**The 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, completely, I’m already working with Metro and some of my Council colleagues on this -- a King County Transportation District in preparation for next year’s expiration of the City of Seattle’s Transportation District funding levy. The Council funded in our 2019-20 biennial budget an initiation of a regional planning effort this year to address implementation of Metro Connects to achieve a long-range transit service and capital plan as well as funding for maintenance needs. What we’re working on is creating a framework for equitable implementation of innovations in transit service and mobility. Paramount to this initiative is to develop a mobility framework to coordinate regional planning efforts that will include a determination of demographic trends, job and population growth, and mobility equity and their greenhouse gas implications. For creating an actual County transportation benefit district, we need to ensure that our Metro Connects program will be equitable, transparent, and sustainable. Several options are being considered, one of which is ballot measure, likely to be placed on the 2020 but possibly later ballot, for funding regional expanded transit access as well as expanding Metro Connects. Funding sources could include an increase in sales tax, MVET, property tax, or a combination, or certainly some new source. But, for me, it is imperative that the funding source(s) be as progressive as possible.

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

I depend on transit every day in going to and from work and to many appointments and meetings, as do a growing number of riders. My vision for transportation in our region involves moving from a transit framework to a mobility framework, in which development, transit infrastructure, employers and government work together to make sure that people can get where they need to go efficiently and cost-effectively, without any cost barriers. I believe an especially effective approach would be to expand the use of providing Orca cards to employees, students, etc., by their employers. Another one is to expand access to recreational areas, including trails, boating, beaches, parks, etc., e.g., Trailhead Direct. Overall, we need to expand equitable and affordable transit access and service hours as well as invest in transit-oriented development and affordable housing. And, importantly, we need to do all we can to speed up conversion away from fossil fuels and support Metro’s clean energy bus and van fleets (see below for additional information).

So what would I like to work on in a second term if I’m re-elected? As a member of the Council’s four-person Budget Leadership Team, I obtained funding in the 2019-2020 Biennial budget for 200,000 hours of increased bus service, as well as funding for bases to maintain current and future bus fleets. I would like to continue such expansion in our 2021-2022 budget, again as a member of the Budget Leadership Team

I also envision a Metro vanpool and bus fleet that is completely emissions-free. In my first year on the Council, I co-sponsored a motion with Councilmember Rod Dembowski directing Metro Transit to study the feasibility of achieving a zero-emissions bus fleet. The study itself outlines a lengthy timeline for gradual implementation; however, I believe that the implementation process could be expedited and am committed to continue working with KC Metro to make that happen.

During my first term, we identified a number of issues with the service delivery of ACCESS vans, which serve some of our most vulnerable community members, including the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Through direct experience with the major challenges my wheelchair-bound mother experienced with ACCESS, e.g., very lengthy waits to be picked up to attend and return from medical appointments and not being able to use toilet facilities, I know how important it is that those services are delivered effectively and on time. With input from unions, we worked with Metro Transit to set up a new RFP process with a new set of evaluation criteria in order to field new contractors and make sure that problem and other problems would be resolved.

In addition, I have sponsored and supported measures on major transit expansion, implementation of low/no-cost transit fare programs, and reforms to fare enforcement policies, to name a few. I recently introduced legislation to waive Metro fares when Metro activates its Emergency Snow Network to ensure that individuals are able to move safely through snowy conditions to access shelter and services. Working with Metro, we were also able to make fare enforcement policies less punitive and harmful to our most vulnerable residents. All and all, I will continue supporting Countywide increased transit access and exploring ways to provide service to low- or no- income individuals but also to make transit use is more attractive to all residents and workers in the County.

And, district-specific, my district, from Madison Ave. to the south, 145th/Shoreline to the north, Elliott Bay to the west and I-5 mostly to the east, has been booming and has immediate needs for increased transit in most of our neighborhoods. This, of course, is true in other high growth areas in Seattle and, in fact, most other areas in the County. For example, I have been working on with King County Metro to develop both short-term and long-term plans for increased transit service in north Belltown and on the waterfront following the closure of the Viaduct and earlier with the closure of the Metro’s Bus Route 99. As part of that effort, in 2017, I obtained the Council’s agreement to direct Metro to create a waterfront advisory group to make recommendations on viable transit options at that time, including the short-term creation of the current free waterfront shuttle, but also for when the Viaduct came down. In addition, I was able to get Metro Transit to provide a Rte 29 bus stop at the corner of Broad and First to mitigate, to some extent, the closure of Rte 99. In addition, with input from constituents, neighborhood groups, and in collaboration with Metro.

In addition, ensuring timely construction of the Sound Transit 3 light rail link from West Seattle to Ballard and examining the feasibility of creating a Ballard-to-Downtown water taxi route are top priorities of mine in terms of transit expansion. My amendment to our supplemental budget was adopted in the Council’s Budget & Fiscal Management Committee on June 4 for Metro to update its feasibility study on establishing such a water taxi. The Council will be voting on the supplemental budget on June 26. Also, I am committed to restoring some form of public transit to the Shilshole Bay and Sunset Hill neighborhoods and am pleased to have convinced Metro to commence a pilot project along Seaview Avenue along Shilshole at the first of next year

To further prioritize transit in our region, I participated in a work group with Seattle City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Representatives Noel Frame and Gael Tarleton, and Senator Reuven Carlyle to develop a plan for improving the Interbay corridor that runs from Holman Road south to Western Avenue, which is a busy thoroughfare through District Four. With all of these examples, continued work is needed.

**What role do you think King County should play in promoting alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle usage?**

As King County oversees King County Metro Transit and other transit-oriented entities, it should be designing policies and supporting implementation with the end goal of reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and be willing to adapt as our mobility framework develops and grows.

For example, rideshare services certainly have a role in the mobility framework that the County is building, because they reduce reliance on regular use of single-occupancy vehicles. A benefit of partnering with the private sector to provide transit options is that it offers more options for people to use to get where they need to go. I recognize the role that these ridesharing services have in the mobility framework, which is why I support the collaboration between KC Metro, Sound Transit, and City of Seattle called Via to Transit. Via to Transit, available either via app or phone, provides on-demand shuttle service to or from five Link light rail stations in southeast Seattle and Tukwila. This service, which counts as a Metro bus trip or a transfer on an Orca pass, helps with the last-mile-connection for people to access transit easily, even if they don’t live right next to a transit station. This, I believe, is an excellent example of rideshare services integrating into a broader mobility framework. The caveat in this model, though, is in using non-union partners, at least in the existing pilot programs. I would like to see unions, such as Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587, be able to compete for these services.

Of course, ridesharing and car/bike/scooter sharing enable people to go without a car, and only use private transit if they really need it. As with anything, there are both benefits and drawbacks, but the most important thing is that County government partners with these private services, meaning that the relationship is there to ensure that King County residents are able to get where they need to go and to do so safely. The Council recently passed legislation to allow for ride-hailing services to be able to pick up passengers near drop-off locations outside of Seattle to minimize so-called “deadheading” or being forced to drive back from a destination with an empty car because a driver isn’t licensed to work outside of Seattle.

And, we need creative solutions and adaptations to be tested, for example, with expansion of water taxis.

**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?**

I don’t think that they have gone far enough, but I do think that we’ve made important strides forward by reforming the current fare enforcement policies. I have supported the restructuring of the fare enforcement program to ensure that people are not receiving citations for being unable to pay and being thrust into the criminal justice system. Those who cannot are most likely to be youth, people of color and low-income individuals. Reducing the fines and providing options to paying is a much fairer and more viable approach to use. It’s also cost-effective in that the fare enforcement efforts were more costly than what was collected through penalties.

Access to transit is especially important for people trying to make their way out of poverty and homelessness. With the goal of having the program in place by 2020, I’ll continue to work through the County’s budget process to implement low- and no-cost transit fares for Metro’s lowest-income passengers, ensuring they can get to work, school, the doctor and other vital services. To ensure service during inclement weather, I introduced legislation to suspend fare collection on Metro transit when the Emergency Snow Network is activated. I also am working to expand our TOD (Transportation-Oriented Developments) housing to be located near transit stations and hubs.

**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?**

I am committed to comprehensive reforms within King County Metro that make it accessible for everyone, and I recognize that a truly comprehensive approach to making Metro accessible means that farebox recovery could dip below 25%. I would be willing to take another look at County policy to determine what lowering that rate would look like in practice. However, I think that it would take more than just re-assessing the 25% number to make these types of reforms successful and sustainable for the County. I would be interested in seeing if we could simultaneously raise rates for people who could afford to pay more, although there would be much to work out in terms of how that is evaluated and determined. I would also be very supportive of increasing the use of employer-bought transit cards as a way to boost revenue and keep KC Metro affordable but also successful and reliable. I do recognize that farebox recovery is an important stream of revenue to preserve and improve transit in our region.

**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?**

In fact, I was on the Council last year for this vote and ended up voting against the public funding, even though I originally had supported it and had been a sponsor of the legislation, because in general I believe that sports generate jobs and tax dollars. However, the fact is that both the City of Seattle and King County have declared a state of emergency regarding homelessness and that there is a woefully inadequate supply of affordable housing. Our spending priorities should reflect that. And, there had been an incorrect provision in the original legislation which I’d found and spoke out against.

I took a bold move by announcing I was removing my name as a sponsor of the measure and subsequently introduced a striking amendment that would have reduced stadium maintenance funding from $180 million to $25 million and increased funding for affordable housing by $184 million. In doing so, I led the opposition to the huge funding increase for the Mariners/Safeco Field funding that was set to come from the new Hotel-Motel tax revenue beginning in 2021. Although four of us supported my striking amendment, we did not prevail, but my leadership led to increasing the amount for affordable housing, including TODs and workforce housing, and substantially reducing the funding for the stadium. But to me, it did not go far enough and, unfortunately, ended up removing the tourism funding for most of the local tourism programs that would have been funded otherwise. It was a very difficult time for the Council but I remain convinced I did the right thing in opposing the legislation.

**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?**

Currently and unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly challenging to maintain a straight face in referring to keeping the county affordable to live in. We’re well past that point for way too many individuals and families. We need to do a lot more to assist people to exit homelessness and to provide an adequate supply of affordable housing in the County.

I believe the top three areas with accompanying strategies should be:

- Retaining and developing more affordable housing.

- Increasing the supply of 24/7 shelter beds with services on site for individuals to be able to exit homelessness.

- Increasing the access to and funding for services that help people transition into permanent homes, including those who have mental health and behavioral health challenges.

I was a member of the Council-created Regional Affordable Housing Task Force (RAHTF) of which CM Claudia Balducci was the lead sponsor and I a cosponsor. It met between June 2017-December 2018 and included elected officials representing King County and our suburban cities that worked with an advisory committee of experts in determining the scope and magnitude of our rapidly increasing housing affordability challenges. I supported and helped develop (and voted for) the Task Force’s Five-Year Action Plan submitted last December that included recommendations to eliminate the housing cost burden for households earning less than 80% of the median family income (MFI) which translates to providing an additional 44,000 secure affordable homes within the next five years and for 244,000 additional homes by the year 2040. Our priorities are to maintain and preserve existing affordable housing, to build new subsidized affordable housing, and to work with private sector partners to expand the availability of affordable housing for middle-income earners. Some of the current strategies to accomplish the recommendations are supporting protections for renters, investing in TODs, increasing funding for affordable housing developments for households earning less than 50% of the area median income, and combating the displacement of individuals and families, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, e.g., by preventing gentrification.

While the RAHTF has run its course, it has been transformed into a new committee of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), approved by both the King County Council and the GMPC. During last year’s 2019-2020 Biennial budget deliberations, we allocated funds for three full-time employees, in part to support the implementation of these recommendations in a way that is equitable and comprehensive. I am a member of the new committee that met for the first time last Friday, June 21st,

Building affordable housing close to transit hubs is crucial. To incentivize the creation of affordable housing near transit hubs, the four-person Budget Leadership Team, of which I was a member last fall, secured funding in the 2019-2020 Biennial Budget for several transit-oriented affordable housing developments (TODs). One in particular that I worked on was with then-Speaker Frank Chopp and Enterprise Community Partners’ Home and Hope Initiative that I was able to get included for pre-design work at North Seattle College. This had not been included in the Executive’s budget proposal, but I continued pushing for it as it will be well located and can be accessed across I-5 from the Northgate Transit Center via the Northgate Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge that will be constructed. I also pushed for increased funding for transit-oriented developments and workforce housing to be included in the Hotel/Motel revenue allocations.

In addition, as a Councilmember I am able to propose legislation to implement property valuation discounts for these TOD developments in order to maximize the resources available for them and provide in the creation and development of inclusionary and incentive-driven developments. The County is able to take big-picture leadership on creating and implementing a regional land-use development strategy to ensure equity in the way that these TODs are built and where they are located.

An adequate supply of affordable housing is critical, but solving homelessness requires a holistic approach. In order for people to successfully exit homelessness and successfully transition into permanent housing, they must be able to access services. Income inequality, structural racism, displacement of existing affordable housing, proportional shrinking of federal funding, an inadequate supply of affordable housing and substance use and mental and behavioral health conditions factor into homelessness. I will continue working for policies that prevent displacement of affordable housing, expand treatment services and ensure public safety in our neighborhoods. This includes supporting the expansion of mental health and behavioral health treatment for those in need, as well as basic health care.

In my second term, I’ll continue my focus on increasing both the supply of affordable housing and the number of 24/7 enhanced shelter beds with services provided to assist in exiting homelessness. I’ll use my leadership positions as Chair of the King County Board of Health and of the Council’s Health, Housing and Human Services Committee to push for increasing access to services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and helping with the transition to permanent housing.

These ideas depend on the assumption that affordable housing must be intentionally developed. As our economy grows, it cannot necessarily be expected to be available if left solely to private developers.

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

I strongly believe we need to make our tax structure progressive at the State level as soon as possible. It is indisputable that we have the most regressive tax structure of any state in the country. While I believe most people would agree that taxes are necessary to fund the essential services that residents in our county and cities want and need, the way that our current structure is set up is highly inequitable and indefensible. Rather than heavily taxing large corporations and those with a great deal of wealth, a greater burden is placed on our lowest-earning community members and small businesses. A report by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy published in 2018 found that when state and local taxes are tallied, Washington’s poorest families pay 17.8 percent of their income, while the top 1% pays only about 3 percent of their income to state and local taxes.

All counties in our state are struggling with budget problems, especially King County as a result of Tim Eyman’s I-747 which caps the growth limit for property taxes at 1% a year, regardless of inflation rates and population growth. We continue to lobby the Legislature—unfortunately thus far unsuccessfully--to authorize our ability to include inflation and population growth as factors. I know the challenge well as I had sponsored legislation many times while serving in the state Senate to reform our highly regressive tax structure that is known to be the most regressive in the entire country. We also need to eliminate the non-supplant restriction to allow special levies to fund existing services and programs and to adjust the qualifying income level on senior property tax exemption to a percentage of county median income and allow extension of the exemption to local levies.

The Council has had to balance the need to raise revenue in order to keep up with the increasing needs of our growing population with refraining from exacerbating the situation for lower- and middle-income homeowners and renters from escalating housing costs, including rises in property values and accompanying property taxes. Other than property tax, we are authorized to increase sales taxes in some situations, but are reluctant to do so because of their regressive nature. Otherwise, we increase user fees, e.g., for transit, or take measures to the ballot for voter approval.

I would vote to increase property taxes when the benefits surpass the costs for most individuals and families in need, as I did for the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy which was approved by the voters in November of 2017. Another example of the benefit outweighing the cost is the renewal of the Parks Levy that will be on the August primary ballot. I was a cosponsor of both ordinances to place the measures on the ballot.

**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 do. In fact,I am pleased to be the Council lead on an effort to create a joint governance model between the City of Seattle and King County government in response to the homelessness crisis. We will also be working with All Home and with other suburban cities to ensure that we can come up with a holistic and regional response to homelessness. I have created a Homeless Governance leadership advisory subcommittee of the Council’s Health, Housing, and Human Services Committee, which I chair, to guide the Council through the process. The County Executive and the Seattle Mayor will be transmitting their proposals to both the County and City Councils in August, taking up an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) to create a new regional authority for providing a more efficient, transparent, and accountable entity to address our homelessness crisis, get services more quickly and effectively to those in need, and to achieve solutions in reducing/eliminating homelessness. The particular model to use has not been determined as of yet but likely could be a Public Development Authority (PDA) of some sort. This would be a major step to take and will need careful consideration by our Council and the Seattle City Council. I am keeping an open mind to this effort but want to make sure we come up with the best possible process in determining what model should be adopted. As part of this initiative, the Council will create a governance structure that likely will include non-profit providers, lived experience individuals and the philanthropist community that will likely be providing a large share of the funding.

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

As a member of the RAHTF and One Table and now the Affordable Housing Committee of the Growth Management Planning Council, I know that an adequate supply of affordable housing is critical but unfortunately not the case in King County. We’ve basically been trying to deal with a national crisis with inadequate local dollars. I also know that solving homelessness requires a holistic approach. Income inequality, structural racism, displacement of existing affordable housing, an inadequate supply of affordable housing, reduced proportional federal funding, and substance use and behavioral health factor into homelessness. I will continue working for policies that prevent displacement of affordable housing and expand treatment services, including the expansion of mental health and behavioral health treatment for those in need. I represent the Council on the MIDD (Mental Illness and Drug Dependency) Advisory Committee.

We are far from our goal of making homelessness rare, brief and one-time, but we have made some important investments. In my first term, I worked successfully to get funding for modular housing, additional emergency as well as enhanced 24/7 shelter space, increased access to aid in finding housing and several affordable housing projects into our 2019-2020 Biennial budget.

I will also continue to lead on the implementation plan and new governance structure of the voter-approved Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy. The levy provides support to reduce homelessness and provide greater housing stability for veterans, seniors, and vulnerable populations throughout King County. In addition, I will continue leading on the oversight of the Best Starts for Kids Levy’s Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention initiative.

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

With our region’s history of racial segregation in housing, in large part left over from our past of using redlining and racial covenants, it’s vital that we construct policies now that support communities of color in acquiring and maintaining housing. I support the efforts the Council has taken to prevent displacement and add needed affordable housing in partnership with the King County Housing Authority and the Housing Development Consortium. I will continue to support funding for programs that provide rental housing and assistance through housing choice vouchers, subsidized housing, moderate-income housing, managing of federally-funded housing and importantly through the acquisition, revitalization, and preservation of apartment buildings as well as creation of new apartment buildings. And I was able to convince the Senate Capital Budget Chair and Ranking Member to include $3 million in the 2017-19 capital budget for development of modular bridge housing. The funds have gone to a project in Renton and now for a new one being located in South Seattle in conjunction with the Chief Seattle Club for native, indigenous peoples who are in homeless situations and that will include culturally-appropriate programming and structure.

As part of the Vision 2050 work being done by the Puget Sound Regional Council, determinations are being made of the areas of the region that are at highest risk for displacement. I’m focused on using those tools to ensure that those areas are given special attention in the development of affordable housing. Focusing on transit and development in these high-risk areas will be something that local government is well positioned to do.

I have consistently supported tenant protections and will continue to do so to minimize evictions, and support strengthening protections against discrimination in housing. For example, I was able to get through an ordinance that prohibits source of income discrimination in the unincorporated areas of the County (which I also prime sponsored for the state while in the Senate).