

Santa Barbara City Council Candidate Questionnaire on Transportation

Brought to you by the Community Environmental Council, Coalition for Sustainable Transportation, and Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition.

Dale Francisco

- 1. Do you agree with the City's Circulation Element vision statement, "Santa Barbara should be a city in which alternative forms of transportation and mobility are so available and so attractive that use of an automobile is a choice, not a necessity"? If not, how would you improve it?**

It depends on the time scale and on the definition of "automobile".

When the authors of this statement wrote it, they undoubtedly conceived of the automobile as we know it today with its attendant problems of air pollution, reliance on finite fossil fuel supplies, traffic congestion, etc. Thus the perfectly reasonable desire to promote transportation alternatives.

Nonetheless, the safety and convenience of personal automotive transportation and the degree to which the automobile has been intertwined with the development of our society over the last hundred years means that there is a huge incentive to find scientific and technological solutions to the automobile's problems. I think that in the distant future, say fifty to a hundred years out, all of those problems will have been fixed by scientific and technological advances.

So if the time scale is of the distant future, I think the vision statement fails by taking a static view of the automobile and an overly pessimistic view of scientific progress.

If the time scale is the five-to-twenty year period over which planning documents are thought to be germane, it fails for a different reason.

Over that time scale, there will be hundreds of circumstances—e.g., a plumber replacing a broken water heater, a heart attack victim being rushed to the hospital, an elderly lady going to the Farmer's Market—under which the use of an automobile will remain a necessity, not one transportation choice among many.

So, taken literally, on any normal planning time scale, the vision statement represents a goal that is unattainable. Planning documents in my view should describe concrete goals, and there should be ways to measure the degree of success in attaining those goals.

I think the goal should be to accommodate those of our citizens who wish to use alternative transportation, and to take their needs into consideration in all of our transportation planning.

Coming up with vision statements is extraordinarily difficult. If were to propose a starting point for discussion, it would be this: Santa Barbara should be a city in which alternative forms of transportation and mobility continue to become more available and more attractive over time, so that those who enjoy and rely on such transportation rarely if ever need to use an automobile.

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- 2. Given that dangerous walking conditions exist in Santa Barbara's Eastside, what might you do to make the Eastside a safer place to walk - more lighting, re-pavement of crosswalks, speed bumps, more police enforcement, or something else?**

Continual infrastructure improvement—sidewalk infill, prioritizing handicap ramps on major pedestrian routes, better streetlighting—is critical. Better law enforcement is also important. Speed bumps pose hazards for emergency response personnel, and thus should be used sparingly if at all.

- 3. Is it the City's duty to improve the jobs/housing imbalance in Santa Barbara? If so, what would you have the City do to accomplish this? If not, how can this imbalance be best addressed?**

The city's duties are laid out in the charter. Improving the jobs/housing imbalance is a policy decision, originally enacted with Measure E, and continued in the latest version of the General Plan. But given the small number of new homes built in Santa Barbara annually, we need to get much more detailed data on commuting patterns—where people come from, where they're going within the city, and why—if such policies are to have any impact.

- 4. Please list three specific things you would prioritize to improve our regional transportation. How would you pay for them? How long would it take to accomplish them?**

I'm happy to work with both Caltrans and with UP, but regional transportation is largely outside our control as a city.

- 5. Do you support the State of California's goals for new and retrofitted "net zero energy" buildings that generate as much energy as they use? If so, how can the City be a leader and help its citizens meet this challenge? If not, why?**

Net zero energy is fine as a goal, and I'm sure many of our local builders will support it. I don't think it should be a state mandate.

- 6. Given projections of increased traffic levels in Santa Barbara, how would you best mitigate our upcoming street congestion?**

If population continues to decline as it has in the last two censuses, the increased traffic is unlikely to be as bad as projected. But to the extent that it's an issue, we need the help of organizations such as the Bicycle Coalition to encourage people to use other forms of transportation that will lessen congestion.