Transit Riders Union Questionnaire for 2019 Seattle City Council Primary Candidates

Candidate Name: Cathy Tuttle
City Council District: 4

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/No) Yes
- Would you support city council action to make this a requirement? (Yes/No) 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/No) Yes. But why just human service providers? Could city contracts include a transit pass clause generally?

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 have a plan for that. See my Green New Deal 2019-2023 plan that I released when I launched my campaign in March. See also my answers to question #3 #4 and #5.

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?
Small business owners and employees are left out, as well as people who do service, teaching, and health care jobs in my NE Seattle district. These folks often want to live closer to their workplaces but cannot afford to do so. Not everyone wants to commute from far away. It is critical that we amplify their voices -- through stories, videos, photos, and press releases. Many owners and employees of businesses that people in my district consider integral to the community cannot afford to live in district, or in Seattle. The teachers and staff at our district schools and service providers are increasingly experiencing the same lack of affordability and long commutes. Hearing from people who work in my district but have extremely long commutes will help to inform and elicit support for local workforce housing from people who are fortunate enough to live close in Seattle.

4. What should the City’s role be in creating a healthy climate for business in Seattle?
We can create zoning that encourages nodes of healthy connected neighborhoods that include easy walks to transit, schools, parks, gathering places, shopping, sidewalks, restaurants, bike
paths, libraries, and more. Puget Sound Sage, a local environmental justice nonprofit, calls for Resiliency Hubs, taking real estate out of speculative markets at transit hubs and investing in housing, walking, and community assets. What I’m proposing is even more than transit oriented development, and is an idea that could and should spread beyond light rail stations and to transit nodes generally. It’s good for the economy, environment, and social well-being for the people of Seattle to live in dense walkable neighborhoods.

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?
   1. Congestion pricing soon! We can definitely do this with minimal equity impacts.
   2. Put a value on curb space -- price parking AND driveways -- all in the public right-of-way.
   3. Figure out how to raise money on real estate speculation.
   4. B&O tax that has a small business proviso so that higher net value companies end up contributing more.

6. Seattle is deeply divided on how to address the homelessness crisis. How would you characterize these divisions, and how would you address them?
   It’s a continuum:
   1. Send homeless people away. (They’re just coming to Seattle because we take good care of people).
   2. Round up chronically homeless people and put them in barracks on some island - out of sight, out of mind.
   3. Arrest and jail everyone who is using opioids or methamphetamines. Also prosecute all petty crime.
   4. Make everyone with substance use disorders accept treatment or be involuntarily committed.
   5. Sweep unsanctioned camps and don’t allow car camping in designated parking lots.
   6. Provide shelter and warm meals on cold nights.
   7. Build lots of tiny houses and make people live in them because tiny homes are so cute.
   8. Provide toilets, and other sanitation services to all camps.
   9. Build permanent supportive housing.

I’ve knocked on over 3,500 doors to date. Many of the people I talk to are still fixated on the first seven numbers of the continuum. I can often bring them to step #8. I am still working to get people to accept it is fiscally and morally the right choice to go right to step #9. However, I am also talking to people who are actually building affordable housing and providing permanent supportive housing and wraparound services, including lawmakers, directors of nonprofits like Bellwether Housing, and other people leading Seattle in addressing homelessness. Part of my job is to listen to the people of my district, and part of my job is to lead. When it comes to homelessness, I am listening and will continue to listen, but I will also take the lead on building permanent supportive housing. I am currently working on a plan, based on the knowledge and
recommendations of experts I speak to, that will fully fund the affordable housing and social services we need to address homelessness.

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.
   - 1. Homelessness prevention
   - 2. Low-income housing
   - 3. Mental health and drug treatment services
   - 4. Emergency shelter (I put it last, but I won’t stop funding shelter!)

8. What lessons do you think should be drawn from the experience of the “head tax” last year?
The main lesson that should be drawn from the head tax experience is that we need to have support from the majority of stakeholders before presenting a plan to big businesses in Seattle. If small businesses, labor, and Seattle communities are fully behind a plan, it is hard for bigger businesses to shut it down. We also should learn that we need clear goals and recommendations for how the revenue from a tax will be used before putting it up to the public. I would come prepared with a fully vetted plan that has tons of community, labor, and small business support before asking larger businesses to pay their fair share.