



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

COMMUNITY LIFE

What do you see as our most serious traffic issues and how would you fix them?

ALEX COMSA

Most people would say that traffic is created by large businesses, and that is partially true. Stanford, as our larger nearby employer is also a big factor here, as they employ almost 30,000 people, not to mention that large employers like VMware are situated in Stanford Research Park. I would LOVE to say that adding affordable housing will fix the traffic issue, and it will, but insignificantly, since we have about 100,000 employees in Palo Alto, and adding 2,000 affordable units will sadly not fix the traffic issue.

Public Transportation is definitely a solution since our PT system needs to be more efficient otherwise people will continue to use cars as the main means of moving around. A HUGE part of the solution is getting more people to bike, so it is imperative to have a Safe Route to School program in place and add more biking boulevards too.

However, I think that the main fix for the traffic issues is the Grade Separation project. If you have access to electric trains every 15 minutes, and if you have to meet someone for lunch in DT Burlingame, you may be inclined to take the train versus driving there and deal with parking issues.

LISA FORSELL

Our most serious traffic issue is about to materialize when Caltrain starts running more frequent trains as a result of the almost-complete electrification upgrade. The gates will be closed at Meadow, Charleston, Churchill and Palo Alto Ave as often as every few minutes. It will be highly disruptive. We need to address this right away - see my "top three goals" answer above.

I want to make space on the road for those who need or want to drive, by providing alternatives to those who can't or prefer not to drive. I want to restart the crosstown shuttle and start the on-demand shuttle that Palo Alto already has a grant for. I want to improve bicycle paths and add bicycle parking in areas that don't have enough, including Downtown, California Ave, Midtown, and our parks.

Palo Alto could use recent technology like the Mobility Data Specification to require UPS and Amazon to operate only during non-peak traffic hours, or to require Waze and other apps to choose routes along our larger roads instead of quiet neighborhood roads.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

Palo Alto's traffic issues stem from the City's huge jobs-housing imbalance. They can be fixed by building more housing, especially affordable housing, close to where people work

ED LAUING

Most serious traffic issue:

- Too much commute traffic on main arteries

How to fix?

- TDM with teeth and oversight
- Better, safer bike paths and use of other micro transportation vehicles
- Housing and jobs near public transit and add to public transit, including local shuttle
- Encourage work-from-home to reduce commuter traffic
- Build affordable housing to make it easier for workers to live here and not commute.

JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS

The traffic in Palo Alto stems from two deficits: a lack of affordable housing and a lack of public transportation. Many laborers, teachers, nurses, retail and service workers, etc. can't afford to live in Palo Alto; as a result, they make grueling commutes from increasingly distant cities, adding to traffic throughout the bay and especially in Palo Alto. Not only is this system unsustainable and producing absurd and unnecessary amounts of greenhouse emissions, but it drastically reduces the quality of life for these thousands of people who spend a good fraction of their day driving. Producing affordable housing and relocating our workforce to within city limits will do wonders for reducing traffic.

To support this, of course, it will also be necessary to strengthen public transit within the city, so people can easily traverse the city without need for a car. While the abundance of bike lanes in PA certainly helps, I think we could explore electric bikes and scooters to help people get around. I also think reinvigorating the city's now defunct shuttle system will also be essential. I would particularly like to get hundreds of cars out of school pickup and drop off lines by partnering with the PAUSD and Stanford to provide a green shuttle for all K-12 schoolchildren.

Unfortunately, worse traffic is coming – and it will likely be gridlock at times – when the CalTrain is electrified and our grade separation has not yet been completed. I hope city leaders will “get in front of” this predictable headache by recommending different detour routes for commuters and parents/school children.

DORIA SUMMA

I would concentrate on public safety, particularly for children, bikes and pedestrians; especially at problem intersections

VICKI VEENKER

First is our four at-grade (street level) rail crossings. They are dangerous to people on the tracks and they cause significant traffic back-ups. We should focus on eliminating at-grade crossings to improve safety and reduce gridlock, especially given that electrification of Caltrain will increase train trips during peak commute times. We need to separate trains and other modes of transportation, such as cars, bikes and pedestrians.

Second, we need to continue to improve bikeways and bike safety to reduce car trips for those who are willing and able to bike. Part of this should be improving bike and pedestrian connections across Alma and the train tracks as a precursor to the grade separation efforts described above.