Transit Riders Union Questionnaire for 2019 Seattle City Council Primary Candidates

Candidate Name: Ami Nguyen
City Council District: 3

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— tells us we need to cut carbon emissions dramatically NOW. What will you do to put Seattle on the path to decarbonization?

I want to make sure that our decarbonization efforts are accessible to people of all incomes. I would vote to renew the Move Seattle Levy to invest in public transportation, providing free access to low-income and disabled riders. Providing safer and expanding bike lanes will encourage alternative ways to travel. We also need to provide more electric car charging stations to encourage more low emission driving. I would advocate for incentive programs for homeowners and property owners (for renters) to replacing older furnaces to with electric furnaces.

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?

Immigrant/Refugee communities are being “left out.” We need to commit to more outreach with translated/interpreted outreach and meetings during hours that are convenient for the immigrant/refugee community.

4. What should the City’s role be in creating a healthy climate for business in Seattle?

Creating a healthy climate for businesses also means creating a healthy climate for customers and residents. It is extremely important to ensure that businesses thrive so they can also continue providing employment and resources for the community.
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?

I would advocate for capital gains tax.

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

Sweeps: some residents want the sweeps to stop while others think it should continue more aggressively. Jailing: some do not see jailing as a solution to the chemical dependency/addiction crisis, which others see jailing as a necessary “intervention.” Resources to homeless communities: some people believe that we need to provide more resources to the homeless communities and others believe that providing these resources are drawing too many homeless people from out of State.

People are compassionate about helping the homelessness communities, but they have different methods for approaching the crisis. The City Council needs to develop a long-term goal and plan for addressing the homelessness crisis so that we are clear about our strategy. With a set goal, people will have less anxiety and will be able to provide a lending hand to reaching the goal together. Without a strong and set goal, we are beginning to see anxious communities express inhumane methods of treating people who already have a multitude of challenges.

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

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

Very good question. No policy is going to receive 100% support, but our democracy relies on the ability for people to be heard. Our City Council lost a lot of trust from our constituents during the head tax because people from both sides (for/against the tax) felt that they were not heard. People felt that there was a lot of back door negotiations. We need to remember that there are special interest groups out there that might have a louder mic than individuals, but at the end of the day, Council Members serve the people. The people need to be heard and represented.