

Access4Bikes Votes - Candidate Questionnaire

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Introduction and Understanding:

- How familiar are you with Access4Bikes' mission and initiatives to maintain and expand mountain bike trail access in Marin County?

As someone who was born and raised in Marin, I consider it a point of pride that we are the birthplace of mountain biking; it is an integral part of the fabric of our county.

I wholeheartedly support the mission of A4B to get fair and reasonable access to our public trails, and to preserve the experience of trail riding for future generations. Furthermore, I feel that mountain biker advocate organizations, such as A4B, should be at the table for decisions being made about Marin open space and trail access. I am open to, and supportive of, ongoing and future trail developments with policy decisions, funding, and personal engagement in bike advocacy-related activities.

I recently met with A4B Foundation Board Executive Director, Vernon Huffman, and Head of Advocacy, Bill Keene, to understand their current priorities and concerns. I have spoken with many of my friends, family members, and neighbors who are avid mountain bikers and regularly use our trails on a daily basis to get their insight on A4B's mission and their perspectives on the political landscape of mountain bike trail access in Marin. I also watched the inspirational "Soil Searching" video about Vernon which highlighted his impactful work in our community and within A4B. Finally, I have thoroughly reviewed the A4B's highly informative website which details the historical background of the organization and current initiatives.

- What are your general thoughts on outdoor recreational activities like mountain biking? Do you support mountain biking as a way to promote community engagement and a healthy lifestyle?

I am a huge proponent of mountain biking and other outdoor recreational activities like hiking and trail running. I believe there is no better way of experiencing the beauty of Marin while promoting a healthy lifestyle. As such, it is important that these activities should be widely accessible and inclusive to everyone in our community. As an added benefit, outdoor recreational participants tend to become invested in protecting the natural areas they experience.

Community engagement is one of my top campaign priorities, and I understand the importance of mountain biking to our community. Mountain bikers are the second largest users of Marin's public land according to surveys done by the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) and the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD). This community is enhanced by organizations like A4B which promote volunteer trail work, group rides, skills clinics, and public social events.

Lastly, I know that mountain biking is an important way to improve one's physical and mental health and overall sense of well-being. This [article](#) says it well: "the combination of physical activity, natural surroundings, and social interaction can provide numerous benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety, improved cognitive function, increased self-confidence, and better sleep quality."

Support for Inclusive Access:

- Access4Bikes is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, aiming to make trails accessible to all. How do you plan to ensure that your policies and decisions align with this commitment?

I applaud A4B's priority to make A4B an inclusive, welcoming, and safe community for all riders. Throughout my personal and professional life, my track record shows a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. I am equity-driven, inclusive, and a proud fluent Spanish speaker; I will support initiatives in which all can participate and enjoy the amazing trails across Marin.

My [Campaign Committee and Endorsement List of 500+ community members](#) represents a diverse range of community perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and generations. I am proud to count Redwood senior Matthew Marotto, a nationally ranked mountain biker and Member of MCBC's Off-Road Committee, as part of my Campaign Committee.

Two other members of my Campaign Committee are Paul Austin, Founder and CEO of Play Marin in Marin City and Omar Carrera, CEO of the Canal Alliance. Here is what they have to say about me in their support for my candidacy for Marin Supervisor:

"Heather's unwavering dedication to equity and diversity shines through her remarkable track record. Like Play Marin, she envisions an inclusive and unified Marin, where everyone feels welcomed and valued in our schools and communities." Paul Austin

"Heather is a forward-thinking leader who acknowledges the vital role of the Latino community in Marin County. She comprehends the importance of collaboration and partnerships in developing innovative strategies to address the pressing issues that affect all Marin residents." Omar Carrera

The beauty of mountain biking is that it allows anyone in our county who can gain access to a bike to immediately experience a healthy lifestyle, the protected land of Marin, and a vibrant community.

- Are you open to supporting initiatives that promote inclusivity and diverse representation in outdoor recreational activities, including mountain biking

I am fully committed to supporting initiatives that promote equity, inclusivity, and diverse representation in all projects and activities, including outdoor recreational ones such as mountain biking. I particularly support A4B's women's initiative to encourage more women on singletrack in Marin and the intentional effort to have three women represented on the Board of Directors.

Collaboration with Stakeholders:

- Access4Bikes emphasizes collaboration with different trail user groups to share the trails. How would you facilitate constructive dialogue and cooperation among various stakeholders to achieve this goal? As an elected official, would you work with us to bring trail user interests that are in conflict together to find ways to equitably share the trails amongst all users?

Historically, different trail user groups have sometimes been at odds with one another in how to share our Marin trails. The recent decision by the Marin Board of Supervisors to approve a project in the Cascade Canyon Open Space Preserve highlights this tension that can occur, particularly between mountain bikers and hikers. One aspect I appreciate about this project is the partnership between the Marin County Bicycle Coalition and Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed to jointly present the proposal to the Marin County Open Space District in 2016.

Like A4B, I believe that collaboration among different trail user groups is essential in finding ways to equitably share the trails. I have a strong track record of consensus building, engagement, and responsive communication. As President of the Kentfield School Board during the pandemic, I led our schools and greater community of Greenbrae and Kentfield during one of the most challenging times in recent history. I led

and facilitated constructive dialogue and cooperation among parents, teachers, and administrators - and in so doing, Kentfield School District became a model for how schools could re-open during the pandemic.

If elected Marin County Supervisor, I would ensure we (a) regularly engage with all our different trail user groups so that each group feels heard during the decision-making process and (b) work collaboratively and transparently to find solutions that meet the needs of all stakeholders with a focus on equitable trail access guiding these discussions.

- Are you willing to actively participate in community events, such as trail work days and group rides, to better understand the needs of mountain bikers and ensure their interests are considered?

Yes, I would warmly welcome the opportunity to actively participate in community events, such as Women's Group Rides, Marinduro, Ales & Trails, Biketoberfest, and Trail Work Days.

Sustainability and Trail Maintenance:

- Maintaining and expanding mountain bike trail access is a key focus of our organization. How do you propose to allocate resources and work with volunteers to ensure the sustainability and proper upkeep of our public trail system?

Our collective goal in Marin should be to build and maintain a sustainable system of trails, both now and for generations to come. To achieve this goal, we need to allocate resources in a way that responsibly provides the greatest access to trails.

We also have an incredible resource in our selfless community volunteers who spend countless hours in trail building and maintenance throughout Marin. We need to continue to grow this volunteer base and support them with resources to ensure our trails remain a source of pride for Marin.

- What strategies do you have in mind to balance the preservation of natural habitats with the increased need and usage of trails for recreational purposes?

The simple, yet nuanced answer is that it must be a balancing act with creativity, collaboration, and compromise among all stakeholders. There are two interesting recent models for this:

The Cascade Canyon Open Space Preserve project cited above is one example of a creative collaboration between two entities (MCBC and Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed) that illustrates the balance between mountain bike advocates and an organization focused on the preservation of natural habitats.

The MMWD Recreational Management Planning currently underway is another example of how collaboration can successfully occur among various stakeholders that take into account balancing the preservation of natural habitats with the increased demand of trails for recreational purposes.

Public Engagement and Education:

- Access4Bikes encourages responsible trail usage. How would you support educational initiatives that promote trail etiquette and safe riding practices to reduce conflicts and ensure public safety?

I would fully support educational initiatives that promote trail etiquette and safe riding practices to reduce conflicts and ensure public safety. For the past 13 years, I have been actively involved in the Kentfield School District's Safe Routes to School Program, mostly serving as Head of the Program. I understand how important it is to promote education and public safety within a community, and in particular, how to effectively use communication tools and organize community members, county leaders,

law enforcement, school administrators, and students around a common goal to safely ride and walk to school.

As a result of our work, we saw the percentage of students biking and walking to school grow dramatically during my leadership, while maintaining a high level of safety for our children.

- Do you have any ideas for innovative ways to engage the community in discussions about trail access, while also addressing concerns from various user groups?

In my role as Head of the Kentfield School District's Safe Routes to School program, I launched an innovative neighborhood organizational structure with volunteer neighborhood captains that received statewide recognition. I think that a similar structure could potentially be focused on certain trails / regional areas throughout Marin with volunteer "trail captains" who could serve as ambassadors of public safety, education, and helpful resources.

I also serve on the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) for the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), and I think that this entity could be instrumental in developing new ways to engage our broader community in discussions about trail access from groups you may not be currently reaching.

Legislation and Advocacy:

- Are you willing to advocate for the development and revision of local ordinances that support responsible mountain biking while ensuring the protection of natural resources?

Yes, I am willing to advocate for the development and reassessment of local ordinances that support responsible mountain biking while ensuring the protection of natural resources.

- How would you collaborate with Access4Bikes and similar organizations to lobby for state and federal funding to support trail development and maintenance?

I am open to collaborating with A4B and similar organizations to lobby for state and federal funding to support trail development and maintenance.

Personal Connection to Mountain Biking:

- Do you have any personal experience with mountain biking or outdoor recreational activities that influence your perspective on trail access and conservation?

As a fourth-generation Marin native, I have deeply cherished our beautiful Marin trails since I was a kid experiencing our vast natural environment with my family. I remember buying my first Marin mountain bike (the Bolinas Ridge) in 1986 from Mike's Bikes in San Rafael.

I have always enjoyed biking throughout any community where I have lived and feel like it is the best way to experience traveling through a new city. Most recently, as mentioned above, I have been an effective public safety advocate in my community for biking and walking to school.

On most days, you will most likely find me running or hiking on Marin trails with my dog or family.

- How would your personal experience contribute to your ability to support and advance the goals of Access4Bikes?

My personal experience shows that I am a community bike advocate and passionate about inclusive access to our incredible Marin trails. I believe this combination would make me extremely effective in supporting and advancing the goals of A4B.

Closing Remarks:

- Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding your commitment

to promoting inclusive access to trails and supporting the mission of
Access4Bikes?

A final thought. . .

What MMWD Directors, Ranjiv Khush and Matthew Samson wrote in their June, 2023 IJ Marin Voice really resonated with me: “The lines between stakeholder groups, however, are increasingly blurry: Many conservationists enjoy cycling; many mountain bikers care deeply about the health of our watershed.”

I was reminded of their editorial while watching the “Soil Searching” feature on Vernon Huffman this week. Vernon made the poignant observation that “we have a responsibility to be good caretakers of our opportunities. The mountain bike community needs to step up and be good caretakers of our land and water. . . we need to seek legitimacy because we are the new conservationists.”

I wholeheartedly agree and support the mission of A4B. In a landscape where the lines among stakeholder groups are becoming increasingly blurry, I look forward to more opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and compromise in decision-making with Marin trails and open space.