

Debate: Melina Kennedy on mass transit

The Star: Is a better mass transit system crucial to the city's future?

Melina Kennedy: I believe it is. I don't think any one can argue that mass transit at the level we have it now is not sufficient for our city. It is a jobs issue, quality of life issue. It is a huge **investment**, a huge undertaking. So my opinion is it is important and it is important for an elected official to recognize the importance of the issue. We need a really solid plan that is regional, that has buy in from the region and also is specific, so when people are asked to get behind it people know exactly what it would look like. It is my understanding that the Indy Connect initiative, which has been launched in the last few years, is undergoing some major changes that I am not privy to. But I would like to understand them and I think the general process that has started makes sense, but I would be curious to what the changes are.

Would you support or oppose a referendum that would raise taxes in order to expand the city's transit system?

It all depends on what the plan looks like, and again I believe in transit and I am committed to putting transit on the agenda

because it is that important, but I want to see a plan that is specific that makes sense. It is my understanding that there are some major changes in the works with the Indy Connect plan so that is something I would like to learn more about. Until I have seen the plan and understand it would be hard say whether or not I would support it, but I am definitely interested in learning more and I think it is a big issue for our city.

Without a tax increase is a serious upgrade of the current system possible?

It is hard to say. I do believe we should be maximizing all our resources. I was concerned and disappointed to see the city lost a nearly \$3 million federal grant because they didn't spend it on time. There have been efforts currently by the mayor that have taken away resources from IndyGo. I certainly don't want to see us go backward, but it seems to me a transformative change in our transit system is going to require additional resources and where they come is yet to be determined.

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What changes in transit would we see over the next four years if you are elected?

The continuation of trying to garner support regionally for a transit system that would be much more regional and makes the city and the region more accessible to everyone. I want to continue to be a part of that and certainly if I am elected as mayor I would play a significant role. I also want us to take advantage of all the various **technologies** that are available. There is light rail and other technologies that are being considered that I think are successful in other cities and other countries as well.

What grade would you give city's current bus system?

My grade would be based on the accessibility not on the hard-working people. So I want to be clear it is not anything about people who are working hard every day to provide transit, but I would give us a C because we are at best average in terms of the availability of people who actually get back and forth from **businesses** and work and other places using our current transit system.

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