

# Joe Rowe For House District 44

**1. General Approach.** The City of Portland is often named the best bicycling city in the country. At the same time, car vehicle miles traveled are increasing while traffic congestion grows. Why do you think more Portlanders don't walk, bicycle, or take transit for transportation, and what will you do to help Portland (especially your legislative district) become an even better city to bike in, as well as a great city to walk and take transit?

As a member of the Oregon House my general approach would be to lobby other lawmakers and inform the public. Lawmakers have a platform to motivate citizens and encourage people to lobby every lawmaker and bureau of transportation. This is what I have done on a personal level to help transportation in Portland. In the 1990's I did this in San Francisco; Most importantly I would seek to compile a foundation of lawmaker research that can inform future Oregon transportation decisions.

We have a large gap in the data. We need to find people who want to drive less. We need to know their quantity, and we need to know exactly what changes would get them on a bike, bus, train or sidewalk. This was the question I wrote for the Feb 7th, 2012 Mayoral Debate on transportation. It was picked out of hundreds. The answer is simple: Our surveys fall short, and many people will not feel safe on a bus or bike unless we spend money to understand and serve the needs of these individuals.

We also can't ignore the history that's prevented us from reaching this goal. We often can't help this target audience due to human roadblocks. Those roadblocks include decision making transportation staff and elected persons. While Portland has made headlines, we have also seen many low cost opportunities delayed or lost; time and money are redirected away from safe and sustainable transportation alternatives.

**2. Choices and Public Perception.** Critics of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects often contend cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users don't pay their fair share in road taxes and other user fees. How would you make the case for allocating funds for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects?

The freeloading Max & cyclist myths can be addressed with diligent and persistent lobbying and public outreach. These myths are false, and most major cities are mimicking the leadership of Portland's bike, transit and light rail pioneering. None the less, the public perception often suffers when the media damage public support for funding bike, transit and pedestrian projects. These myths will persist over time, and decrease. Time and activism will prevail.

If bikes represent a 6% commute rate, and transit represents 15% then we should be funding those at those levels or above. Bikes and transit are underfunded in Portland.

There are a large number of activists and groups in Portland who make it their passion to build case

studies showing the many benefits for funding bike, pedestrian and transit projects.

I have been an active contributor to the AROW, Portland's Active Right of Way group. Another example is Portland's Chris Smith. He's an activist and steward of the website

<http://www.thecaseforcycling.com>

One of the first public events for the Bike Walk Vote PAC was a large public meeting on April 4th, 2012. Before that meeting I met with Peter Welte and lobbied to change the agenda so that the audience could quickly vote on priorities. The results showed the top 2 audience priorities: stopping the CRC and securing equitable funding for transportation.

If elected, I would use my existing work and these vast grassroots community resources to continue making the case for equitable spending of transportation taxes and user fees.

<http://bikeportland.org/2013/10/30/city-auditor-survey-shows-portlands-continued-cycling-stagnation-96367>

**3. State Funding for Active Transportation.** HB 1700 from 1971 (ORS 366.514) requires the state set aside at least 1% of the highway fund to build bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Meanwhile, one-quarter of Oregonians (roughly a million people) are too poor, young, old or infirm to drive. Do you feel that the 1% is an adequate allotment to fulfill the safety and transportation needs of the ever-increasing bicycling and pedestrian community? If not, what would you do to change it?

See my answer to the previous question. I do not feel that the current 1% funding is adequate. Oregon must reward and promote the public for transportation choices that save us money, and tax the public when transportation choices put a much more costly burden on our society.

**4. Traffic Safety.** Traffic-related crashes are the top cause of death and injury for Oregonians aged 1 to 34. Pedestrian injuries and deaths are a serious problem in Oregon, with one serious injury a day and one death a week, encompassing 14% of traffic deaths in Oregon and 30% of deaths in Portland. Not surprisingly, most walkers and cyclists are injured or killed on busy streets. How will you improve traffic safety for walkers and bicyclists, especially for youth?

Traffic speed is the leading factor in crashes (even above alcohol), and one of the largest contributors to whether a crash is fatal. Is safety the highest priority of the transportation system? If so (or if not) what policy and implications does that have, especially when it comes to slowing cars and protecting vulnerable roadway users? Will you commit to a Vision Zero strategy calling for zero tolerance for road fatalities and commit to developing standards and policies to reach those goals?

Yes. I would be proud to commit to a Vision Zero strategy of road safety being promoted in Portland. One must aim for 100% safety.

The city has a history of resisting low cost safety adjustments. I had to fight to improve the safety of a

very unsafe re-design of an intersection at North Albina and Holman. The issues involved serious dangers to pedestrians resulting from both legal and illegal parking. A simple change of paint solved both problems, but it took almost 18 months of video, photos and communication. Dangerous bike lanes were also changed to sharrows. This example shows what can be done, and what barriers existed to my own battle.

How can we meet the Vision Zero goals? To begin slowing cars and protecting vulnerable users we must allow the public a timely and easy way to refine all the unsafe areas in their neighborhoods. Often there are no advocates speak up for the dead or injured. In these cases the state and local transportation departments should be given funding for staff who have the sole job to audit & revise all locations resulting in a death or significant injury. Currently many serious collisions lack a police report. Many deaths continue in the same spots known to be a death trap. Police fail to even investigate unless a death occurs. In a recent case the media helped bring justice.

<http://bikeportland.org/2013/08/21/police-finally-issue-bulletin-reward-notice-on-barbur-hit-and-run-case-92759>

**5. Sensible Traffic Laws.** For over 30 years, Idaho has had a law allowing cyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs, and come to a rolling stop instead of a complete stop (out of understanding of the laws of physics and the excessive use of stop signs on neighborhood streets). Over those last 30 years, Idaho police departments have seen no increase in safety problems, and have provided testimony in favor of the law. The Oregon legislature has considered passing a similar law in Oregon, but has failed to. What are your views on such a proposal?

I would sponsor, co-sponsor and vote for such a proposal. I think many people in the public would offer unanimous support if the law was made very clear and slightly improved. This would also prevent the media from blowing the issue into an attack on cyclists. Concerns of motorists are important, and can be addressed.

**6. CRC Highway Mega-project.** There has been a lot of pressure to build the most expensive public works project in the region's history, the five-mile long highway project known as the Columbia River Crossing. Despite being a multi-billion dollar project, bicycle and pedestrian facilities involved are substandard, including an under-highway mile-long path, a five-block corkscrew detour into Vancouver, and a mostly minimum-width-allowed 16-foot path width, all for a facility designed to serve the next 100 years. The project is diverting billions of dollars from other regional priorities to build an expansion that won't solve congestion. What are your views on the mega-project and what would you do about its funding as a legislator?

The CRC needs to die, and stay dead. We can do so much better with less money.

In 2009 I realized that all democrats from Portland supported the CRC, with the exception of 3 lawmakers. I called every single one of them that Spring, and none of them wanted to go on record with their support. Now that the facts are out and the tide has turned we have a great opportunity to create a sustainable transportation solution over the Columbia River.

The Common Sense Alternative design proposed by many activists and myself can solve the real problems in the project area. The CSA creates better results with less money when compared to the CRC design.

I have been working with a group of 10-30 activists over the last 6 years to stop the CRC and promote the CSA. Over the last 18 months I have sent ongoing action alerts and updates to over 350 people who have signed my petition. This work helped secure several key meetings to halt the CRC and promote the CSA. I have gone to Salem a half dozen times, and attended over 20 public meetings on the CRC.

In 2014 and 2015 I will continue to lobby lawmakers as a fellow lawmaker or citizen. I will help adopt the CSA plan or another sustainable and active transportation plan for the region.

**7. Cleaner Transportation, Better Choices through Land Use.** Smart land use planning has a huge effect on how many people use transportation choices. In 2010, legislators passed Senate Bill 1059, which requires Metro to make its land use planning decisions lead to specific reductions in global warming pollution. It also requires Eugene-Springfield to plan on how it would accomplish such reductions. Would you support an effort to provide \$300,000 for a grant to do scenario planning for one of Oregon's other four Metro areas, which would be designed as a competitive pilot effort to model how Salem/Keizer, Corvallis, the Rogue Valley, or Bend could reduce their transportation pollution? If so, how would you go about finding that funding?

Yes! I would support \$300,000 to meet our existing goals. Funding could be found from a variety of sources: Federal Grants, Foundations, and gas taxes. We can increase taxes on new land developments that put a burden on transportation, and we can increase fees on vehicles that more significantly pollute. Oregon needs a tax reform effort. We need to increase taxes on highly profitable corporations, and we need to make tax returns public. With this type of open tax system the public can close the loopholes that are fully legal but often exploited by highly profitable businesses. If we can't cut off these exploitations for the rich, we are doomed.

**8. Transit funding.** Transit systems throughout the state continue to struggle to make ends meet, especially in their quest for operating funds. In response, often service is cut while fares are increased. While the payroll tax cap was increased in 2009, it only increased for some cities. If you think public transit funding is inadequate, what sources of funds would you work increase or create as a legislator?

See my answers above and below. Funding for transportation is inadequate. Tax the rich. Increase taxes on highly profitable corporations. These legally tax dodging corporations do provide some new jobs, but we must not accept those jobs when it is taxpayers who pay the salaries. It's worth noting that the

profits from these new jobs wind up as profits for the corporations. We must bring the system into a new era of equity. It is time to show these businesses that paying fair taxes will result in a better climate for business.

**9. Transportation Equity.** Recent census data show nearly 10,000 people of color, mostly African Americans, have moved from Portland's city core to the city's eastern edges over the past ten years. East Portland has much sparser sidewalks and bikeways, grocery stores and parks, and less access to transit. How would you ensure these increasingly diverse and historically under- invested neighborhoods are revitalized for their current residents? How would you improve transportation choices for low income communities and communities of color?

I saw many of my student's families from Jefferson high school migrating out of North Portland for the suburbs. There are many possible solutions. Here are some ideas: I would seek to reverse the damage done by draining taxpayer funds from far East Portland to line the pockets of PDC developers building brew pubs on Mississippi Avenue. The recent PDC handouts to Trader Joe's is yet one more example of many. PDC has wasted millions in the Lentz neighborhood and ignored the neighbors. As a lawmaker I would draft a law that outlawed PDC and taxpayer funded gentrification. A revised PDC could easily identify new social justice development zones by finding homes near Title I schools. It would limit PDC spending to the narrow confines of sidewalks, parks, healthy grocery vendors, and transit. Neighbors would be given direct oversight and input of development distributions. Rural counties would also benefit from these reforms. There is a report called "Why Johnny can't walk to school" that provides a good insight into problems and solutions.

**10. Health.** How will you make sure that transportation priorities support Oregon's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals?

I would draft or co-sponsor legislation that revised our statutes to better integrate these goals. This would then make the efforts enforceable and clear.

**11. Personal Example and Understanding.** How do you currently travel around town, and how do you commute to work?

On a weekly basis I use my car, car2go membership, walking, bike, cargo bike, and the following Trimet lines: 4, 44, 35, 75. I buy my tickets on my smart phone, and plan my trips with TriMetTrackerApp I commute to work mostly by car. Once or twice a month I commute to work with a folding bike and a 55 minute ride on the #35 bus.

**12. Past active transportation accomplishments.** What are your specific accomplishments in helping improve conditions for bicycling, walking and accessing transit in Portland region, or other places?

See my examples in the above questions. I have been a media watch activist when there is bias against public transit and cyclists. I have worked with OPAL and attended meetings of Trimet to help reduce

the damage from board decisions that adversely affect low income people. I've been a BTA member for 6 years. I was able to create a solution when the Bike Transportation Alliance was unable to move a pole out of the bike lane on the Broadway bridge. I had help from many activists, Chris Smith and the local media.

**13. Vision.** Five years from now, what will you say when asked, "Over the past five years, what has the State accomplished with regard to transportation and what was your influence on that?"

I was not here to battle the Mt Hood freeway, but I am proud to say that I did everything I could to fight the CRC freeway and promote alternatives.

If I become elected to the house I will be proud to say that I set an example for by finding another career for lawmakers who mislead the public and act as the primary salesperson for the most wasteful and costly public works project in our state's history.

If I don't win the may election, I will be proud that my campaign resulted in more registered voters, and more neighbors who worked together to seek fair taxes, cleaner air, and the reduction of power from corporations and special interests.

**14. Campaign Viability.** What makes you a viable candidate for state Representative? How do you differentiate yourself from you opponent?

I am a viable candidate. Why? Because progressive Portland voters in North Portland do not want a career politician who puts profit above people. My opponent makes no apology for supporting the CRC using fear and deception. My opponent frequently abandons progressive lawmakers and votes with right wing conservatives. My opponent has taken over \$950,000 into her PAC over the 7 previous years. Monsanto has been a contributor to several PACs that then contributed to my opponent. One key example here is HB863. This law was part of the grand bargain of 2013 and designed by my opponent. HB863 Protects Monsanto and prevents local farming communities from creating safeguards against GMO pollution. For a longer list of why I'm viable, and my opponent is vulnerable visit these URLs <http://electjoerowe.com/tina> or <http://electjoerowe.com/money>

**15. Transportation Network.** The reach of expensive, high-capacity transit investments is typically limited to corridors and town centers. At the same time, the bus system that feeds into the high capacity system is experiencing significant service cuts. What is your strategy for developing true geographic and demographic equity in the region's transportation network?

We should follow suggestions of progressive transit planners such as Jim Howell and engineers in ODOT and PBOT who support active transportation. In my neighborhood it would help if staff at Trimet, ODOT and PBOT made some simple and low cost adjustments.

Here are some transportation network ideas:

- A diverse set of small transit hubs would be an example of a great low cost transit solution. The #8

bus previously terminated in the Jantzen Beach area. It's now looping in a way that lacks benefit and creates excessive noise and pollution for neighbors. The #8 could be routed in the Kenton area and link up with the following lines: Yellow line, #75, #4 A properly located break area for drivers would solve the noise and bus parking concerns.

- The #35 bus could have express busses in commute hours. These would make fewer stops and cut 10 minutes from the transit time from North Portland to Downtown. Another 15 minutes could be cut from Portland to Clackamas.

- PCC could easily re-design their shuttle bus service and offer students free Tri-Met passes. This would get more students to class quicker and save money for students and the college. Many students needlessly spend a large chunk of their loans on parking lots and cars. PCC Bond money should go to make space for child care centers and classrooms, not parking lots.

- Bus Rapid Transit would be a great solution for many suburban Portland Arteries with dense housing areas. Portland could follow the vision of Chicago's BRT project. I grew up in Chicago near the proposed endpoint of this project: Irving Park Road and Ashland Avenue. It's a 16 mile innovation that works with Chicago's highly functional elevated rail and commuter rail options.