

MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL APPOINTMENT CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Name: Tim Sexton

Position Title: Public Works Director

Department: Department of Public Works

Responses Due to City Clerk: End of Day June 17, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS

The following questionnaire is intended to gather candidate responses for City Council consideration during the appointment process. There are two sections, the first contains questions posed to all appointed candidates, the second are questions more specific to the respective department's scope of work. Section One is broken into 4 categories, each with three questions. Section Two contains 8 department specific questions. Please ensure you respond to each question asked and aim for thorough but concise responses of roughly 1-3 paragraphs per question and the response field will adjust as you type.

Once completed, responses should be submitted to the City Clerk by the return date noted above. Should a question not directly apply to your background, briefly explain why and describe the most relevant analogous experience.

QUESTIONS FOR ALL APPOINTED CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS

1) Vision, Challenges, & Opportunities

- a) Please share what attracted you to this role with the City of Minneapolis?
- b) What do you see as the top challenges and opportunities facing this department?
- c) What are your top three priorities for the department to pursue this term? How have these priorities evolved throughout your previous appointments to this role?

Response

Serving as Director of Public Works is a rare opportunity to work alongside a talented team in the city where I live, where my kids go to school, and where I care deeply about the long-term prosperity of residents and businesses. As someone who has worked on climate and equity issues in transportation for the past twenty years—locally, nationally, and internationally - this is a unique chance to bring a focus on climate, equity, and safety to transportation AND public infrastructure and operations beyond only transportation.

Like any large department (1,300 people, \$700M+ budget), there are many challenges, but several high-level issues include funding, changing public expectations, and aging infrastructure.

My top priorities include: 1) delivering excellent core city services, 2) further incorporating climate, equity, and safety into all we do, and 3) ensuring we have an engaged workforce that can go home safely at the end of each day. Since my initial appointment 2 years ago, my top-line priorities have largely stayed the same, but my understanding of how we achieve them has refined. For example, working with our project teams on construction projects has helped me understand the importance of investing in tools and best practices to communicate with residents and businesses during construction.

2) Leadership Style & Management Practices

- a) Describe your leadership style and management philosophy? How do you recognize when staff are engaged and effectively supported?
- b) How do you incorporate continuous improvement into your own management practices, accountability standards, and oversight of senior and mid-level leadership within the department?
- c) As a department leader, how do you promote a workplace culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Response

My leadership style is built on mutual respect and appreciation for the vast expertise and life experiences across the department. One way I try to demonstrate that respect is by supporting decisions being made at the appropriate level. Public Works is the largest city department, with divisions larger than most other city departments, which means that no single person has all the answers, and our success depends on working collaboratively as a team. I encourage people to ask questions, propose new ideas, and respectfully challenge me and other leaders. I appreciate hearing from all team members about what they think is going well and what isn't, and I routinely ask these questions directly to staff in the office and in the field.

Continuous improvement is important to evaluate department investment outcomes and identify ways for me and other Public Works leaders to better support our teams. Over the past two years, we've reduced and refined what we measure through Outcomes Minneapolis to better use data to drive progress and initiate discussions about department direction. We've also put a new emphasis on My Minneapolis reporting by visiting worksites to encourage people to fill out the employee survey, and we held our first Public Works Town Hall to share the survey results and get feedback from the full department. One survey highlight was positive results around our emphasis on teamwork and respect among employees and fostering a collaborative work environment.

To build trust, working relationships, and accountability, I meet with my direct reports weekly to review immediate actions; host meetings one to two times per week with all Division Directors; and attend monthly budget meetings with each Division Director, Finance staff, and our Budget Manager. I also meet quarterly with Division Directors for general check-ins where they set the agenda.

Creating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion is a priority. As a department, we heavily invest in training and professional development, which includes hosting annual management forums (Grade 8 and above) and Safety Days where we bring all staff together to review safety training and build teams across divisions. I attend these events and others like training graduations at Pine Technical &

Community College, new employee orientation, Public Works Week events, Snowplow Operator Trainings, intern and equity team welcome sessions, and others. Our Field Support Manager and her team have done award-winning work recruiting an increasingly diverse workforce, and we meet monthly to learn, share, and support their efforts. One effort I'm especially proud of is *Faces of Public Works*, where we feature a professional headshot and interview with frontline staff and supervisors each month on our website.

3) Organizational Structure, Staffing, & Budget

- a) How do you evaluate the department's existing organizational structure, staffing, and budget priorities? When areas for change or improvement are identified, how do you implement those changes?
- b) What is the Director's role in management of a department's operational budget? Describe your own approach to budget oversight and how you have adapted to any previous budget challenges.
- c) As a department leader, how do you balance budgetary demands between your non-personnel and personnel budget?

Response

Within Public Works, we meet monthly with each division to review and manage all our budgets (\$700M+). We have similar regular meetings about all council budget amendments and earmarks to ensure we're on track or to identify challenges to implementation.

Each year, we begin budget discussions in the spring for the following year. These include policy priorities, budget needs, and staffing considerations to prepare for official budget discussions in the summer and fall.

In fall 2025, we brought together over 60 leaders from across Public Works for a series of workshops to develop a department strategic framework. The intent was to help prioritize actions for the next 1 to 3 years from the much longer list of actions in plans like the TAP and REF-T. This work will be used to evaluate our organizational structure, staffing, and budget priorities in the future. Implementation was delayed by Operation Metro Surge and the Public Works Director confirmation process.

Ultimately, I am responsible for the Public Works department budget. I have monthly meetings with our Public Works Budget Manager and each Division Director (9 total) to review and monitor all Public Works personnel and non-personnel budgets for the current year and project 5 years out to understand how choices today impact future budgets. This is especially relevant for our special revenue funds, internal service funds, and utility programs.

If budget changes impact our ability to deliver core services, those impacts are discussed during monthly meetings or separately depending on the size of the amendment or impacts. The goal is to identify issues early and do our best to avoid overages.

Separately, our teams have done a great job identifying additional external revenue from federal, state, and regional governments, as well as philanthropy.

4) Collaboration with City Council & City Government

- a) How does this appointed position fit within the City's government structure, including your relationships with the City Council, Mayor, OPS, OCS, and other City departments? Where does direction come from, where do you bring concerns?
- b) What factors do you believe are critical to building and maintaining a productive working relationship with the City Council? Describe your approach and experience communicating on significant issues, responding to Council concerns, and balancing policy direction with your professional judgment on operations.
- c) How can the City Council better support this role and department?

Response

I have only worked under the current government structure. The Director of Public Works reports directly to the City Operations Officer. I have individual weekly meetings with the COO and the Mayor's policy team to share information, seek advice, and elevate issues, as needed. I also collaborate regularly with several other departments, including Regulatory Services, CPED, and Health in my role as executive sponsor of the Mayor's Climate Subcabinet.

Public Works engages directly with Council Members on project-specific issues, legislative directives, and relevant policy work, if and when requested by the Council. This includes direct communications, agenda setting, Climate & Infrastructure (C&I) committee meetings, and C&I leadership meetings with the Chair and Vice Chair.

The most frequent coordination between the Council and Public Works is on transportation projects, when we offer briefings and get feedback on project design and engagement. We also respond to thousands of requests each year from the Council and residents, and we pride ourselves on being responsive. We created a council intake form to help manage these requests, track topics by ward, and be accountable for timely responses. There is often a balance between policy and judgment that is guided by our strategic framework, council-approved policy documents, citywide consistency and fairness, and common sense.

The past three budget cycles have included amendments that impacted Public Works staffing for core services like transportation planning, snow plowing, grass mowing, etc. The best support would be continued funding for the core city services provided by Public Works.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you believe are the biggest challenges to the city's current public works-related infrastructure?
How can Public Works work to mitigate, or resolve, these challenges?

Response

Aging Infrastructure Pavements and underground utility infrastructure continue to age faster than we can afford to repair or replace them. This is especially true for our pavements and legacy underground system of stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Infrastructure age alone does not determine condition or performance, but it increases overall system risk and vulnerability to disruption.

To mitigate system risks, we continue to increase our focus on asset management data collection and evaluation to better identify the likelihood and magnitude of risks, prioritize investments, and help us make the right fix at the right time. Prioritization includes equity factors and coordination with other public sector projects to minimize disruption to neighbors. For example, over 90% of the City's sanitary and stormwater infrastructure is at least 100 years old. Public Works recently updated the risk assessment methodology for our sanitary sewer system and is developing a long-range comprehensive asset management plan to prioritize repairs to maximize cost-effectiveness and system reliability.

Funding

Construction projects are increasingly complex and expensive, especially transportation projects. More expensive material and labor costs, additional safety and environmental features, and higher public expectations for engagement all extend project schedules and increase costs. The result is that more funding is needed to maintain current condition levels.

Public Works will continue to pursue external funding to supplement city and state funding. Since 2024, we have been awarded over \$160M in federal funding, alongside additional grants from the state and philanthropy. We are planning process improvements to streamline project delivery, enhance coordination between city departments and external partners, and expand asset management tools to build on our data-driven approach to decision-making to maximize constrained resources.

Managing Change

Minneapolis has ambitious goals for our transportation system—specifically, for three out of five trips to be taken in a mode other than driving alone. Streets are our public spaces, and people feel ownership over them, which means there is rarely universal agreement on the approach forward. We must continue working to improve how we conduct thoughtful engagement to share goals, listen to changing stakeholder needs, and balance trade-offs to deliver projects that reflect the input of those in the immediate area while meeting citywide goals for safety, equity, and climate.

- 2) How would you evaluate the City's traffic calming efforts over the last few years, and do you see these efforts expanding? What is the role of traffic calming in transportation network planning?

Response

Planning and funding for neighborhood traffic calming and Vision Zero safety improvements need to be aligned. Vision Zero safety improvements remain our highest priority because they target high-injury streets where most traffic crashes that result in death or severe injury occur. Neighborhood traffic calming responds to community concerns and supports livability for residents.

I believe there should be funding for neighborhood traffic calming, but given our funding constraints, our primary focus should be streets with a proven crash history. Data-driven programs include Vision Zero, Highway Safety Improvement Program funding, bike and pedestrian safety projects, Safe Routes to School programs, traffic safety cameras, and adding safety improvements during street reconstructions. These data-driven programs also allow us to maximize co-benefits by including environmental improvements like rain gardens, bioswales, and vegetated medians to reduce and treat stormwater runoff, improve water quality, and create more attractive and resilient streetscapes.

- 3) Can you describe how Public Works has utilized the assessment process related to road, sidewalk, and utilities projects? How do you manage the need for assessments with the demand for equitable impact(s) to property owners?

Response

City ordinances and state law enable assessments to pay for capital improvements because there is a benefit to each property. Adjacent property owners pay only a portion of the project cost. Remaining costs are generally paid by selling citywide, property-tax-supported net debt bonds. Without assessments, the City would either have to raise other revenue or be unable to fund the amount of capital improvements needed to replace deteriorating infrastructure.

The City assesses benefited properties at the Uniform Assessment Rate (UAR) for certain improvements or repairs like street reconstruction, renovation, and resurfacing projects to maintain and improve infrastructure. This rate is set annually by the City Council. To make assessments more equitable, the UAR uses the same rate for each project type regardless of where the project is located or unique circumstances that increase costs at a specific location. Depending on the type of assessment, costs are spread over 5 to 20 years, with a hardship deferment available for certain groups.

I understand assessments can come as a surprise to property owners, and the costs, even spread over 20 years, can create challenges. The Racial Equity Framework for Transportation outlines a strategy to "Acknowledge the impact of the City's assessment policies and the financial burdens related to Transportation Equity Priority Areas." We are looking at two strategies to reduce surprises and balance costs.

First, we're developing public information about the costs of property ownership to help property owners avoid surprises. Some people don't understand what gets assessed and why, along with the other costs of owning property in Minneapolis (which can vary by city) for things like sewer laterals. I

believe this should be somehow included in property transactions, similar to Truth in Housing statements.

Second, we're researching how other cities handle assessments or other fees to fund infrastructure, with the goal of further improving equity while continuing to help fund infrastructure. For example, some cities have introduced transportation fees to fund infrastructure, using regular smaller payments versus larger one-time assessments. We expect to share the results later this year.

- 4) How has the [Racial Equity Framework for Transportation](#) impacted Public Works' approach to new projects? Are there areas where we have seen successes and any issues we have noted to improve?

Response

The REF gives Public Works a new way to consider geographic-based equity measures called Transportation Equity Priority (TEP) areas in programming, engagement, and operations. TEP scores are updated annually to consider elements like race, income, commute time, and localized land temperature.

A notable impact is incorporating TEP scores into our 20-year Streets Funding Program, which informs our Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and shapes where investments happen around the city. For example, we continue to disproportionately invest in TEP 1 and 2 areas compared to the percentage of lane miles or assets citywide. Other examples include a pilot Community Engagement Consulting Pool to bring in more diverse small businesses, a Transportation Equity Dashboard to share our equity-informed approach to planning, and project managers now regularly using Community Engagement Planning Tools to determine equitable stakeholder outreach and ensure that historic inequities are directly tied to project justifications.

Several areas remain opportunities for improvement, including assessments and addressing the disproportionate number of Black, Latino, and Native American residents killed in traffic crashes on city streets.

- 5) What have been the biggest challenges to the City's ice/ snow removal efforts and has Public Works' approach to those efforts changed during your time as Director?

Response

I first want to credit our snow and ice team for all the work they do to keep corners shoveled, and our bike lanes and streets cleared in the winter. It's hard, cold, and dark work navigating narrow streets with inconsistent compliance with snow emergency parking rules while keeping a lookout for people, bikes, and other vehicles.

In the past two years as Director, I've noted three main challenges that I'm working with our team to address.

The snow budget is a challenge, including budgets for streets, bike lanes, and the sidewalk pilot. Winter has two parts in the calendar budget year (January–April and November–December), but budgets are set in December. This leaves insufficient time to adjust the adopted budget to staff up or down for the remainder of the winter and can make it hard to determine funding levels for sidewalk pilot funding for neighborhood organizations or others.

Compliance with city rules for snow emergencies remains a challenge. Over the past two years, we’ve updated the way we share information about snow emergencies, including using new tools like the parking app and RAVE.

Winter sidewalk clearing remains a challenge. Despite requirements for clearing, some property owners continue to choose not to clear sidewalks in a timely manner. In the past two years, through the Sidewalk Snow and Ice Pilot, we’ve increased our work with neighborhood organizations to match “snow angels” with neighbors needing assistance and are working to increase enforcement for those not clearing sidewalks as required. Given budget and staffing constraints, I believe these are the most cost-effective strategies for city-supported clearing (beyond the established corner clearing program).

- 6) What is the current status of the City’s [ADA Transition Plan](#) for Public Works? Is this work on schedule and how much remains to be done?

Response

The ADA Transition Plan for Public Works is an important tool that helps guide our work. We last updated the plan in 2024. At that time, we expected to complete all the required improvements to pedestrian curb ramps within 13 to 17 years at an estimated cost of \$401M, which included addressing traffic signals, sidewalks, and street crossings/pedestrian ramps. We’ve made steady progress in some of the highest areas of need identified in the plan, including:

- Upgrading 5,200 ADA ramps in the last 5 years, ramping up from 441 in 2020 to over 1,300 in 2024.
- Adding accessible pedestrian signals (APS) and accessible ramps at over 70% of intersections (very high for a city our size).

A challenge has been addressing some actions related to our sidewalk network. Currently, we do not have an inventory of all deficiencies in our network, which is needed to prioritize investment. We will submit a grant to fund this inventory via the Active Transportation Regional Solicitation later this month.

- 7) Street reconstruction often brings debate on the prioritization of drivers, transit, or cyclists. How has Public Works managed these different expectations to mitigate negative impacts, or set expectations early in the process?

Response

Climate, equity, and safety are the foundation of our work in Public Works, which includes a mode shift goal for three out of five trips to be walking, biking, or transit by 2030. Street reconstruction projects are our biggest opportunity to make progress toward that goal and make changes that support real transportation choices for all users. Curb space is a valuable public resource, and we are often faced with trade-offs around curb access for parking, deliveries, safety countermeasures, bike facilities, or mobility services. The City's Complete Streets Policy clearly identifies a modal hierarchy that prioritizes our most vulnerable users in street design.

As we engage with the community on the development of a project concept layout, we balance community input with policy goals around VMT, GHG reduction, and safety; project budgets; and strategies described in the Transportation Action Plan, ADA Transition Plan, Vision Zero Plan, and others. While early engagement is critical to street design, we never leave a project; we continue to monitor, engage with the community after a road is built, and adjust operations as needed.

Our national leadership in multimodal street design is one reason NACTO selected Minneapolis as a host city, and why other cities look to our work as a model.

- 8) In addition to what you have already shared - can you identify an area of success and an area that has been challenging for Public Works that you believe are important for the City Council to recognize?

Response

For many people, our crews are the face of the city and who they see and interact with the most. I'm really proud to support these teams as they pave streets, fix water and sewer lines, repair streetlights, fix signs, haul trash carts. Because they are often in the streets when incidences occur, they have served at ad hoc first responders quite literally saving people's lives along with more basic friendly help for residents.

While it's been said before, budgets and funding remain a substantial challenge and adjusting staffing and workloads at the end of each year is a challenge. While we have a large total number of staff, we run very lean in most areas and even small changes to staffing numbers can create immediate and visible impacts to core city services.