



“When we are talking to people about what they want to see us do to make Charlottesville a better community, this issue comes up frequently,” said Norris who is running for a second term on council. “People want to be able to get around Charlottesville without necessarily having to resort to an automobile.”

Norris said that many of the proposals he and Szakos were supporting came originally from local citizens and area non-profits working to make Charlottesville a more bike and pedestrian friendly city. “But It’s not enough to have ideas on the table or in reports, we really need leaders who are going take these kinds of ideas and work to put them into action,” said Norris.

Download the bike & pedestrian safety proposals

Szakos said she wanted to look at community mobility in a comprehensive way, as a health issue, as an environmental issue, and as a quality of life issue. “People are very concerned about the lack of safe ways, for children especially, to get to school, to get around the neighborhood without being hit by cars,” said Szakos. “A lot of what we are doing has to do with safety for kids, but also for all residents of the city who want to stay out of their cars.”

Szakos said many of the simple fixes, like painting bike lines, improving signage, and passing an ordinance to require bike helmets for children age fourteen and under, could be done cheaply and immediately.

“These are things that don’t need a lot of money, don’t need a whole lot of political will, these are things that we could do this week if we wanted to,” said Szakos. Asked which of the simple fixes Mayor Norris might get City Council to address immediately, Norris said it was important to get his running mate elected first.

“Well of course I am one of five city councilors,” responded Norris. “What this really demands, as [Szakos] said, is the political will to implement these kinds of proposals. So I think that’s why it is vital to get [Szakos] elected on November 3rd and then we can move forward on implementing some of these proposals.”

Szakos also described the goal of implementing a “complete streets” policy to require “all construction and major street redesign projects” to accommodate bikes, pedestrians, and cars. She said the city should improve funding of sidewalk repair and maintenance too, but that she was unsure of the total costs of all the proposals they were advocating.

On pedestrian safety, Norris and Szakos called for city government to fine any of its employees using city vehicles who fail to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Failure to yield to pedestrians is already a violation of state law.

Norris said there needed to be a “paradigm shift” from investing in roads to investing in bike and pedestrian initiatives. Longer term proposals the candidates recommended include building new off-road multi-purpose trails and the completion of the Rivanna Trail system encircling the city.

Asked about the impact of their proposals on downtown parking and businesses, Szakos emphasized the goal was to take cars off the road. “Ultimately, one of our aims is to reduce traffic, to reduce parking, to reduce the need for new roads,” said Szakos. “If we improve the ability of people to get downtown, to make it a more pleasant journey for both the people in their cars and the people on their bikes and on foot, that’s a plus for everybody.”

Norris added that downtown businesses are already “looking for creative ways to reduce their need to provide parking to their employees.”

“We have more and more enlightened businesses in this community that are starting to install bike racks, that are starting to provide showers for employees, because it’s very, very expensive for them to subsidize the cost of vehicular parking for their employees,” said Norris. “This ethic is already settling in and they need the city to be a more aggressive partner in that.”



Norris and Szakos brought with them a copy of the 2003 Charlottesville Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Master Plan. “This is an amazing document,” said Szakos. “We obviously had a consultant hired who did beautiful work, showing us how we could have cross town bike trails, how we could have commuter routes for bikes and pedestrians to get to work in Charlottesville. It’s all in here, yet we haven’t done it.

“If [Szakos] gets elected...I can guarantee you that she and I will both be pushing to see more funding in the budget for these kinds of improvements,” said Norris.

The only candidates nominated by a political party, Norris and Szakos are facing three independent challengers in the November election: Bob Fenwick; Paul Long; and write-in candidate Andrew Williams. In July, Fenwick also held a press conference on key campaign issues and called for greater efforts to repair city infrastructure, especially sidewalks.