

Abigail Doer, Candidate for King County Council, District 4  
Urbanist Endorsement Questionnaire

- **Do you support the creation of a King County transportation benefit district after the expiration of the Seattle Transportation Benefit District in 2020?**

Yes. A regional (county wide) funding approach is necessary as the Seattle Transportation Benefit District expires in 2020 whether it means going to the ballot countywide or through council action in 2020 for a regional measure. I led the campaign to pass the Seattle Transportation Benefit District in 2014 which was never intended to be a long term funding measure - it was meant to be stop gap funding to prevent bus cuts which by election day ended up being a transit expansion measure. I'm very proud of what the investments in Seattle Transportation Benefit District has resulted in -- neighborhoods that have frequent transit within a 10 minute walk increased from 25% of the City to nearly 70%. That being said, the quality of transit service in Seattle is significantly better than the service outside the city of Seattle and it only exacerbates inequities in our transit system and communities. If we are going to get people reliable options to get out of their cars, connect our communities, and fight climate change - we need King County to step up and lead on expanding transit across our county and a region wide measure is an important first step.

- **What priorities would you have for King County Metro during your term?**

Improving transit and access to transit is central to why I am running. I made a choice a few years ago to not own a car and rely on transit as my primary means of transportation. I know the good, the bad, and the ugly of our transit system and know it's full potential has not been realized. Transit has the potential to be a critical tool to address poverty and provide access to opportunity, grow our economy, and live our values. Thriving transit is key to building connected communities and a future for all of us that has clean air and clean water.

My priorities for King County Metro are:

- Expand our metro bus system: Fighting for and developing stable and reliable funding to build out Metro's long range plan should be a core responsibility of the county council and will be a central priority of mine. While upwards of \$200 million a year is necessary to build out Metro's long range plan we are currently lacking transit champions within King County to help realize this vision of increasing transit service across King County by 70%.
- Get a subsidized transit pass into the hands of every person in King County: Many of our major employers do not provide fully subsidized transit passes to their workers, including the University of Washington. That is unacceptable. I will partner with the City of Seattle, businesses, and advocates to develop strong policies to get free and affordable passes into the hands of everyone in this city.
- Electrify our transit fleet: Metro is on track to transition the diesel bus fleet to electric battery by 2040 - we must work more urgently to transition to electric in under 10 years.
- Modernize metro's performance metrics: Our region has the fastest growing transit system in the nation because we are investing in our transit system. However, the performance metrics the County Council prioritizes as a successful transit system have not contributed to this growth. I will work to develop performance metrics that ensure the

financial health of the agency, that taxpayer resources are used efficiently, and that we are prioritizing policies that increase ridership, reliability, and serving the most vulnerable in our community. Our current performance metrics (like farebox recovery) ensure we are spending more energy on where the revenue is coming from rather than how we are improving services and efficiencies overall.

- Breakdown barriers to access transit: Access to reliable transportation is often an insurmountable barrier preventing people from moving up the economic ladder. I'm proud to have helped shape ORCA LIFT but so much more can be done to ensure that Metro is prioritizing investments in communities who have historically been left behind. I'm eager to roll up my sleeves to improve and expand our human services transit pass program, make transit more accessible for people with disabilities, and ensure that transit is reliable and accessible for those who need it most.
  - Improve first and last mile connections to transit: King County must be working with local jurisdictions to ensure that our transit infrastructure has safe and reliable connections to get people to and from transit. I've knocked on over 6,000 doors in this district and navigating on transit around Northwest Seattle would be much safer and more reliable if the streets that connected to transit had sidewalks. If the streets and crosswalks were safe and well lit. Metro must be working with local jurisdictions to develop solutions to create safe and reliable connections to transit.
- **What role do you think King County should play in promoting alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle usage?**

I believe it is a central responsibility of King County to do all that we can to address climate change and protect our environment. The biggest emitter of pollution in King County comes from transportation and providing alternatives to driving is one of the core responsibilities of the King County Council. Metro Transit is 21% of King County's \$11 billion biennium budget and there is so much opportunity and potential improve this critical transportation service: it connects our workers to jobs, people to opportunity, and is one of the most critical steps we can take as a region to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and tackle climate change.

King County is not meeting its goals for reducing vehicle miles traveled in the County's Climate Action plan and for us to truly act and lead on climate we need the Council acting urgently to give people reliable options to get on transit.

To do this King County must ensure we are:

- providing safe, reliable, frequent, and high quality transit across our region,
  - partnering to build safe first and last mile connections to transit,
  - building densely around transit hubs and enforcing the growth management act and,
  - investing in and growing critical services around transit including child care, grocery stores, and family housing.
- **Studies have shown that fare enforcement disproportionately impacts people of color and can trap people in a cycle of poverty. Do you think recent reforms implemented by Metro have gone far enough to address this problem?**

No I do not. I am supportive of the reforms Metro has made to address many of the inequities in fare enforcement and was part of the early conversations with Metro to improve the policies but they do not go far enough.

I was recently on the D line and fare enforcement entered the bus. Before fare enforcement even asked for proof of payment from a man sitting behind me emphatically repeated that he could not pay and he didn't get paid for a few days. The fare enforcement officers were kind and trying to explain to him the penalties (which were the improved less harsh penalties) but it was a humiliating and unnecessary exercise.

Regardless of how flexible the improved penalties are, the presence of a fare enforcement officer is intimidating and unwelcoming and likely continue to disproportionately punish people who have insecure housing, low-income people, and people of color.

I believe it is time to end fare enforcement at King County and Sound Transit and replace the program with "Transit Ambassadors". Transit Ambassadors may be able to check if people have paid for their fare but these workers must be shepherds of transit, of King County, and help connect people with the many services our region provides to the most vulnerable in our community.

I met a woman at her door last week who had totaled her car 5 months earlier and had been depending on transit since. She was resigned about how difficult it was to get groceries and get around. I spent 20 minutes with her showing her which apps would help make it easier to use transit. Spending that 20 minutes with Jeanne was one of the highlights of the campaign and highlighted to me how much work we have to do to help people using our transit system.

We need Transit Ambassadors to help people like Jeanne who are new to transit get an affordable pass, learn how to use the system, and to show people visiting our city how to get to the market and all that our great neighborhoods have to offer. We need resources on our transit system who are helping those struggling with their mental health or who are homeless get connected with services that will help them so our bus drivers can focus on getting all of their passengers where they need to go safely. And more than anything, we need transit to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone and that is not what fare enforcement is currently achieving.

- **The county council has imposed a farebox recovery target of 25% on King County Metro which limits the agency's flexibility and may force it to raise fares. Would you support keeping this target?**

No. Farebox recovery is a poor performance metric for determining the financial and overall health of a transit agency. I will work to overhaul the performance metrics the County Council uses to determine the health of the agency that is more focused on increasing transit ridership, fiscal health, and ensuring we are equitably serving communities who have historically been left behind and need transit the most.

Eliminating the directive from King County Council to prioritize high 'Farebox Recovery' would:

- Make space for creative policy solutions to improve transit. If our transit agency planners and our policy makers weren't so focused on where certain revenue was coming from

and instead how we can improve ridership and increase service it would open the door for creative solutions around transit revenue.

- Create a more equitable transit system and eliminate a regressive double burden on our lowest income transit riders. Metro is mostly funded by regressive sales taxes and by setting the expectation that transit riders must pay their fair share means that low income people are paying for transit service twice.
  - Value transit as an incredible public benefit - whether you use it or not. Budgets reflect our values. Investments in transit benefit everyone by helping us have cleaner air, cleaner water, less cars on our roads, and of course the additional choices to get out of traffic. Farebox recovery policies hold transit to a higher standard than other transportation choices.
- **Would you have voted for the public funding of the Safeco field renovation approved in 2018 if you were on the county council at that time?**

I would not have voted for the policy that was presented to the County Council last summer. I love the Mariners and our sports teams (I'm a Storm season ticket holder) but the legislation the county council approved was not good. As a region we have proven with Key Arena that we can attract world class sports franchises, build/renovate/service great community sports assets with our incredible workforce, invest in community organizations, and ensure tax payers are on the hook for very little.

While I would have voted the same way as the incumbent, I believe it was because Councilmember Kohl-Welles flip-flopped on her position so late in the policy making process we came away with such a crummy policy. She started off in the policy making process as a strong supporter and co-sponsor of the original legislation and was rightfully pressured to change her position. Had she been thoughtful and engaged from the start of the policy process much more could have been done to develop a more responsible policy that was a win for our sports team, our workers, our tourism industry, and affordable housing.

I do not think it is unreasonable for limited resources to be invested in the maintenance of a publicly owned sports facility but the council's proposal went far beyond basic maintenance. Public ownership and some ownership in sports facilities create important leverage to ensure we are creating good prevailing wage jobs for construction workers and the staff who work in the facilities. Key Arena is a great example of how a public facility's control over labor protections can be maintained and I will always fight to protect our workers building and servicing such infrastructure and facilities.

This vote also highlighted to me a failure of the County Council to act on affordable housing more broadly - from transit to tourism budget conversations continue to address affordable housing at the margins rather than the substantial direct investments that is needed to take this housing crisis head on.

- **What do you think is the most important strategy or strategies King County can pursue to keep the county affordable to live in? What assumptions about affordability do those strategies rely on?**

Transportation, housing, and childcare are the largest household costs and they are intersectional. Housing affordability affects every single person in our community. Without a place that you can afford that is near transit, jobs, and other community resources, it's hard to thrive in our region. I am a renter and would be the only person elected to the County Council who does not and never has owned a home.

I will prioritize ensuring our region is building and developing adequate housing. King County needs 244,000 units of low income affordable housing by 2040 and as of now we do not have a financing plan to meet that need. We need regional housing investments that build not just the 0-80% ami affordable housing but also middle income affordable housing and tools to encourage missing middle housing types.

I have experience creating and developing approval for similarly ambitious plans through my work on Sound Transit 3. We identified a long term need and rolled up our sleeves to map out the funding and revenue needs, obtain authority from the legislature, and then work hard to get voter approval. That leadership is necessary to address our housing crisis and I'm motivated to bring our regional partners together to get it done.

Another critical affordability issue that greatly impacts our communities and is connected to housing and transportation is childcare. We need universal child care statewide and in the interim I would support the creation of such a program locally. To address affordable childcare in King County we must be moving forward child care policies that: provide facilities and child care for King County workers as an employee benefit; plan for child care facilities in all transit oriented development and in County operated office spaces; provide subsidies and direct investments in child care for no-, low-, and middle-income families; develop tools and resources for working families to connect with providers of quality child care; and partner with higher education institutions to develop training and education programs for child care workers.

- **Under what circumstances would you vote to increase property taxes in King County?**

This August I will be voting for both the Seattle Library's Levy and the King County Parks Levy which are both property tax levy's for renewals and increases funding. These are examples of necessary public investments that we must make.

Property taxes are one of the more prevalent concerns I hear as I am out knocking on doors. I am sympathetic to the homeowners (especially low income homeowners) who have seen their property taxes rise as a result of the legislature's plan to address McCleary. Most people I talk to don't have a problem paying more taxes to support our homeless neighbors, have world class schools or pay for parks and libraries but voters also want to make sure that everyone in our community are paying their fair share - and right now the wealthiest in our community are not. Of our many regressive taxes, property taxes do disproportionately land on low- and middle-income people.

We need to be fighting to fundamentally transform our tax system to ensure that the wealthiest in our communities are paying their fair share. As we all know, Washington State has the most regressive tax code in the nation where those that make the least - pay the largest share of their incomes. This tax code exacerbates income inequality, and prevents King County from making

necessary public investments to serve those who need it most. My opponent has had 25 years in elected office to make a meaningful impact on our regressive tax code - including having served in a super majority in Olympia.

Having watched elected leaders and community groups advocate for tax reform (especially for the repeal of the 1% property tax inflation cap) over the years, it's clear to me that it is necessary to reframe the conversation and ensure we are developing intentional messaging that shares the opportunities we could achieve by eliminating this broken tool. Budgets are not sexy nor is wonky revenue policy and as a result the urgency from the legislature to address this has not been realized -- as I've watched the legislature in the last two cycles take on some of our biggest structural issues; progressive funding has been the lowest of priorities and the hardest to develop a majority.

- **Do you support the creation of a city-county authority to address homelessness in Seattle/King County? If so, what steps would you take to support it on county council? If not, why not?**

Yes, I strongly support the creation of a county/city governance structure to address homelessness in Seattle and King County. Centralizing our homelessness services and eliminating duplicative administrative work will ensure resources are spent directly supporting people in our community experiencing homelessness. The County Council must be deeply engaged in ensuring the administrative transition is conducted smoothly, but also ensure that simply transforming the administrative structure is not enough to address our homelessness crisis. The County Council must be leading the development of a bold funding plan to build the much needed housing stock and pathways to housing and must be engaging deeply in developing the needed behavior health investments to help our neighbors in need.

- **What causes people to experience homelessness in King County?**

A lack of affordable housing and adequate housing supply is the reason why people experience homelessness. There are complex and contributing factors that escalate one's ability to be housed including but not limited to: poverty, income inequality, mental illness, trauma, our foster care system, our criminal justice system, addiction, job loss, domestic violence, and more.

We need to invest in affordable, low income, and transitional housing to have an impact on homelessness in King County. As I mentioned previously, I will prioritize ensuring our region is building and developing adequate housing such as the 244,000 units of low income affordable housing King County needs to develop by 2040.

- **What specifically should the county do to address racial disparities in housing opportunity?**

"People of color collectively comprise approximately 27% of the general population in King County, yet, they represent 57% of people who are homeless." Racism, historic redlining, displacement, and gentrification all contribute to the racial disparities in housing opportunity. As a transit advocate I have also seen investments in transit and other desirable infrastructure increases land values and without intentionally planning and developing land in communities we

will continue to see displacement of affordable housing - largely for communities of color and low-income people - especially in communities that had previously been affordable.

At Transportation Choices Coalition, I worked with Puget Sound Sage, OneAmerica, Housing Development Consortium, Futurewise and other organizations to develop policy solutions to attempt to right these historic wrongs and to ensure we are mapping out a future to prevent displacement and here are tangible actions the county can take to address racial disparities in housing opportunity. The following tools are a starting place to address racial disparity in housing opportunity:

- Ensure communities of color are at the table and leading the solutions for housing: We must resource communities of color and those most impacted by displacement can develop and lead solutions for building thriving, equitable, affordable communities. These intentional efforts can help reduce displacement and help create stronger communities.
- Implement equitable transit oriented development: Last year, Sound Transit passed strong ETOD policies by prioritizing and requiring properties owned by Sound Transit around transit stations to be first offered to affordable housing providers for free or at greatly reduced costs (80-80-80). While the policy is strong, ongoing proactive engagement from elected officials and advocates as Sound Transit is built out (and as existing land is surplussed) is necessary to ensure we are intentionally developing around transit hubs and preventing further displacement.
- Free public land for affordable housing development: We must be working diligently to identify public land that could be used for affordable housing and offer the land to affordable housing development at free or greatly reduced costs. As Sound Transit and Metro and other public infrastructure acquire property - all land must be acquired with the potential development of the site in mind to ensure it is suitable for affordable housing.
- Community land trusts: King County must work to develop and direct investments into Community Land Trusts that are designed to support community stewardship of the land and to ensure long term housing affordability.
- Affirmative marketing preferences: We need to ensure that folks who have been pushed out of our communities, have the first chance at coming back. This is especially important in affordable housing developments. As we see our neighborhoods gentrify, we need to ensure that there are places for our low- and middle-income neighbors to live - and return to.
- Low interest loan programs for ADUs and DADUs in communities at risk of displacement: King County should develop low-interest loan programs or grants for homeowners targeted towards communities at risk of displacement for housing additional family or for additional rental income.
- Prioritize affordable commercial space: Housing is not the only being displaced from gentrification - small businesses operated by people of color. Any strategy for equitable development and affordable housing must include intentional and affordable storefront space.
- Expanding King County Metro bus service regionally: King County must be expanding our transit system regional to replace Seattle Transportation Benefit District Prop 1 (which expires at the end of 2020). The quality of transit service in Seattle is significantly better than the service outside the city of Seattle and the inequities in the transit service exacerbates displacement and increases transportation costs for those who have been

pushed farther from Seattle City limits. As I said above, access to reliable transportation is often an insurmountable barrier from moving up the economic ladder and we need to ensure that affordable housing is connected to reliable transit.