

Brandy Jenkins

Introduction

- ❖ Please briefly describe yourself and why you are running for Knox County Board of Education.
 - *I'm running because I'm a lifelong Knox County resident, mom of two daughters in South Knox County Schools, and I believe our schools work best when decisions are focused on students and educators, not political agendas or national politics. As a parent, volunteer, and longtime member of the South Knox community, I've seen firsthand how important strong public schools are for families across District 9.*
 - *My top priority is supporting and retaining great teachers. We cannot have strong schools without strong educators, and that means making sure teachers have the support, resources, and working conditions they need to stay in the profession. I also want to strengthen early literacy and student support so children build a strong foundation for learning from the start. Too often students don't receive extra help until they've already struggled with high-stakes testing, and we should be focusing on giving them the tools to succeed beginning in the early grades. Finally, I believe we must continue investing in our public schools so they have the resources needed to support both teachers and students. Improving class sizes, expanding early literacy support, and strengthening our schools all require a commitment to funding public education.*

Use of Active Transportation

- ❖ How often do you walk for transportation?
 - *Somewhat infrequently*
- ❖ How often do you walk for recreation?
 - *Very frequently*
- ❖ How often do you ride a bicycle for transportation?
 - *Very infrequently*
- ❖ How often do you ride a bicycle for recreation?
 - *Very infrequently*
- ❖ How often do you take public transportation?
 - *Very infrequently*

Active Transportation Infrastructure

- ❖ Please indicate your support for the following:
 - Sidewalks

- *Strongly favor*
- Please explain the reasoning behind your response.
 - *I strongly support sidewalks because they directly impact the safety and daily lives of our families and students. In many parts of Knox County, children are expected to walk along roads without safe pedestrian access, which is a serious concern. Sidewalks create safer routes to school, encourage outdoor activity, and help build stronger, more connected communities. This is about making sure every child and family has safe, accessible ways to get where they need to go.*
- Unprotected bike lanes (bike lanes without any physical barriers providing separation from the lane of vehicular traffic)
 - *Neutral*
- Please explain the reasoning behind your response.
 - *I selected neutral because I want to better understand what is preferred by the people who use bike lanes most—cyclists themselves. Safety should be the priority, and while unprotected bike lanes can increase access, I also recognize that they may not always provide the level of comfort or protection some riders need, especially on busy roads.*
 - *From a driver's perspective, I can see the value in clearly separated spaces for bikes and vehicles to reduce confusion and improve safety for everyone. However, I believe it's important to listen to cyclists, transportation experts, and the community to determine what types of bike infrastructure are most effective and appropriate for different areas.*
 - *Ultimately, I support thoughtful, data-driven approaches that prioritize safety, accessibility, and the needs of all road users.*
- Protected bike lanes (bike lanes with physical barriers providing separation from the lane of vehicular traffic)
 - *Neutral*
- Please explain the reasoning behind your response.
 - *I selected neutral because I want to better understand what is preferred by the people who use bike lanes most—cyclists themselves. Safety should be the priority, and while unprotected bike lanes can increase access, I also recognize that they may not always provide the level of comfort or protection some riders need, especially on busy roads.*
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- *Ultimately, I support thoughtful, data-driven approaches that prioritize safety, accessibility, and the needs of all road users.*
- Greenways
 - *Strongly favor*
- Please explain the reasoning behind your response.
 - *I strongly support greenways because they provide safe, accessible spaces for people of all ages to walk, bike, and enjoy the outdoors. Greenways connect neighborhoods, parks, and schools in a way that promotes both physical activity and community engagement, without the safety concerns that come with sharing busy roads.*
 - *They also play an important role in improving quality of life by offering families and students a place to be active, reduce stress, and spend time outside. For students in particular, greenways can even create safer routes to school and opportunities for outdoor learning.*
 - *From an environmental standpoint, greenways help preserve natural spaces, protect local ecosystems, and support cleaner air and water. Investing in greenways is not just about recreation—it's about building healthier communities, safer connections, and a more sustainable future for Knox County.*
- Traffic calming (improvements in non-motorist safety, mobility, and comfort typically achieved by reducing vehicle speeds or volumes on a single street or a street network)
 - *Strongly favor*
- Please explain the reasoning behind your response.
 - *I support traffic calming because it is a practical way to improve safety for everyone in our community, especially students and families. Measures like speed bumps, narrower lanes, better signage, and crosswalk enhancements help slow down traffic and reduce the risk of accidents in neighborhoods and around schools.*
 - *For many families, especially those who walk or bike, fast-moving traffic can be a major safety concern. Traffic calming creates safer, more predictable environments that allow students to get to school more safely and encourages more people to be active in their communities.*

- *These improvements also strengthen neighborhoods by making streets feel more livable and connected, rather than just pass-through routes for cars. Thoughtful traffic calming is an important investment in public safety, community well-being, and quality of life.*
- ❖ Please describe your vision for active transportation infrastructure around schools in Knox County, and how you would use your position as a member of the Knox County Board of Education to achieve that vision.
 - *My vision for active transportation around schools in Knox County is to create safe, connected, and accessible pathways so that every student and family has the option to walk or bike to school if they choose. This means prioritizing sidewalks, greenways, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures around school zones to ensure students can travel safely without relying solely on car transportation.*
 - *Right now, many areas lack basic infrastructure, which creates safety concerns for families, especially along busy roads. By improving connectivity between neighborhoods and schools, we can reduce traffic congestion during drop-off and pick-up times, promote healthier lifestyles, and strengthen community connections.*
 - *As a member of the Knox County Board of Education, I would work collaboratively with county and city leaders, transportation planners, and community stakeholders to advocate for these improvements. While the school board does not directly control road infrastructure, it plays an important role in identifying needs, prioritizing school safety, and partnering with local governments to support funding opportunities and long-term planning.*
 - *I would also support data-driven decisions, ensuring we focus on the areas with the greatest safety concerns, and engage families and students in the conversation so their experiences help guide solutions. My goal is to make getting to school safer, more accessible, and more sustainable for every student in Knox County.*

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program aimed at making walking and biking to school safer for students. Most often this is in the form of a Walking School Bus (WSB), where school staff and other adult volunteers accompany children walking to or from school, resulting in healthier students and a safer environment. Walking School Bus programming helps reduce traffic and air pollution surrounding schools due to a decrease in the amount of cars idling, increases regular physical activity for students, leads to better academic performance, and can reduce student absences and tardiness.

A Walking School Bus is beneficial to everyone in the school environment, but especially serves students and families living in the Parental Responsibility Zone (PRZ).

- ❖ Please rank your priorities for active transportation around Knox County Schools.
 - Complete sidewalk networks
 - *High priority*
 - Complete bike facilities networks
 - *Medium priority*
 - Safe vehicular traffic speeds on roadways
 - *Essential*
 - Programming to support walking/biking to school
 - *High priority*
- ❖ Please indicate your support for Safe Routes to School and Walking School Bus programming.
 - *Somewhat favor*
- ❖ What are your biggest concerns regarding student safety when walking and/or biking to school?
 - *My biggest concerns regarding student safety when walking or biking to school are the lack of adequate infrastructure and the risks created by high-traffic areas. In many parts of Knox County, students do not have access to continuous sidewalks, safe crossings, or clearly designated spaces for biking, which forces them to travel too close to moving vehicles.*
 - *Speeding in school zones and along common routes to school is another major concern. Without proper traffic calming measures, crosswalk visibility, and enforcement, even short distances can become unsafe for students.*
 - *I am also concerned about connectivity. Even when sidewalks or paths exist, they are often incomplete or disconnected, making it difficult for students to safely travel from their neighborhoods to school without encountering gaps in protection.*
 - *Additionally, bus stop locations can present safety challenges. Some stops are placed along busy roads without safe waiting areas, sidewalks, or nearby crossings, which can put students at risk while they wait for or get on and off the bus.*
 - *These challenges highlight the need for a coordinated approach that prioritizes safe infrastructure, better planning, and community awareness to ensure that all students can get to school safely, whether they walk, bike, or use the bus.*

Miscellaneous

- ❖ Please share your thoughts on Parental Responsibility Zones (PRZs) and their impact on transportation opportunities for Knox County Schools students and families.
 - *I have concerns about Parental Responsibility Zones and the impact they have on transportation opportunities for students and families. While I understand they are intended to manage transportation costs and efficiency, the reality is that many areas within these zones are not truly safe or accessible for students to walk or bike to school.*
 - *In many parts of Knox County, there are gaps in sidewalks, limited safe crossings, and high-traffic roads, which can make getting to school unsafe for students who live within a PRZ. This places a significant burden on families, especially those who may not have flexible work schedules, reliable transportation, or the ability to consistently drive their children to school.*
 - *PRZs can also create inequities, as not all families have the same resources or support systems. Without safe infrastructure and reliable alternatives, these policies can limit access to education rather than support it.*
 - *I believe any transportation policy should prioritize student safety and equity. If PRZs are used, they must be paired with real investments in sidewalks, traffic calming, safe crossings, and community planning to ensure that all students have a safe and dependable way to get to school.*
- ❖ Please share your thoughts on how walking and biking contribute to student physical and mental health and well-being.
 - *Walking and biking to school provide significant benefits for students' physical and mental health. Physically, these activities help students build cardiovascular fitness, strength, and endurance, while also encouraging lifelong healthy habits. Regular movement also supports weight management and overall wellness.*
 - *Mentally, walking or biking can improve focus, reduce stress, and boost mood. Starting the day with active transportation can help students arrive at school alert, energized, and ready to learn. It also encourages independence, responsibility, and confidence, as students navigate their routes safely and make decisions along the way.*
 - *Beyond individual health, walking and biking foster social connections, as students often travel with friends or neighbors, strengthening a sense of community. By supporting safe and accessible walking and biking options, we not only improve student well-being but also build a culture of health, sustainability, and active engagement in our neighborhoods.*
- ❖ In respect to active transportation around Knox County Schools, what do you think the Board of Education has done well?

- *The Knox County Board of Education has taken important steps to support active transportation by collaborating with city and county agencies to improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and school zone signage. Efforts to plan safe routes to school, implement crossing guards, and partner on programs like Bike to School Day show a commitment to encouraging walking and biking. These initiatives demonstrate that the Board recognizes the value of safe, active transportation in promoting student health, independence, and community engagement.*
- *While there is still work to do, these actions provide a strong foundation to build on as we continue expanding safe, accessible options for students across the county.*
- ❖ *In respect to active transportation around Knox County Schools, what do you think the Board of Education could do better?*
 - *While the Board of Education has made progress, there are several areas where improvements could enhance active transportation for students. Sidewalk gaps, unsafe intersections, and limited protected bike lanes make walking and biking challenging in many neighborhoods. Bus stop locations can also pose safety risks, and not all students have equal access to safe routes.*
 - *The Board could do better by prioritizing funding for continuous sidewalks, implementing more traffic calming measures near schools, expanding protected bike lanes, and ensuring safe, well-lit crossings. Partnering more closely with city planners, law enforcement, and community groups to create Safe Routes to School plans for every neighborhood would help ensure that all students can walk or bike safely and confidently.*
- ❖ *Is there anything else you would like to share related to active transportation, safety, and/or infrastructure?*
 - *Active transportation is about more than getting students from point A to point B—it's an investment in their health, independence, and connection to their community. I believe every student should have safe, accessible options for walking and biking, regardless of where they live. By improving sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and traffic calming measures, and by coordinating with city planning and law enforcement, we can make these options safe and appealing. Additionally, involving families and students in planning ensures that solutions meet real-world needs. Strong active transportation infrastructure not only promotes safety, physical activity, and mental well-being, but also fosters environmentally responsible habits that can last a lifetime.*