

Remarks from Mark Wallach:

Again, I am sorry that I will be unable to attend the Cycling Forum on Tuesday, and I am grateful for the opportunity to offer a few comments with respect to the issues that you care deeply about. As an initial matter, I note that approximately half of the questions that you will be asking imply the commitment of additional financial resources to bring the desired outcomes into reality. As this is a forum dedicated to cycling issues, and as this is an election season, I assume that many candidates will pledge their commitment to achieve all of them, without reference to the actual costs and the tradeoffs with other funding commitments that would be needed to do so. Having been a member of the Council for the past two years I would offer a different perspective. So allow me to offer a few general statements about where I think we can achieve substantial progress in the short term.

First are the issues regarding theft and safety. We are currently short approximately 40 officers in our police department due to the stresses of the job and the difficulties in recruiting capable, professional candidates willing to serve. This needs to be a high priority, not only for the biking community, but for the community at large. Public safety is a core issue for me. Safety on our public lands is essential, for bikers, hikers, runners and even slow walkers such as myself. Additional police resources will make a contribution to this effort. And while we tend to deemphasize property crimes in Boulder, there need to be some limits to this. When we see a chop shop with a substantial number of bikes it should be treated as the felony that it is. Especially when property crimes are committed by the unhoused, there is a growing realization that simply recycling members of that community through the prison system serves neither the long-term interests of those individuals or the community. However, as I noted before, there need to be some guardrails to that practice, and enforcement of our laws is needed. Finding the proper balance between enforcement and programs that address the core issues of drug addiction and mental illness that afflict many members of the unhoused community is our greatest challenge moving forward. But I do not believe we can continue to address property theft as incidental or unimportant.

As we are receiving a substantial amount of ARPA funding, and as I hope we can achieve passage of the infrastructure tax that will be on the ballot this year, I believe that we can generate some additional funding for more protected bike lanes, with a particular focus on 28th and 30th Streets, as well as converting more intersections to a "no right on red" status. I would not be in favor of this at all intersections, but there are obvious places where this would be beneficial. If the Biden infrastructure bill is ever passed, we might look forward to even more funding for separated pathways and improvement of the conditions of our underpasses. But as all of this takes place in an environment in which we already have many unfunded needs and commitments, it is important that we increase the revenues available to us. Sales tax revenues for 2021 look like they will be substantially larger than once feared, and 2022 is now projected to be better than 2019. If we are fortunate, we can source the funding to address more of our community's needs, including those of the cycling community. But to suggest that cycling needs

take priority over all others (arts, housing, homeless services, public safety, infrastructure repair, etc.) is neither realistic nor equitable, and I am unable to make a blanket commitment to that.

Connectivity should be a continuing emphasis of our transportation system, and all new developments, such as CU South, Alpine-Balsam and Diagonal Plaza should be designed with this in mind. I only wish the FAA could have seen the value of permitting the proposed bike path between Gunbarrel and Boulder, which would have required passage over a small portion of its property, but I am hopeful that a reasonable alternative can be approved. With respect to the North Sky Trail, Council has approved acquisition of an easement that will allow its completion with less impact on sensitive habitat conservation areas, and this project can now move forward. However, the question asks how we would help OSMP to acquire the funds necessary to commence and complete the work. We have already taken the steps necessary to initiate completion of the project, and our City Manager is well aware of our desire for completion as is the Open Space Board of Trustees. Council does not generally intervene in specific funding decisions on the part of the City or its agencies, although that could change if there is a reluctance to complete a project that we have authorized. I have seen no indication of resistance to moving forward with the North Sky Trail.

With respect to 119 and the Boulder-Lyons bikeway, I am open to suggestions from any of the interested parties (City, County, CDOT and RTD), as well as from our Transportation Advisory Board and groups such as yourselves to create a more useable, safer passageway. But as I am not a transportation expert (and I will resist the urge to play one, even in the context of a political campaign), I will look to others to design the specifics of a safer, more connected passageway.

A couple of additional comments: one question asked whether we are prepared to take street space away from automobiles in favor of alternate modes of transportation. The only meaningful answer to that is: Maybe. Depends on the street, and on the ability for people – even people in automobiles – to successfully get where they are going. Most traffic in Boulder is still conducted by automobile. Bikers, E-bikers, scooters and buses (often substantially empty as they traverse the community) do not represent a large enough portion of our transportation network to provide a categorical answer of “yes” to that question, and anyone who makes that promise is being highly unrealistic. Everyone wants to be a visionary when it comes to transportation, but in the near term some visions are more likely to be realized than others. Where we can make that exchange we should, but it will not occur everywhere.

I have a similar response to the question concerning subsidies for e-bikes for those who are economically challenged. Surely, we all want to do this; find me the money and I am on board, provided that it is not money for other essential services. As in every conversation of this type, one must set priorities. We are currently hoping to source additional money for the arts community, for drug addiction and mental health programs for the homeless, etc. Which ones

should have a lower priority? This is simply not a question with an unambiguous answer. The entire process of establishing an annual budget is an exercise in prioritization.

Again, I am sorry that I will be unable to attend the forum, but in the event that I am returned to Council (and who knows about that?) I would be more than happy to meet with you to obtain a more detailed understanding of your concerns and issues, and perhaps to discuss mine. I am sure that I will be the primary beneficiary of that exchange, and I look forward to it, unless the electorate decides to elevate me to a higher office, that of a private citizen. Have a great forum tomorrow.

Best, Mark