Transit Riders Union Questionnaire for 2019 Seattle City Council Primary Candidates

Candidate Name: Christopher Peguero
City Council District: 2

1. Many employers in the downtown and center city neighborhoods—including the City of Seattle—fully or partially cover the cost of ORCA transit passes for their employees. Incentivizing public transit and reducing drive-alone commuting is especially important during the next five years, with the “Seattle Squeeze” creating challenging traffic conditions. However, many employers don’t provide any transit pass subsidy. Anecdotally, higher-paid workers are more likely to receive employer-subsidized passes than lower-wage workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color. Many lower-wage workers earn too much to be eligible for the ORCA LIFT low-income reduced fare program, but not enough to afford housing in Seattle without being severely cost-burdened. For the following questions, please choose either Yes or No. You may explain your answers if you like.

- Do you think employers of a certain size should subsidize employee transit passes? Yes
- Would you support city council action to make this a requirement? Yes
- Do you think the City should cover the costs of transit passes for employees of human service providers that are funded by city contracts? Yes

2. Report after report—notably the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in October 2018—tell us we need to cut carbon emissions dramatically NOW. What will you do to put Seattle on the path to decarbonization?

My job at Seattle City Light has always directed my work towards reducing our carbon footprint and creating a space for people of color to partner up with Seattle City Light and drive community solutions. I will create a way to incentivize employers to give their employees a subsidized bus pass or means to use public transportation. Parking around the city is not easy, by providing an orca pass or something similar to my hope is that it will reduce our carbon footprint as a whole and make public transportation accessible especially to folks who cannot afford to pay $4 a day to get on the light rail or bus. This along with the proposition of Seattle Green New Deal will be what I will act on to reduce our carbon footprint.

3. What is one community, specifically in your district, that you feel is being “left out” as our city grows and changes? What will you do to make sure their voices are heard?

My focus will be with tribes, immigrant and refugee communities, people of color, low-income and limited English proficient folks, simply because when it comes to movements of enviromentalism and even LGBTQ rights, there has been a common demographic that has always had a seat at the table. In Seattle and more specifically, District 2; we are facing environmental racism and the exclusion of Trans Black woman and nonbinary folks. Environmental racism affects people of color in low income communities at a much higher rate than those that live away from the area of noise, water and air pollution. I will bring the concerns of these communities onto the table, as I have always made sure to do at Seattle City Light.

4. What should the City’s role in creating a healthy climate for business in Seattle?
5. Seattle has the most regressive tax system of any city in Washington State, which has the most regressive tax system of any state in the US. Do you believe that the City has a responsibility to raise significant new revenue to address the challenges facing our communities? If so, what tax policies would you advocate for at the city level to generate new revenue?

The city needs to take a leadership role in lobbying the state to create a more progressive capital gains tax and progressive income tax, if that doesn't happen the city needs to start its own process towards a progressive tax structure in order to address the challenges our community is facing.

6. Seattle is deeply divided on how to address the homelessness crisis. How would you characterize these divisions, and how would you address them?

There is a group of people in the city that would like to criminalize homelessnes instead of recognizing the structural income inequality that forces our homelessnes crisis, too many people in Seattle believe that poverty is self inflicted on the other hand there is a group of us that would want to create affordable housing in all sides of the scale, by increasing the funding for affordable housing and mental health treatment to create a path out of poverty so every person has a chance to have a better quality of life.

7. There is widespread agreement that all areas of response to the homelessness crisis need to be stepped up— but in practice, an elected official's job is often to prioritize. How would you rank the following in terms of relative priority for increased funding and attention? (1=highest, 4=lowest)
You may explain your choice, but if you fail to rank the options, we will not consider your answer.

- Homelessness prevention (1, 2, 3, 4) 1
- Mental health and drug treatment services (1, 2, 3, 4) 2
- Low-income housing (1, 2, 3, 4) 4
- Emergency shelter (1, 2, 3, 4) 3

8. What lessons do you think should be drawn from the experience of the “head tax” last year?

The result of the head tax has taught us that money and interest have a powerful sway in our city government and that messaging is important. There must be clear and honest information given to all parties affected by proposed legislation that way there can be space made to find a consensus among most parties. Big corporations are driving rent prices up and causing the displacement of people in all areas of Seattle, if the issue of them taking advantage of their power within the city is not addressed, we will not find a solution in a timely manner.