

rrail GPAC

2011 Candidate Questionnaire

Please complete the following:

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Office sought:

- 1) What political office do you currently hold or, if you are not an officeholder, what is your current line of employment?

- 2) What political offices have you held and/or sought in the past?

- 3) Experience in other cities shows that walkable streets – defined by wide sidewalks and shade contained in attractive, well-maintained streetscapes – especially those within reasonable walking distance of transit stations, encourage transit ridership. If elected,

- a. Will you work for, and vote to fund, such improvements along Richmond Avenue in order to make our new light rail system truly neighborhood and pedestrian friendly? Specific examples of improvements include sidewalks at least six feet wide with trees in tree wells between the curb and the sidewalk; wide sidewalks extending into adjacent neighborhoods with well-marked crosswalks at every street that intersects Richmond; and amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, pedestrian lighting, and bicycle racks.

YES NO

- b. Will you approve the designation of Richmond Avenue as a transit corridor in the City's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan, which will enable future development along the corridor to take advantage of provisions of the new "transit corridor ordinance"?

YES NO

4) Many current City of Houston policies that govern development are geared to greenfield suburban development and are not well suited to new development and redevelopment in our existing, increasingly dense inner-city neighborhoods. Two areas of policy that have particular relevance in transit corridors are street design and parking.

a. Are you willing to take action to change City policies and practices with regard to street design, to address the requirements of the dense urban areas along Richmond Avenue and other transit corridors and to better balance the needs of all users: people on foot, in wheelchairs and on bicycles as well as trains, buses, cars and other motor vehicles? Examples of such changes include right-sizing traffic lanes and curb radii and permitting mid-block crosswalks at key locations, such as the end of a transit platform.

YES NO

b. Current one-size-fits-all parking regulations in force outside of downtown Houston do little to address the parking challenges of growing density in the urban core. At the same time, these regulations penalize small business owners, subvert other existing or potential land uses in favor of parking lots, and hamper the creation of vibrant and walkable streetscapes. Will you pursue new context-sensitive policies that take into account the presence of transit and promote shared parking solutions along Richmond Avenue and other transit corridors?

YES NO

5) With the proximity of Richmond Avenue to the Texas Medical Center and the rich diversity of available housing in the neighborhoods along Richmond, the disabled population is well represented here. Will you champion strong requirements for improving accessibility for all people along Richmond Avenue and the other light rail transit corridors?

YES NO

6) Rail construction presents a unique opportunity to upgrade an aging infrastructure and minimize future disruptions. Placing phone, cable, and electric utility wires underground reduces the number of poles in the sidewalk, protects trees, and increases reliability in hurricanes and other high wind conditions. The most cost-effective time to do this is during street reconstruction. Will you advocate participation by the City in funding the burying of utility lines along Richmond Avenue when the light rail line is built?

YES NO

7) The construction of new transportation infrastructure (light rail) has long-term benefits for the City and the region. However, it also creates short-term challenges for businesses and residents in neighborhoods where light rail is being constructed. Limited access and other disruptions during construction can severely hurt local business and inconvenience residents. Will you partner with Metro and the Community to develop meaningful programs to mitigate the negative impacts of the construction phase?

YES NO

8) What programs will you seek or propose to mitigate local impacts on the businesses along Richmond Avenue? Examples of such programs used in other cities include offering financial support, marketing services, clearly established lines of communication, and regular information dissemination. How would you work to make this a neighborhood improvement project rather than a transportation improvement project?

9) Houstonians fund transit with a \$.01 sales tax. One quarter of the funds collected are diverted to the General Mobility program and shifted to local jurisdictions within the METRO service area to fund road improvements across the region. Since 1992, more than \$1.6 billion has been diverted from transit -- funds which may have lost us more than \$1 billion in federal matching dollars. Do you support devoting the entire one cent tax to transit spending by ending the diversion of funds to the General Mobility program when the current agreement expires in 2014?

YES NO

10) METRO is expected to hold a voter referendum by 2013 seeking funding authorization for further expansion of the light rail system. Will you support such authorization?

YES NO

11) Five members of the METRO Board of Directors are nominated by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. What criteria will you use to nominate or approve Directors to the METRO Board?

12) To enable funding and building transit in Houston requires support at the state and federal level. What would you do to ensure that Houston wins and retains such support?

13) The current plan for the University Line depends on appropriation by Congress of additional "new starts" transit funds. What alternative ideas do you have for funding the University Line if federal dollars are not forthcoming?

14) Are you an active member of a civic association? If so, which one?

YES NO

15) Do you live and/or work in the Richmond Avenue area? If so, where?

YES NO

Mayoral Candidates:

16) What criteria will you use to ensure effective and equitable decision-making in the Rebuild Houston process?