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# Transportation debate ramps up at first District 11 candidates forum



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City Council candidates Ori Raphael and Lee Kleinman asked voters to trust them with the keys to the city's transportation infrastructure during their first joint forum appearance Wednesday morning at the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce.

But the two candidates, who are vying to replace term-limited transportation aficionado Linda Koop in District 11, offered divergent routes to some three-dozen attendees at the League of Women Voters Q-and-A session.

Kleinman, a former Park Board member who earned Koop's endorsement, said he supports the Cotton Belt Corridor, bike trails, pedestrian access, mixed-use developments — think Mockingbird Station — and a Trinity River toll road.

Kleinman also said he would favor bringing a high-speed railway station to Dallas. State transportation officials are currently studying the feasibility of high-speed rail along the Interstate 35 corridor from Oklahoma City to San Antonio.

"Streets and highways are always important, but options are important, too," Kleinman said.

Raphael, a former staffer for Republican U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions, said he supports the Trinity River toll road, but remains "up in the air" over the Cotton Belt Corridor, which would provide a train link between Plano and Fort Worth. Alternative transit proposals are often too costly for Dallas residents and benefit too few, he said. Plus, people who take trains to downtown Dallas still might need to hop in a car to get around anyway, he said.

Alleviating traffic, fixing potholes and alleyways and diverting 18-wheelers should be the city's top priority, he said. Dallas — something Austin has done, and both the city of Houston and the state Legislature are trying to do.

"Let's go back to basics," Raphael said. "People spend their time getting around in their cars. That's the problem."

Kleinman shot back at Raphael, 29, saying "it's ironic that you're calling yourself the young candidate."

After the event, Raphael responded by telling a reporter that Kleinman, who helped develop the city's bike trails, "isn't the young guy you think he is."

**Update:** Raphael called and said he meant that Kleinman was "the same old politician who wants to spend tax dollars on his projects," not that he is an old guy.

### Other notes on the District 11 forum:

- Both men said they believe the Valley View mall redevelopment will be a boon to economic growth in their North Dallas district.
- Neither took firm positions on hydraulic fracturing in Dallas, but both said drilling probably shouldn't occur around residential areas or kids' soccer fields.
- Although the League of Women Voters sponsored the event, there were roughly as many men as women in attendance.

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