

Full Answers from Liang Chao · 2022 WBC City Council Candidate Survey

<p><i>Increased biking can reduce traffic and improve community health and sustainability. What would you do to increase bike use within Cupertino?</i></p>	<p>One of our favorite family activities is to bike on long off-street bike trails since they are safe and enjoyable. There are many great trails to take. I would encourage families to consider such trips by providing more information about bike racks [sic] etc. My older son has been biking to school since middle school daily, rain or shine. We carpool and drop the students one block away from their school, which is further away. Cupertino could do more to encourage more teens to use alternative transportation. I hope the city or the community could organize short community bike rides around each park throughout the year. Perhaps, bike rides organized by block party leaders. We can engage Teen Commission and Youth Activity Board to organize them.</p>
<p><i>Many new sidewalks cannot be added in Cupertino due to decades old zoning of streets as rural which do not require homes to have sidewalks, and homeowners that oppose adding them there. What are some other ideas you have to improve walkability in our city as adding them in these areas is difficult or impossible?</i></p>	<p>Concrete sidewalks are costly to build and it takes time. Plus, concrete is not eco-friendly. However, there are many ways to create environmentally friendly sidewalks, which we should explore. We just need a way to delineate the sidewalk so that the pedestrians have a safe passageway, similar to buffered bike paths, on less busy streets. This way we can create more non-concrete sidewalks quickly and economically. I do think we waste a lot of street pavement for vehicles on many neighborhood streets, which do not have a lot of traffic. I would not rule out turning some low-traffic neighborhood streets into one-way streets. This would create more space for biking without taking away parking spaces. However, for any innovative projects, I would always put a lot of weight on the voices of the neighborhoods who will be impacted (but also benefit) from such projects.</p>
<p><i>What is your view on removing some parking (<10 spaces) to allow for bicycle right-of-ways when doing so improves student safety near schools?</i></p>	<p>As for parking around schools, if at all possible, we should find ways to provide safer passage ways without taking away parking spaces. For K-5 schools, many students do still need to be dropped off close to schools; thus, taking away parking has bigger impacts. For middle school or high schools, I think the students could walk the last block or two to school, as my kids have done (see my answer for Question 1). Whatever my personal opinion is on parking spaces around schools, as a City Councilmember, I think such a project, which changes existing traffic flow, must do careful traffic study, consider multiple alternatives and engage the impacted community before any decision is made. Then, we are making a decision, which although compromised, is the best for most people.</p>
<p><i>How have you personally advocated for proven improved walking or biking in Cupertino or the surrounding areas? Examples could include Safe Routes to School work, supporting new infrastructure through signing a petition, or by advocating by speaking as a resident at a City Council or at a Bicycle Pedestrian Commission meeting.</i></p>	<p>It is one thing to sign a petition or speak to support one specific project; it is quite a different thing for a City Councilmember to do “the right thing,” which often might mean pushing for better alternatives to address community concerns, rather than ignoring them simply because they are a small minority impacted by a project. I think we should all be sympathetic to those who are impacted by a project, since we are an inclusive and diverse community which values each other even when we disagree. And we especially should not force a project on a small neighborhood for efficiency or economy. Since I took office in November 2018, my approach has always been taking the time to listen and address concerns since those concerns often make the project better and more welcomed by the community.</p>

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<p><i>Why or why not would you support giving the right-of-way path easement at Lozano Lane to the local HOA (closing it to public use) which was planned to connect to the Regnart Creek Trail?</i></p>	<p>The Lozano Lane residents' concerns were never brought to the attention of the City Council since they were swept under the rugs for some reason. Those residents deserve to have their concerns seriously considered by the Council and everyone should respect their right to do so. This is why I advocated for the issue to be placed on the Council agenda. ONce [sic] it is on the Council agenda, we can then hear various voices and needs, such as those who need to use the easement to access these Regnart Creek Trail from across the street. Yet, such needs revealed a serious safety concern that those residents across the streets have beeing [sic] crossing Rodriguez dangerously to access the Trail. If the issue has not been put on the Council agenda, we would not have an opportunity to address this safety issue. The staff is now doing a traffic study to see whether a crosswalk is necessary and where. Thus, it's important to understand people's concern and address them as much as we can so that our solutions are improved in the end.</p>
<p><i>The Cupertino 2016 Bicycle and 2018 Pedestrian Plans prioritize infrastructure projects based on many factors derived through community input such as need and safety. What do you think is the role of Councilmembers in adjusting the prioritization of those lists of projects? Do you support building the Carmen Bridge, which is next in the list?</i></p>	<p>I have objected to singling one specific project out to push forward, while there are more higher priority projects not yet addressed in the Bike and Pedestrian plan. I have objected to singling one project out to add to the city's annual CIP project without evaluating all higher priority projects together, ranking them and then prioritizing them. Of course, the priorities set in the 2016 Bicycle and 2018 Pedestrian plans are not set in stone since situations and priorities change. Therefore, I have suggested that each year the city should have a list of higher priority projects to be considered and prioritized by the commissions and the Council with public input. I think Carmen Road Bridge would be a good addition to the neighborhood and provides a great connection, once neighborhood concerns are addressed. However, to me, making on street bike paths safer in high traffic, accident prone areas, has been a higher priority for me. In order to encourage more residents to bike, we must improve road safety on existing bike paths, which connect popular destinations and schools.</p>
<p><i>Should the city of Cupertino pay for improvements, such as fencing, on private properties of residents near new trails or other infrastructure projects? If yes, then approximately what percentage of the total project cost would be acceptable to spend on this?</i></p>	<p>It depends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does a homeowner share the cost of the fence with their neighbors? They most likely do. - When a shopping center gets developed, right next to a neighborhood, should the shopping center pay for a better sound wall since they will bring more impact to the neighborhood? - When a project is going to negatively impact a neighborhood, should the project developer pay to mitigate the impact? <p>My answer is yes. A responsible party does do our best to mitigate the impact caused by us.</p>

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<p><i>The 2016 Cupertino Bike Plan has expired, but the Bicycle Pedestrian Commission choose not to create a new one in the last two years of workplans, which puts city grant funding at risk. Do you support creating a new one? Please explain why or why not.</i></p>	<p>I am not aware that the 2016 Bike Plan expires in 2020, which means the plan is only a 4-year plan, which seems to be too short. No one has brought that to the Council's attention or has written to the Council about it. Otherwise, I would have tried to find out the situation. As I remember, that 2016 plan has some short-term goals and also prioritized a long list of bike projects. I think the Bike Peds Commission has chosen to focus on the Vision Zero project since 2020 in order to improve the safety for walking and biking with "the goal of eliminating fatalities on Cupertino roadways". I applaud their efforts and hope they can get more support for that project.</p>
<p><i>Do you feel it is necessary to appoint Bike Ped Commissioners who regularly walk or bike within the city and have a track record of supporting walking and biking infrastructure projects in Cupertino? Why or why not?</i></p>	<p>I feel that it is necessary to include diverse points of views on the Commission so that a project is well vetted with diverse concerns and perspectives so that the project is enhanced and address concerns ahead of time. Thus, I do think it is important to include commissioners who are avid bikers, but also commissioners who are everyday walkers. If every one of the Commissioners think alike and do not disagree with each other, we do not get the benefits of diverse views and concerns. As a result, we do need commissioners who value the opinions of those who disagree with them and who respect those who disagree with them. This makes a better Commission.</p>
<p><i>What would you like voters, including all the members of Walk-Bike Cupertino, to know about your position on walking and biking in the city?</i></p>	<p>We are a one-car family though. The decision to not replace the second car when it broke down has forced everyone of us to use alternative transportation methods: pitching a ride with friends, biking and scooters. We do them all when it fits the situation. It's been great!! Cupertino has funded an on-demand microshuttle system, Via Cupertino, with 6-passenger electric cars with bike racks, since 2019. We put a pause during the covid pandemic due to health concerns.. It has re-started. With a wait of 5 minutes (at most 15 minutes), Cupertino residents could get to any location in Cupertino or Kaiser and Caltrain stations for \$4 a ride. The city currently subsidizes Via, but we hope this pilot would encourage other cities to join so that this model could serve the unique needs in this suburban area. This year we will get an \$8M grant from the state to expand it to Santa Clara. I hope more people utilize Via so that it is more feasible to biking and walking in Cupertino to access other amenities.</p>