

2009 TRANSIT RIDERS UNION QUESTIONNAIRE

For County and City of Seattle candidates. Please send your answers asap to the person contacting your candidate and we will post on the group's website, transitriders.org. While we do not ask for word limits, please keep your answers to a reasonable length. There is no deadline but we ask you to respond as soon as practicable. Please answer no matter what office you are seeking, as we believe all officeholders must collaborate to create an integrated transit system that serves the riders. We are giving you this document in MS Word; please e mail a response that includes both the questions and the answers in MS Word. Thank you for your participation!

1. **Metro – general**

a. How would you improve our public transportation system, to better serve the needs of riders? As a City Councilmember, we do not manage Metro, but we do have a vital interest in the service it provides. I am looking for a regional partnership, as we forged for Transit Now, but with the goal of going to the Legislature for a funding source that is stable to augment the sales tax that we have now. Lots of other ideas to improve Metro, from going to a rational, ridership-based service expansion model to replace 40-40-20 to consolidating bus stops with three block intervals where possible to improve reliability. The Charter amendments that were passed by the voters last year gives somewhat more power to the Regional Transit Committee, but until we find a way to get past the sterile Seattle-suburban impasse over service allocations, it will be difficult to make any progress on most other issues. I also play a role as a member of the Sound Transit Board, where I will continue to work for light rail to Northgate and beyond, across Lake Washington to the East Side, and south of the airport, as well as expanded regional bus services.

b. What overall numeric or measurable metric(s) or yardstick(s) would you commit to, **now**, so voters can know your specific goals and judge your performance? This question is really appropriate for the King County Councilmembers who ultimately have control over Metro performance.

2. **Metro – revenue shortfall, governance, innovation.**

a. Do you support the proposal to cut Metro service on an across the board basis for all routes? No.

b. Should the 40-40-20 policy be changed? If yes, what policy would you support for allocation of service hours? If no, please explain. Yes. New service allocation should be based on a model that includes the potential for relieving overcrowding on current routes and increasing transit ridership, on serving urban centers and other nodes that are adding housing and jobs as part of the regional commitment to growth management, and to provide effective service for transit dependent populations, especially low income households who depend on transit for mobility.

c. Currently route changes require a council vote. Is this too rigid? Would you change it? In Seattle we have steadily moved away from these kinds of micro-management of administrative roles. A good compromise that preserves the Council's oversight would be to allow route changes administratively but require reporting to the County Council as changes are made, so that the Council could intervene if there was a route change that overlooked special circumstances.

d. What will you do to change the culture at Metro, so that it becomes a "can-do" agency? What can we learn from other cities? (Examples could be parking meters that issue bus tickets; three day "tourist" passes; off-board fare payment; bus maps at bus stops; circulator systems; more "express" express buses; stop-spacing changes; signal prioritization and system usability features.) Again, the City Council has very limited ability to actually change the Metro culture, and until the Regional Transit Committee becomes a more functional and cooperative body, it will be difficult to build the trust to allow such changes to happen. I like these suggestions, and the City can play a role in helping to make many of them happen, but it will require leadership from the County.

3. **Metro – new revenue**

Which sources of new revenue would you support or oppose for Metro, including:

a. sources that Metro itself can implement, such as ads, concessions, charging for parking at park and rides, or higher fares? All of these may be useful tools, but none of them will really tackle the financial crisis. I am particularly interested in the idea of charging for parking at park and rides, and would advocate for it as the appropriate policy to promote alternatives to the SOV, but it will be necessary to make a decision as to whether it is politically possible.

b. sources that Metro can seek by working with other entities, such as traffic or parking fine revenue, new property or sales tax, car tab fees or the like? Property taxes and car tab fees would be my choice for long-term stable sources of funds. Both of those are relatively inelastic. Car tab fees have the advantage of being directly tied to transportation and providing the appropriate cost signal – but they paradoxically mean that if real progress is made in reducing automobile dependency, then the revenues decline. Property taxes are exceptionally stable in the Washington system, but are not directly tied to transportation in the same way.

4. **City of Seattle**

a. What role should the city of Seattle play in public transit? Our key role is providing regional leadership on promoting a regional strategy that brings transit resources into harmony with land use and housing and job development under the Growth Management Act. We should continue to provide support for Metro through partnering on Rapid Ride, cooperating on transit priority signals, supporting new funding sources, continuing our policies that support transit and other alternatives and discourage SOV use, especially in the downtown, and developing additional transit options where that is appropriate.

b. Discuss the free ride zone; electric trolley buses; and trolleys like the South Lake Union Trolley. Should we keep, eliminate or expand these functions? Why or why not? The free ride zone has been an excellent way to promote the use of transit in downtown and to maintain the schedules of buses going through downtown. It is worth evaluating it to make sure it is still the optimum way to do this, especially in the light of the proposal to dramatically increase the charge to Seattle for this service, which I believe is unjustified. Electric trolley buses have advantages in air quality, noise, and fossil fuel use that make them optimum ways to provide bus service. However, they do cost more to purchase, and we should carefully evaluate their long-term cost effectiveness as hybrids become more available – and if the technology for battery based electric vehicles scales up to be usable for buses. Streetcars work very well in dense urban environments to provide service that is reliable and promotes transit-oriented development. I was initially skeptical of the South Lake Union trolley, but when the developers agreed to pay for half of the cost, that helped me to feel more confident about it. We still need to have a good cost/benefit assessment of how this streetcar line actually performs and how future lines would perform, but I think streetcars are likely to turn out to be useful and cost-effective if we can identify and fund a network that is connected and serves the appropriate areas. I am particularly interested in testing extending the SLU line to Fremont and Ballard, extending the First Hill line down Jackson, and considering whether a streetcar or a light rail technology is the best way to enhance transit service from downtown to West Seattle. The interconnection between the two funded lines is more problematic, but I hope we can continue to explore options for this.

c. What is your preferred solution for the Alaskan Way Viaduct issue and the Mercer corridor? Please discuss the transit impacts of your choice. While I personally believe that the surface transit alternative could have been successful, the tunnel liberates the waterfront and handles transportation. The aerial rebuild is unacceptable. The Legislature has made a decision and it is time to move on into implementation. If either the engineering or the costs become problematic, then the issue could potentially be reopened, but the key task right now for transit advocates is to find a way to fund the transit additions that will be required no matter what solution is ultimately built. I support the Mercer corridor project, which will result in a main street for SLU that will support the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan designation of SLU as an urban center.

d. How will you change street parking policies, to speed busses? As has been done throughout downtown, on 15th Ave West, and in other locations, street parking should be removed or limited in time where this will be helpful to make transit more reliable and effective.

5. **Sound Transit and regional rapid transit**

a. Do you support the current plans of Sound Transit to expand light rail? Elaborate. Yes. I support Phase II extending light rail to Northgate and beyond, across the Lake to Bellevue and Redmond, and south of the airport to Federal Way. I would also support a phase III, which should include service between Seattle and Tacoma, north to Everett, and a spur line to West

Seattle, as well as considering how to serve Ballard, Issaquah, and other points not currently served.

b. Are you satisfied with the timing and alignments of those plans to expand light rail? No, I would like to move faster. Generally the current alignments are fine, but we will need additional lines to truly serve the region. However, sales tax revenue is down since the vote on Phase II, and I am concerned that this could slow down progress or result in a reduced scope of expansion.

c. Are you satisfied with the ST governance structure? I think it is working reasonably well. While a more regional transit agency (like Tri-Met in Portland) is an interesting idea, there are a great many details that would have to be worked out to ensure that we retain the advantages of Sound Transit and don't incur additional problems. The somewhat uneasy compromise of the Subarea Equity policy has turned out to be manageable for Sound Transit – if a regional agency were able to eliminate it, that would be great, but if it strengthened it, that would be problematic.

d. City studies showed the Green Line corridor is the second-highest transit ridership corridor in the City of Seattle. What will you do to bring rapid transit to this corridor (including links between Ballard and West Seattle, and linking rapid transit in that corridor with the current light rail line)? When should rapid transit reach the Ballard-West Seattle corridor, and what form should it be in? Sound Transit II included a study for possible service to West Seattle, and I am very interested in that option, with a dedicated streetcar line as a possible fallback. The monorail corridor would be the logical choice, at least as far as the West Seattle Junction, and has been well vetted with few significant issues. The downtown to Ballard corridor is more challenging from an urban form and engineering standpoint, and it may be that expanded Rapid Ride and a possible streetcar through Fremont to Ballard are the best choices to provide service there.

6. **“Bus Rapid Transit” and “Rapid Ride”**

In 2007, voters passed a “Transit Now” package including “Bus Rapid Transit” in key corridors.

a. Is this real bus rapid transit in your opinion? Real BRT involves separated transit lanes, but this is a very positive step towards better bus service.

b. Are you satisfied with this project, including design, timetable, dedicated bus lanes, off board fare payment, stop spacing, signal priority, and waiting area amenities? I want it to be implemented more rapidly. Don't have any specific suggestions on the design details, but would be very open to proposals that would make it more effective.

c. What are your plans to improve or accelerate or deliver on the promises made to voters? Our first task is to rescue the Metro system from its current financial problems. Once we do that, we can look at how to ensure that Rapid Ride is brought on as soon and effectively as possible.

7. Land use, building codes, parking requirements

a. What is the relationship of transit to land use, zoning and building codes?

Transportation and land use are not only inextricably intertwined, they are really the same thing – two sides of the same coin. Land use and building codes must fully coordinate with transit if we are to appropriately use the investment in transit.

b. What changes in land use, zoning and building codes would you support for all areas? For areas near light rail stations? I support increasing the capacity of areas that are well served by transit, including reviewing zoning and limiting parking requirements, as we currently do in downtown.

c. Current rules for new multifamily construction force a person buying a condo to also buy a parking space. This makes housing less affordable. Similarly, rules for construction of new apartment buildings also force persons leasing newly built units, to also lease a parking space in the building. Do you support ending these requirements that force people to buy into car storage? Do you believe forcing people to buy or lease parking spaces is good policy when some people don't want the parking space, or don't own a car, or can't use a car? I do not think that the land use code should require residents to purchase parking spaces in multi-family buildings. Eliminating parking requirements will require cooperation between businesses and residents so that businesses are confident that reduced street parking will not inhibit customers from patronizing businesses. More transit will help solve this problem – again underscoring the connection between land use and transportation planning.

d. Do you believe rules requiring such parking spaces in new construction affect the nature and shape of new multifamily buildings or town houses? How? Are you satisfied with this? Yes, they increase the cost and affect the design. Also, parking in front of condos and storefronts reduces the vitality of the streetscape, creating dead zones and increasing the potential for car-pedestrian accidents (from cars crossing sidewalks while turning onto lots). No, I am not satisfied with this.

8. Bikes and pedestrians

How will you support bike and pedestrian access to transit? By implementing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans. I have a track record of advocating for and securing funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and will continue to do so.

9. Local ferries

Currently we have a seasonal foot ferry from West Seattle to downtown, and legislation in place taxing County residents to create possible other ferry routes. Please elaborate your plans regarding these facilities and these taxes. I helped secure city support for the West Seattle to downtown route, and I am interested in other routes. However, the King County Council has the primary responsibility for these.

10. Potential floods in Kent and Auburn.

How should we prevent floods that would cover tracks for Sounder, BNSF and Amtrak trains? This should be a priority for the King County Flood Control District. As a member of the WRIA 9 Forum, I advocate for appropriate flood control measures which are coordinated with salmon recovery measures.

11. **Special rights for highways?**

What is the 18th Amendment to the State Constitution? Limits gas tax to highway purposes. Do you support it, or not? Not Do you believe that, if a majority of the state senate and house would wish to dedicate some part of state gas tax revenues to transit, then this democratic choice should be barred or prohibited in our State Constitution? No

12. **Personal transit experience**

- a. How many times did you take the bus last year? About 300
- b. What routes do you use? Normally the 3 or the 2 between home and work
- c. When did you last take a bus? Yesterday
- d. What problems have you experienced on Metro? How will you fix them?
Running late out of downtown. Can't do much as a City elected to fix them, but I have encouraged Metro to consolidate stops to speed up the buses.