

ATX Safer Streets 2014 candidate questionnaire.

Responses are unedited and appear as submitted by the candidate, except as indicated by brackets [].

The percentage under each candidate's name is a score based on how frequently their responses mirrored our responses to each question.

The order the candidates are listed are the order in which they responded.

If you have questions please email outreach@atxsaferstreets.org.

ATX Safer Streets is a volunteer run, grassroots non profit.

ROBERTO PEREZ JR - DISTRICT 4

64%

How would you explain your understanding of ATX Safer Streets mission and principles?

Advocating for improvements in our transit services to create safer streets in Austin.

What is your opinion on the state of transportation in Austin? (Please touch on CapMetro, taxis, TNCs as well as personally owned vehicles)

We need more sensible transportation options.

Do you believe Austin has a transit shortage? (Not enough taxis, buses, etc.) Why or why not?

Yes. There is a transit shortage during major events.

Do you believe that Austin has enough "for hire" transportation options? (Taxis, pedi-cabs, TNCs, limousines) Why or why not?

No. During major events in Austin we can see a need for additional transportation options.

Do you support an expansion of our current transit system to accommodate daily commuters? Why or why not?

Yes. We need to use all the options available to accommodate daily commuters. A possible solution I propose is looking at implementing free public transportation for Austin Residents. The fare recuperation for Capital Metro was 11.7% systemwide in 2012 (fixed-route bus was 10.2-10.7%; Rail was 2.9-8.7%; and MetroAccess was 2.5%). The future goal is to get in the neighborhood of 20%. This would be beneficial to service workers and create safer streets. We can study the models used by 39 other communities in the United States to create a plan that will work in Austin.

Do you support a more comprehensive late night service plan for downtown visitors, hospitality and graveyard shift employees? Why or why not?

Yes. We need to use all the options available to accommodate daily commuters. A possible solution I propose is looking at implementing free public transportation for Austin Residents. The fare recuperation for Capital Metro was 11.7% systemwide in 2012 (fixed-route bus was 10.2-10.7%; Rail was 2.9-8.7%; and MetroAccess was 2.5%). The future goal is to get in the neighborhood of 20%. This would be beneficial to service workers and create safer streets. We can study the models used by 39 other communities in the

United States to create a plan that will work in Austin. [Editor's note: Candidate provided same answer for two questions]

Do you support the current urban rail initiative? Why or why not?

No. I would not initial bond package that was presented. It has to be separated, one for urban rail and another for roads.

Would you support utilization of city owned parking lots and garages as overnight parking areas on weekends as a means to prevent drunk driving? Why or why not?

Yes. This would need additional information and the impact on parking availability after the weekend.

Do you support the legalization of regulated Transportation Network Companies (such as Uber and Lyft) in Austin? Why or why not?

Yes. If we use existing TNC regulations in cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago as a model for a regulatory structure in Austin it can be successful. Let the market decided if this would be a viable option.

Do you support increasing the number of permanent taxi permits in Austin?

Yes. Supply and demand, if the market demands the need for additional taxis in Austin, we should consider additional permits.

Do you support temporary "peak time" permits for special events to allow licensed out of town cabbies to meet increased demand?

No. I believe that we can develop solutions with local cabbies and TNCs to meet the demand.

Would you support using designated "cab stands" for downtown pick up as an alternative to "street hails"? Why or why not?

Since there is no "maybe" I will say no. I would need additional information on the impact or the need for cab stands vs street hails.

Do you personally use public or alternative (taxis, TNCs, bicycle) transit? If yes, how frequently?

No. Infrequently.

Would you be willing to join other officials in going without personal vehicles for a week to study, first hand, what issues Austin commuters are facing?

No.

Why do you believe ATX Safer Streets should endorse you?

As a child of Mexican immigrants, I learned early on that seizing educational and professional opportunities would provide a successful life for my wife Patricia, my children Alexa and Maximilian, and myself. That's why I chose to move my family to the great state of Texas - a place where we can live safely and affordably while I proudly serve my community and pursue my Doctorate in Business Administration at Walden University. My experience in business and workforce development along with my educational choices make me confident to represent the highly diverse population of District 4.

Living in District 4 for the past five years, I have worked alongside my neighbors to build a better community. Serving as Co-Chair and Place 14 representative on the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team, I work daily to make District 4 safer while listening to the additional needs of our neighborhoods. In turn, I serve on the Community Development Commission for the Austin City Council and the Project Advisory Council for Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities at Safeplace. These positions give me the opportunity to learn about the needs of the City and allow me to carry the voices of our neighbors to our city and state leaders.

I believe every person in Austin deserves to live in a safe, thriving neighborhood. District 4 residents should have safe neighborhoods, recreational facilities to celebrate their families, robust businesses to stimulate our local economy, and job opportunities to live full, enjoyable lives.

SHARON MAYS - DISTRICT 4

86%

How would you explain your understanding of ATX Safer Streets mission and principles?

ATXSS is advocating for a better transportation system in efforts to reduce the drunk drivers on our streets as well as improve traffic congestion. ATXSS supports better bus, train, and taxi systems, and also supports the use of TNCs.

What is your opinion on the state of transportation in Austin? (Please touch on CapMetro, taxis, TNCs as well as personally owned vehicles)

Our transportation is in a state of critical error. We do not have the infrastructure necessary to safely move people in and around Austin. Capital Metro remains a resource that is not being fully optimized. We need routes to more places and run more frequently. The bus stops themselves need a major upgrade. Some stops are a pole on the side of the road - no seating or protection from the weather. Many stops in District 4 do not have sidewalks leading to/from the stop which makes it dangerous to take the bus. We need more tax licenses. There is 1 taxi for every 1,146 Austin residents. We need to take the limitations off the taxi licenses. This same ratio is relevant for TNCs. Our community would benefit from increased ride-for-hire options. Overall, if we want people to leave their personal vehicles at home, we need to provide them with options that can provide an adequate substitution. If public transportation is not safe, affordable or convenient, people will continue to choose to drive their own car and our traffic problems will not subside.

Do you believe Austin has a transit shortage? (Not enough taxis, buses, etc.) Why or why not?

Yes. See above. We don't have enough of all forms of public transportation. Increasing the number of options needs to be a top priority.

Do you believe that Austin has enough "for hire" transportation options? (Taxis, pedi-cabs, TNCs, limousines) Why or why not?

No. There is 1 taxi for every 1,146 Austin residents.

Do you support an expansion of our current transit system to accommodate daily commuters? Why or why not?

Yes. If we want people to leave their personal vehicles at home, we need to provide them with options that can provide an adequate substitution. If public transportation is not safe, affordable or convenient, people will continue to choose to drive their own car and our traffic problems will not subside.

Do you support a more comprehensive late night service plan for downtown visitors, hospitality and graveyard shift employees? Why or why not?

Yes. If we don't want people to leave downtown Austin and drive under the influence, we need to stop them from driving downtown in the first place. Banning towing of cars parked overnight is a good start, but that still relies on people having the rational mind to do the right thing and not drive home. People that are intoxicated do not typically have a rational mind or are capable of making smart decisions. Getting people to take the public transportation to and from downtown is the safest option. The fare cost for the Night Owl is cheaper than parking downtown, taking a cab, or dealing with a DWI.

Do you support the current urban rail initiative? Why or why not?

No. I've attended about 12 meetings about urban rail and the data that I have seen and heard does not support the marketing that is promoting the urban rail. It's being called an affordability solution, but it will have a premium price. Affordable and premium price usually don't play well together. It also claims to take 9K cars off the road, but the data doesn't sufficiently show that the riders will be former car owners or existing public transportation riders. Also, most people do not only travel in one area of town day after day. For the rail to actually take cars off the road, we would need to expand public transportation in areas that the rail does not service. I haven't seen/heard any plans for that.

Would you support utilization of city owned parking lots and garages as overnight parking areas on weekends as a means to prevent drunk driving? Why or why not?

Yes & no. I think this could be a good program. If the land is not being used at night, it would make a great location for additional parking. If patrons knew that their vehicles would not be towed, it might encourage people to take a safe ride home (assuming they could find one). I think the possible problem becomes car abandoned in the lot for longer than overnight. At what point are cars towed? If someone parks on Friday night and doesn't get their car on Saturday, it prevents someone else from using the lot Saturday night. Also, what is the cost associated with having the available. I think it's an interesting idea, but definitely needs some additional information to see if it's a viable option.

Do you support the legalization of regulated Transportation Network Companies (such as Uber and Lyft) in Austin? Why or why not?

Yes. There is 1 taxi for every 1,146 Austin residents. TNCs could provide additional options, helping to service the demand that the taxi companies do not have the ability to meet.

Do you support increasing the number of permanent taxi permits in Austin?

Yes. We do not have enough licensed cabs to handle the demand of our growing population. The regular business and recreational tourism in Austin adds additional strain on the problem. The amount of cab permits should be determined by the demand for service. There is no legitimate reason to have the limits that currently exist. These limits do not serve the needs and wants of the community.

Do you support temporary “peak time” permits for special events to allow licensed out of town cabbies to meet increased demand?

yes. We do not have enough local licensed cab drivers to support the demand in Austin during regular weekends. During special events, hiring a cab become an exercise in futility. If we allowed licensed out of town cabs to come during event weekends when demand is tripled, everyone benefits. Our local cabs cannot fulfill the increased demand. Bringing in outside drivers will not take away from the locals' business. In fact people get out of the habit of calling cabs when they are consistently unable to get a ride. Bringing in outside drivers could actually increase business because there would be an expectation that there is a better chance of getting a cab. People might be less likely to find another form of transportation.

Would you support using designated “cab stands” for downtown pick up as an alternative to “street hails”? Why or why not?

Yes. Cab stands would create a safe and orderly destination for patrons to hire cabs. This would also prevent people from standing in the street trying to attract the attention of cabs passing by or running out into the street to enter a cab. Cabs provide a safe alternative to driving downtown. We need to ensure that we provide a safe and convenient environment for people to find and hire cabs.

Do you personally use public or alternative (taxis, TNCs, bicycle) transit? If yes, how frequently?

No. Infrequently.

Would you be willing to join other officials in going without personal vehicles for a week to study, first hand, what issues Austin commuters are facing?

Yes.

Why do you believe ATX Safer Streets should endorse you?

I have lived in District 4 for almost 10 years. I have been a business and community leader in Austin for 20 years. I fully support the mission and goals of ATX Safer Streets and I welcome the opportunity to work towards making Austin's streets safe for drivers, riders and pedestrians.

GREGORIO CASAR - DISTRICT 4
93%

How would you explain your understanding of ATX Safer Streets mission and principles?

My understanding of your mission and principles is rooted in the experiences of my friends and my community. Many of my colleagues, my former roommates, and even a member of my campaign team work late hours Downtown and do not have adequate transportation options. I have lost friends because of others' drunk driving, and I have lost friends because of their own impaired driving.

We can improve the quality of life for Austinites and save lives simply by providing transportation options. I understand, and I respect the political organizing that must be done to prioritize resources to address this problem. Your principles are based on personal responsibility: the dearth of options in the current system

makes it difficult for folks to have responsible, safer options. Anyone who's been out late in Austin knows we need more transit, better taxi service, more for-hire transportation, and safe parking.

What is your opinion on the state of transportation in Austin? (Please touch on CapMetro, taxis, TNCs as well as personally owned vehicles)

We have a serious transportation problem in Austin. The congestion and delays for cars is one of the worst in the county. Cap Metro bus service does not provide access to many places people need to go; the service takes a long time in many cases; hours of operation are often inadequate, especially in the night and weekends; and because the service is not perceived as dependable things get worse. The city has recently been improving bike and pedestrian facilities, but there is a lot more that needs to be done, in particular, to reduce the number of bike and pedestrian accidents with vehicles. Taxi service is inadequate, and transportation networking companies currently do not have a legal framework to operate under successfully.

Do you believe Austin has a transit shortage? (Not enough taxis, buses, etc.) Why or why not?

Yes. Bus service does not cover enough of the city, and the buses do not access a number of places where people need to go. Hours of operation are limited, and delays make the service unreliable. Houston recently did a full reimagining of its bus lines, and hopes to show large increases in usage dedicating significantly more resources. I think we need the resources, but at a minimum should engage in a similar reimagining of our bus system. I believe we have two major issues in the taxi industry— first, we need to do better incentivizing drivers and riders to connect, and second we are lacking in taxis, especially on weekends, late at night, and during events.

Do you believe that Austin has enough “for hire” transportation options? (Taxis, pedi-cabs, TNCs, limousines) Why or why not?

No. I believe we often have enough ‘for hire’ transportation options during some hours and times, but during peak demand hours, we clearly do not. The City should be a partner in fostering innovation and new options, along with helping existing “for hire” transportation options thrive.

Do you support an expansion of our current transit system to accommodate daily commuters? Why or why not?

Yes. Our current transit system does not adequately meet the needs of commuters because it does not operate in a timely manner or provide access to enough places. Commuters are a high priority because their peak demand of our roadways are the underlying cause of our worst congestion issues.

Do you support a more comprehensive late night service plan for downtown visitors, hospitality and graveyard shift employees? Why or why not?

Yes. Our transportation system must meet the needs of all of our community and currently it is seriously lacking in some areas. It is especially important that people who are transit-dependent and work at low or moderate-income jobs are able to get to work and back in a timely, affordable, and safe manner. Many of the hardworking Austinites that live in District 4 are hospitality late-night industry employees. I believe that the coalition building work that ATXSS is doing between our downtown workers, visitors, and businesses is critical for us to move a comprehensive, rather than a piecemeal, plan forward.

Do you support the current urban rail initiative? Why or why not?

No. My personal decision is to not vote for the rail. While I certainly support rail transit, our city leaders have not successfully implemented a comprehensive plan around preserving affordability in Austin, and therefore I've chosen not to vote for the bond. Many people have worked very hard to put this rail proposal together, but it's clear that the community at large & in District 4 remains too divided despite all that work. The fact of the matter is, the voters will decide the rail election in November. As a mass transit supporter myself, if this rail election passes, I will be dedicated from day one on building community trust and implementing a true affordability plan, so that we can pass the second and third and fourth lines of the rail in an equitable way—we will need these other lines to ensure we have as successful of a rail system as possible. If the bonds do not pass, then I believe the proposed route, with some possible modification, is prime for improved bus service. This could immediately improve our area's traffic problems and could be extended quickly into later night hours. This is a more affordable option available for the current riders, now, and would take cars off the road and could bring residents to and from Downtown that work or enjoy themselves there. We must begin a more robust conversation about pairing affordability with new transit investments.

Would you support utilization of city owned parking lots and garages as overnight parking areas on weekends as a means to prevent drunk driving? Why or why not?

Yes. It is good to provide as many options as possible to keep people who are impaired from driving vehicles; city property should be used to serve the public as often as possible—the financial cost (not even counting the obvious human cost) of every drunk driving accident is enormous compared to the cost of opening up empty parking lots for overnight parking.

Do you support the legalization of regulated Transportation Network Companies (such as Uber and Lyft) in Austin? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe we need more transportation options in Austin. I believe regulations should balance three priorities 1) riders should be able to reliably and quickly get connected with the safe rides they need, 2) drivers should earn fair pay for the service they provide, 3) companies should be allowed to fairly compete based on the merits of their service, under reasonable rules for consumer protection.

Do you support increasing the number of permanent taxi permits in Austin?

Yes. As I outlined above, many riders are not getting picked up reliably or quickly under the current system. This is due in part to a lack of permits during peak hours and events, but also because many drivers aren't being connected to riders effectively enough.

Do you support temporary “peak time” permits for special events to allow licensed out of town cabbies to meet increased demand?

Yes. During special events, our local cabbies have more work than they can handle—but we must consider that these events are also a critical time for our local cabs to earn the money they need to cover expenses in down times, such as summers. I believe we could support this measure if it is implemented by a data driven process.

Would you support using designated “cab stands” for downtown pick up as an alternative to “street hails”? Why or why not?

Yes. It would provide a more equitable way to access taxis, and prevent dangerous situations where folks are competing to get a taxi's attention late at night, standing in the street.

Do you personally use public or alternative (taxis, TNCs, bicycle) transit? If yes, how frequently?

Yes. A couple times a week.

Would you be willing to join other officials in going without personal vehicles for a week to study, first hand, what issues Austin commuters are facing?

Yes.

Why do you believe ATX Safer Streets should endorse you?

Because of the many young people and late-night workers in my District— and being a younger member of the community myself— I believe I could successfully champion the issues you've brought forth. I have a successful track record of starting difficult conversations amongst a group of stakeholders, and turning those conversations into policy. I've been fortunate enough to work on campaigns to move over two dozen policy changes at the local level— these successes have always been made possible because dedicated civic organizations that have had a vision for the future of Austin have been involved. I'm excited to continue working together with ATXSS.