

Greer Stone

Personal transportation choices: What are your primary and secondary modes of transportation for getting around town? If one of your preferred modes is bicycling, how often do you ride? What type of trips do you make and why do you choose this option over other modes?

My primary modes of transportation are walking, bicycling, driving. I ride as frequently as 2-3 times per week depending on factors such as weather, air quality, and if I have errands and/or meetings after work. If I'm simply commuting to work and I have no obligations after work that requires my car, I prefer to bike because it can be equally as fast to get to work during typical commute times (pre-Covid), it is cost-effective, and a greener alternative to single-occupancy vehicles.

Summer Streets: Palo Alto's [2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#) notes that "Walkable, bikeable downtowns attract residents and visitors to spend money at local businesses". In addition, our [2030 Comprehensive Plan](#) proposes studying "the feasibility of converting parts of University Avenue to a pedestrian zone". "[Summer Streets](#)", the opening of California Avenue and University Avenue to pedestrian and bicycle traffic only, has provided the city with an opportunity to pilot this program. Would you support making these street modifications either seasonally recurring or permanent? Why or why not?

Summer streets is an exciting city initiative that I have enjoyed several times since its inception. I believe it is too early to say whether or not the program should be made permanent given the uncertainty of our local economy and how commuting patterns may change in a post-Covid world. I believe any determination that would permanently close University Avenue and California Avenue to traffic would need to be made in collaboration with the business owners in those districts, residents, and city staff. One of my policy proposals is to explore ways to indefinitely extend telecommuting when this pandemic ends. My hope is that through greater use of telecommuting, businesses will require less need for office workers commuting into town. With fewer commuters, there will be less need for parking on University and California Avenue and we will be able to transform our retail cores from being office hubs to being a retail and dining experience for shoppers. Hopefully, this will lessen the reliance on parking spots, and allow for our community to consider whether to permanently or seasonally close these streets to traffic.

Programs: Programs can be very effective at increasing the walking and biking mode-share within a population. An example of this is the [Safe Routes To School](#) (SRTS) program. Last year, about [60% of high school students](#) in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) walked or biked to school. While this program has been successful at getting students to adopt active transportation, among adults and seniors the walking and bicycling mode share is only around 10%. Considering the significant health benefits of active living, would you be in favor of investing in a pilot program for adults and seniors? Why or why not?

Yes, I am very interested in investing in a pilot program for adults and seniors similar to our city's SRTS program. As a teacher at both Paly and Gunn, most of my students bike to campus. I have

been an advocate for SRTS during my time as a teacher. Previously, I taught at JLS, where I was also the 7th-grade student council teacher advisor. I had become concerned over several near bicycle collisions I witnessed while walking to school and I wanted to work with school administration, SRTS, and my 7th-grade student council students to improve bicycle safety for students biking to school. Through a series of meetings with our vice-principal and city employees representing SRTS, we were able to organize and execute a successful Bike Safety week where students were awarded prizes for following traffic laws and practicing safe biking practices. We also further educated students and worked with our police department to better enforce traffic laws on East Meadow. I am interested in bringing that same passion for bicycle safety for our city's youth and applying it to creating a pilot program to encourage more adults and seniors to bike.

Road Safety: The [2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#) lists the [locations of hazardous intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists](#) in Palo Alto, and suggests treatments to improve safety. The city has addressed a number of these intersections, but, unfortunately, for many of them no safety improvements have been made. In early March, there was a tragic crash at one of these unimproved intersections, resulting in the death of a young bicyclist. What policies would you support to reduce risk for all users at hazardous intersections and roadways?

Public safety is by far the most important responsibility of government. As a councilmember, I would always place the safety and wellbeing of our people first. We must prioritize these intersections and invest the necessary funding and time into improving them. I have talked with many Palo Altans who do not ride their bicycles around town because they feel it is not safe. By prioritizing these intersections and making the necessary improvements, we can both improve the safety of our roads and also encourage greater use of bicycles by working actively towards making our streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.

In addition, we need to prioritize reinstating the Palo Alto Police Department's Traffic Enforcement Team. The traffic team was suspended due to budget cuts in 2008 due to the Great Recession. It was not until recently when the traffic team was reinstated but then was cut again this last Spring because of the city's budget deficit. I believe we can reallocate resources within our police department in order to reestablish the traffic enforcement team. I would accomplish this by restructuring which calls police officers respond to in our city.

There are examples of this around the country including Southern California's PERT Program and Eugene, Oregon's CAHOOT program, where local police and community services collaborate with each other to offer the proper service to 911 calls. When people call 911 a dispatcher triages the call and determines if the call requires a police response because it involves a legal matter or is an issue involving violence or threatening of property. However, if the call involves issues that have a heavy mental or behavioral health component, the 911 dispatcher will redirect the call to a social worker who is trained to deescalate these issues and help provide the person the help they actually need. Not only has this led to a significant decrease in police shootings and incidents of police violence in Eugene, but it is estimated to save the city \$15 million a year. Not only is this reform effective in reducing police violence, but it also cost-effective. By reallocating funds from our city budget, we will be able to save money and then reinvest that money into essential public safety services such as reestablishing the police department's traffic team.

Commuting: The [2016 Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(S/CAP\) framework](#) states a 2030 goal to “Increase bike mode share, including work commute trips, from 7% to 25%”. What kinds of programs and/or infrastructure improvements do you support to encourage more people to commute by bicycle to help the city of Palo Alto reach this ambitious goal?

In order to increase the bike mode share from 7% to 25%, we need to make it as easy and safe as possible for bicyclists to move around Palo Alto. I would invest in more bike lanes and bike boulevards so bicyclists can efficiently move about the city. I would also require more bike locks on public land and would require bike locks to be an addition to all new developments in the city, and especially in Downtown and California Avenue.

Equity: The [2030 Comprehensive Plan](#) states that “ Due to the high number of jobs relative to a low number of employed residents, many workers must commute to Palo Alto, resulting in traffic congestion, air pollution and parking constraints”. This is especially true for service workers. In addition, the [Calendar Year 2019 Annual Report](#) from the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association (PATMA) finds that 70% of service workers at University Avenue and California Avenue use single-occupancy vehicles (SOV) to commute to work. What barriers do you think could prevent these workers from using green transportation options, and what policies could the city adopt to alleviate these barriers?

As the vice-chair of the Santa Clara County Human Rights Commission, former chair of the Palo Alto Human Relations Commission, and teacher in our school district, issues of equity and inclusion are by far my greatest passion and concern in government. Transportation and parking issues are particularly vexing for low-income families because low-income families tend to be far more reliant on cars than more affluent people. Part of the difficulty for service workers is that they often do not work typical hours of a 9-5 job. Because of this, and due to the nature of public transportation along the Peninsula, it is more difficult for them to rely on greener modes of transportation.

Some of the ways in which I would attempt to remove some of these barriers would be first, improving pedestrian infrastructure and access to public transportation for our lower-income communities and working with our neighboring cities to create safer bike lanes and bike boulevards to get to job centers on University and California Avenues. Second, I would explore either through government subsidies or working with employers to offer public transportation benefits to these service workers in order to encourage them to take alternative modes of transportation. Third, we could do more to lobby the VTA and other public transit agencies to increase service, especially nighttime service, in Palo Alto to provide these workers with a safe and reliable mode of transportation. Finally, we must invest in greater affordable housing in Palo Alto in order to make living in Palo Alto a reality for many of these people who serve our community but who cannot afford to live here.

Design: Designing complete streets for safe and convenient travel for all users -- pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, users and operators of public transportation, emergency vehicles, seniors, children, youth, and families -- is a part of [state law](#). Which of these alternatives shown below for a fictional Fletcher Street would you prefer, and why?



I prefer the design for Fletcher Street II because it seems to be the safest alternative. I have seen too often cars make dangerous maneuvers around bicyclists who are biking in the street, and I believe having their own separate bike lanes, separated from the road and the parking strip, to be the safest. However, I think different streets with different traffic patterns, bicycle, and pedestrian use, may require different designs that work best for the health and safety of that particular street, so I do not think there is a one-size-fits-all solution.

Infrastructure: Active transportation infrastructure makes walking, biking, and electric boards (like e-scooters) feel safer and more convenient. What kinds of infrastructure projects, supporting active transportation, would you like to see come forward for City Council approval in the next 4-8 years? What kinds of projects would be your highest priorities? How would you choose?

A list of bicycle and pedestrian projects is proposed in chapter 6 of the [2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#). The [City Office of Transportation project page](#) has a list of all Palo Alto transportation projects -- the status for these goes from early development, to planned, to complete, or halted. Larger capital projects are part of the [Palo Alto infrastructure plan website](#).

There are several infrastructure improvement projects that excite me, but two areas that need greater focus in order to further encourage people to ride bicycles and provide less of a reliance on single-

occupancy vehicles is to invest in more bikeable and pedestrian-friendly paths in order to address the first mile/last mile problem. Many commuters do not take public transportation because they are unable to traverse the first mile from their homes to transportation hubs and they are unable to get to their jobs from the transportation hubs without some other form of transportation. I would be interested in investing in solving this important issue.

Additionally, the city has been working on bike boulevards that connect our North and South through the Bryant Bike Boulevard and connecting Midtown through the Neighborhood Traffic Safety and Bicycle Boulevard Projects Phase 1. Phase 2 seeks to create bike boulevards along Maybell Ave., Stanford Ave., Park Blvd., and Wilkie Way. This will help connect the Western portion of Palo Alto. However, there is no connection between East and West Palo Alto that seamlessly connects the various bike boulevards. I would like to explore ways in which to have an interconnection of our bike boulevards so that bicyclists know they can safely and efficiently navigate our city's streets and get from one end of town to the other on the same safe bike route.

Community engagement: Bryant Street is one of Palo Alto's most beloved streets. However, when Bryant Street became a bicycle boulevard, the proposed changes were quite controversial and sparked community pushback. How would you balance concerns raised by residents who may oppose a change to their street with broader city goals to make streets more accessible to different modes of transport?

As chair of the Midtown Residents Association, I remember vividly the frustration of many residents over the Ross Road Bike Boulevard changes. I spoke with many of our residents regarding the project and what I learned most from that project is that residents often feel like their opinions are not considered by the city and their voices are not heard. Shortly after that project, I convened a meeting with the City Manager, Ed Shikada, and spoke to him about the Ross Road project. I explained to him the frustration of our residents and advised him in the future to provide greater notice to those who will be impacted by city projects and to seek their input. He agreed with me that the city should have done better to work with the residents and apologized for the misstep.

No one is ever going to agree 100% of the time on any proposed project, but in my experience, people are willing to accept a decision if they feel it was decided in a fair way and if their voices were heard. As a councilmember, I would always ensure that the interested stakeholders have a seat at the table from the inception of a new project in order to solicit community feedback and buy-in. I believe if this was done for bike boulevard projects like Bryant Street and Ross Road, the city could have avoided the controversy and pushback that subsequently ensued.
