

Question 1: Nebraska's population is aging, especially in our rural communities, and successfully aging in place depends on the ability to stay active and maintain personal connections. What should be the state's role, particularly regarding state highways within local boundaries, in creating and maintaining infrastructure like connected sidewalks and intersection crossings that are safe for all ages and abilities?

LD7	Tony Vargas (Incumbent): Infrastructure funding is collaborative and interconnected through all levels of government -- federal, state, and local. Every level of government should be doing more to ensure that sidewalks and intersection crossings are safe and secure for everyone in our communities.
	Jorge Sotolongo (Challenger): Interconnectivity is extremely important, not only in urban environments, but also in the suburbs. It increases quality of life for residents by allowing for alternate forms of transportation, encouraging fitness and health, and keeping residents of all ages safe. The state should work to build and maintain these pathways and intersections, as well as work with developers to incentivize transit-oriented development. Maintaining our infrastructure is also a way to provide jobs and develop skilled labor.
LD39	Lou Ann Linehan (Incumbent): I love walking. I would support sensible crossings. The costs have to be balanced with the need.
	Allison Heimes (Challenger): The state should encourage/participate in facilitating this

Question 2: Too many Nebraska children have died or been seriously injured in crashes involving people running red lights and speeding while driving. Automated enforcement measures such as red light cameras would reduce law enforcement burden and eliminate potential biases. Would you support a change in state law to allow automated enforcement in Nebraska? If so, under what conditions?

LD7	Tony Vargas (Incumbent): Though I agree that this is an important issue, I also remain hesitant to rely on video and photo technology that may cross constitutional lines and have clear and critical issues with misidentifying individuals who are non-white and non-male.
	Jorge Sotolongo (Challenger): I think there are some definite benefits of automated enforcement, so long as it is limited to actions that do not infringe on citizens' rights to privacy. Speeding is a large issue in District 7 and is a common concern raised by constituents here. Enforcement, education, and infrastructure that aims to slow down traffic and increase interconnectivity all need to be considered.
LD39	Lou Ann Linehan (Incumbent): I support stronger enforcement. I am not certain that the automatic tickets are a good idea. I would need more information before I could support
	Allison Heimes (Challenger): Yes, conditions will need to be carefully researched

Question 3: We know that Nebraskans spend more annually (26%) for transportation than the national acceptable average (15%). This percentage is even greater for low income Nebraskans. What can be done to reduce this burden for our citizens?

LD7	Tony Vargas (Incumbent): Nebraska, especially our metro areas, need better, more efficient, more affordable public transportation options, which include safe bike lanes and sidewalks. I strongly support these investments in our infrastructure, which will not only bring costs down for Nebraskans, but will lighten traffic on our roads and have positive effects for our environment
	Jorge Sotolongo (Challenger): One way would be to provide more transportation options, especially in the urban core of Omaha and other metropolitan communities. In addition, attracting employers to these areas (especially along bus routes and bike lanes) would allow for workers to reduce their commutes and, effectively, their costs of transportation.
LD39	Lou Ann Linehan (Incumbent): I supported legislation to increase public transportation in greater Omaha. There is a significant need.
	Allison Heimes (Challenger): invest in public transportation options, resist urban sprawl, build up local communities so resources can be within walking distance.

Question 4: Workforce issues in Nebraska have been described as "the most pressing economic issue in the state" and "very quiet and...happening at record speed." The same could be said for "brain drain" of our youth. Knowing that young professionals increasingly prefer walking, biking and taking transit over driving, what should the state be doing to invest in transportation options that will help stem the tide?

LD7	Tony Vargas (Incumbent): As stated above, I support investing in sustainable, efficient, and more affordable transportation options and will continue to look to other ways to ensure our city and state is a better place for young professionals, which includes looking at alternative transportation options
	Jorge Sotolongo (Challenger): Transit-oriented development should be encouraged and incentivized, as well as investing in our infrastructure. Zoning laws and affordable housing will also play a role and will require revision and adaptation to a multi-modal way of life.
LD39	Lou Ann Linehan (Incumbent): The state should work with local communities to access grants and private-public partnerships to address this need
	Allison Heimes (Challenger): Its a money and efficiency issue. It will take a great deal of research to know which method of public transportation would be cost effective and provide the necessary public transport for workers. We could create a grant program for bike lanes and sidewalks for smaller towns and communities as well.

Question 5: COVID-19 has severely impacted traditional tourism across the country, including in Nebraska; however, bicycling and bicycle tourism has been skyrocketing at the same time. Would you support funding for trails (i.e. Cowboy Trail, MoPac Trail), which could increase bicycle tourism and bring thousands of dollars of economic development to the small Nebraska towns along the routes? Why or why not?

LD7 **Tony Vargas (Incumbent):** As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I understand the benefits of making these types of investments and generally support them. Eight months ago, when we were looking at a projected revenue surplus, I would have said yes, absolutely. However, we are living through unprecedented economic circumstances that have had a huge impact on our state's revenue, so my priority will always be investing in and restoring services to the most vulnerable in our communities. Should we have a budget surplus in future years, I am open to learning about and supporting proposals that would increase bike tourism.

Jorge Sotolongo (Challenger): Absolutely. Cycling is one of my personal passions and is a great activity to promote, since it not only increases transportation but also keeps residents healthy. Cycling provides a great tourism opportunity in Nebraska, and we have seen it work in Iowa.

LD39 **Lou Ann Linehan (Incumbent):** I have thought for sometime that cycling could boost tourism in NE. HWY 2 from Grand Island to Fort Robinson is ideal for cycling plus all the river rafting options along that route. Closer to home HWY 31 along the Platte River in Sarpy County is another ideal location. I would like to work with Nebraska Game and Parks to research the possibilities since they have properties in close proximity to these routes. But to be truly successful, private investment in restaurants and bars will be needed. The most successful ventures include a profit motive.

Allison Heimes (Challenger): yes. if you are going to get a return on investment, why wouldn't you?