

The Urbanist Seattle City Council Endorsement Questionnaire

- Do you support Seattle's commitment to Vision Zero, and what legislative strategies would you seek to implement the goal of reducing serious injuries and fatalities on our streets to zero within the next decade? Do you think legislative strategies are sufficient to achieve this goal?

I support reducing serious injuries and fatalities on our roads. I do not know if legislative strategies are sufficient, but they are an important part of the process. I want to see a service level agreement for right of way that accounts for all the users of the roadway, not just cars. The conversation about priorities is ongoing and I think it is important to be a part of it. I am glad to see leading ped interval signaling being rolled out.

- Do you support the completion of the current bicycle master plan? If so, what strategies, both political and financial, do you propose to ensure its completion?

I support the version of the Bike Master plan created by the Bike Advisory Board with its focus on underserved communities in the South. I support the political pressure created by the ride for safe streets, ghost bikes and other mechanisms. Financing changes to create truly safe bike routes is going to be tricky, the move Seattle levy is not producing like it should and everything else is kind of a mess budget wise because we wrote a budget based on the head tax. I think there is a reasonable argument for the sweetened beverage tax going to support active transportation in communities that are underserved by infrastructure and at risk for limited transportation options.

- The current Seattle Transportation Benefit District funding bus services and transit access expires at the end of 2020. Should it be extended and do you envision any changes to the programs it funds?

Yes it should be extended and I would like to see tolls for bus lane usage added to the funding sources which would go to improvements to transit services like covered bus stops

- The Move Seattle levy expires as the end of 2024. What features should the next transportation capital project levy have? What lessons do you take away from the way the current levy has gone?

Estimates going off was a really big political blow that will have to be dealt with in the next levy, having already bid the contracts involved is probably too much work but it will likely take someone from outside the SDOT to verify that the work estimates are reasonable. The RapidRides falling off is a big disappointment and the scale back of infrastructure.

- Do you support the construction of the Center City Connector streetcar and why/why not?

Yes because this link makes the other streetcar lines work better.

- What considerations should inform the discussion around finding additional funding for a light rail tunnel to West Seattle? To Ballard?

Time. Transit delayed is transit denied and none of the proposals can match the existing proposal in speed even without funding delays, I am concerned about the health of the maritime industry along ships canal but I think we can get to a good compromise with a bridge.

- For what purposes should impact fees on development be used?

Sadly we are limited by statute to “Public streets and roads, publicly owned parks, open space, and recreation facilities, school facilities and fire protection facilities” so most of what I want to them for is probably off limits, but fire protection facilities and school expansion might make sense if carefully crafted and if housing was exempted in some situations.

- Do you support imposing additional fees on ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft?

Only if it doesn't hurt rideshare drivers and that seems unlikely, I would like data sharing so we can limit unsafe drop off and pick up practices.

- Do you support a congestion pricing program downtown? If so, what considerations should be made when setting up such a program?

I am concerned. London is a different situation because it is a highway and so I am not sure about the safety numbers. Congestion sucks and is bad for the environment but it is very good at slowing traffic and downtown is where many of our most vulnerable pedestrians congregate. I want to see more data from NYC if possible because there is an argument that it should cost the same to get downtown on the bus or streets, but I am worried about anything that makes courts and elected officials less accessible.

- How do you feel about the current allocation of street space in Seattle? Under what circumstance would you support converting general purpose lanes to other uses?

I think the current allocation favors cars and is a real concern. My first priority is sidewalks because if people can't walk or roll then all other alternative transportation is compromised and more difficult, also walkable neighborhoods and services are wonderful and things people enjoy. I am a big fan of bus only lanes because bus speed is so important to transit use and cost. I also like bike lanes, not only for bikers but because they make streets safer by slowing and separating traffic. In the current crisis we need to implement as many other uses for road as we can.

- What approaches would you take to ensure that emerging mobility options (bikeshare, rideshare, e-scooter, etc) are implemented in a manner that increases access to our mobility hubs?

The big concern here is parking for bikes and scooters and repositioning after chagrining or fueling. For parking I favor converting all spaces within 30 feet of a stop sign to bike or scooter parking even if we can't designate them all right away (I also want to test the space in front of fire hydrants with the department, it might be useful and no unduly impair hose access) Repositioning after chagrining or fueling is in the companies control and we can negotiate with them and possibly impose real consequences (confiscation) if we can't get things done better.

- What lessons did you take away from the head tax vote/debate? Would you support bringing back the head tax?

Unless somehow the high-income earner tax survives the court challenge this summer, we are going to need more revenue to address homelessness. There is no real way about that, but focusing on the need and the use instead of the source is an important part of getting this passed as is direct outreach like that done by working Washington for the 15 an hour minimum wage.

- What responsibilities do you think that corporations doing business in Seattle have to the city, and are they meeting them? If not how would you get them to do so?

I think that corporations don't have conscience so they can't feel obligation, thus it is kind of hard to talk about them like they are people even if it is an often-used legal fiction. People who control and own corporations are the ones who really determine how moral the actions of the entity are and they are also hamstrung to some extent by the rules about shareholder value. So no one is doing anything but working in the system we have designed when they don't support public welfare with corporate dollars except to the extent it is good publicity, but that is also exactly why we have to change the system to make more support a thing you have to do. B&O taxation makes lots of things in Washington harder, and one is thinking about the morality of taxes when you don't have people on the other side in any normal sense of the word.

- If you had been on council at the time it was considered, would you have voted for Mandatory Housing Affordability, Seattle's version of inclusionary zoning? In what ways did the final approved plan differ from your ideal policy?

I would have voted for it because something had to be done but I would have preferred a strong incentive-based plan instead because it would be more protected from court challenge and it could have increased density

- Do you support transit-oriented development? If so, how do you ensure TOD is affordable and doesn't displace communities around new transit infrastructure?

I support TOD and the reality is communities around new light rail stops will be disrupted the question is only how not if because markets do a thing when left unchecked, so I would like to see more community driven TOD development because that helps home and ground community and creates ownership in a way that the city cannot do alone.

- What do you think is the most important strategy or set of strategies Seattle can pursue to make the city affordable to live in? What assumptions about affordability do those strategies rely on?

We have to fund affordable housing; the market just is not set up to build it. That can happen a lot of ways, for example ground leasing land to make construction possible, direct investment, technical assistance, fee waivers or building and owning. At this point we kind of need to just make housing happen, including market rate housing to just keep up with demand not to mention digging out of the lack of building during previous growth periods.

- What would you do as a city council member to address evictions and the displacement they cause, particularly in communities of color?

I want to license property managers to ensure training and to hold them to a set of professional responsibilities, including non-discrimination. I want us to end the wasteful and harmful practice of economic eviction from subsidized housing (instead referring to social workers for possible adjustments or one time payments) and I would like to see training from the housing justice project for judges to encourage them to use their new state granted powers in positive ways.

- Do you support the proposed creation of a city-county authority to address homelessness in Seattle/King County? If so, what steps would you take to support it on city council?

I am ok with it, but I don't think we can afford to slow things down with more complex process or while we wait for this to happen.

- What causes people to experience homelessness in the City of Seattle?

Not being able to afford housing, the most common cause of that is job loss.

- What, specifically, should the city do to address racial disparities in housing opportunity?

Fund community orgs addressing it like Africatown and look into low equity coop financing options to help spread ownership in groups while allowing community preference

- How would you define "historic character", and in what ways do you feel your definition is inclusive of Seattle's indigenous communities?

I don't think I can so I would like to see the historic preservation board be majority or even exclusively indigenous

- What approaches would you consider to ensure that multi-generational, affordable housing is located in high-opportunities neighborhoods?.

Luckily the condo rules have changed so we have more opportunity for infill housing that is small condos or stacked flats if we zone for it instead of townhomes which limit occupancy to the very abled.

- What role should Safe Seattle and like-minded groups play in our public discourse?

Cautionary Tales

- To what extent has pursuing racial equity been a priority in your work to date? How do you plan to continue that work on city council?

I am realistic, I can't have experiences I just don't have as a white person, so I think it is important to plan with people who have that experience. I try to pay attention to who is affected and who is at the table and, as much as is possible, make sure the two groups align.

- What approaches do you feel are most-important to ensuring that programs, policies, and practices are prioritized in historically underserved and underrepresented communities, who may not have the loudest voice in a public forum?

People who haven't been able to get government to care about their problems are not going to believe you care about their problems unless you show up and ask what they are and build trust by acting on something that you can act on. I am not sure showing up and doing something helpful counts as a program or policy but it seems like the only approach that really works.

- What are ideas for progressive revenue sources for transportation and housing that do not burden low-income communities?

We used to have an inheritance tax statewide, it was revoked and replaced with just a high value estate tax but I would love to see if we could reinstitute that or a gift tax. I don't see a lot of other paths that are not blocked by legal limitations but in general I would like to use taxes to limit generational wealth.