

Bob Zahrowski For Multnomah County

Commission District 2

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 and Washington County become an even better city to bike in, as well as a great city to walk and take transit?

First I think it's safety. We need to do as much as possible to separate the vehicles at one ton plus, and high rates of speed, from the bicycles and pedestrians. I also encourage the continuous improvements and expansion of bike lanes on the major arterial for the commuters, although these are best suited for the more agile riders. I am no longer a part of that group. From my personal experience, my wife and I enjoy the multi-use paths separated from the vehicle traffic. A great example are the pathways under the power lines. A great use of land which already has the right-of-way and requires no excessive costs. I would really like to see these expanded in the district.

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?

I feel we all pay for it in our taxes. We could institute a small bike tax or license fee, but on the other hand, bikers don't pollute and deserve an incentive. It is a larger picture that I would like to explore to make a better education position. Just for an idea, suppose there was a bike tax devoted to establishing pathways and safety education for commuters. For walking, biking, and driving safety. We have pedestrians who do not cross at a crosswalk on 185th. With the high rate of speed posted at 40 (in reality most are doing 45-50) the potential of a serious if not fatal accident is just waiting to happen.

I would advocate for more community education of the laws for both drivers and bikers. I feel many people do not know or understand the vehicle vs pedestrian rights and laws. I, personally, experienced a biker riding on the sidewalk at 25+mph in the opposite direction of car traffic. I was turning right, and due to a curve and just not expecting a bike on the sidewalk in the wrong direction, I had a narrow miss. These are major issues that need to be addressed.

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?

I would need to look at the state's planning; but am most concerned with Washington County.

We have long avoided addressing the importance of bike lanes and it is now a high priority.

I need to take some time to think about if the 1% is adequate, I really have not studied this.

I would encourage discussion with land use/transportation, bike groups and the community at large. From my discussions with Dick Schouten, he is the leader and has a good understanding of the issues in Washington County. I would look to his opinion and leadership. Mutual respect of each other's strengths is critical as a Commissioner.

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?

Part of the planning for youth is the installation of crosswalks and stop signs in the higher density home areas which have a higher density of younger pedestrians and bicycles. Everyone has the right to share the roads and each person needs to be held accountable for their actions. I am in favor of the new crosswalks that have been installed on West Union and others to provide a safety crossing are great investments.

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?

Idaho is not Oregon, and is the congestion really the same? I believe its up to each and every community to monitor this and not pass it off to the regulators in Salem. There are places where a rolling stop makes sense, especially for those longer riders as commuters who use the clip in technology and fully understand the risks involved if they collide with a vehicle. It does not make sense for an unstable rider or inexperienced rider to not stop and look before crossing oncoming traffic. I personally am in the latter category at my age.

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?

I have to state my honest opinion, I think you are asking for something I truly believe in, and I believe that these dollars would be better spent in our neighborhoods serving the many not the few. Until convinced otherwise that is my firm take on this issue. I might add I am one who deals in logic not emotions. We need to get the best use from our dollars.

7. 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 to increase or create as County Commissioner?

If it is not working the solution is not throw more money at a problem. The solution is to think out of the box, and look for creative solutions which solve the problem. For this I am very willing to listen to those who are smarter and better versed than I am for creative solutions.

8. Transportation Equity. How would you improve transportation choices for low income communities and communities of color?

I personally have low-income relatives. Some of the best transportation is available to them, but they choose not to use it. I asked why; they do not feel safe! They came from a small community, see the news of the big city, and they will not even trust the best system we could get for them, (Tri-met's lift system). I believe the choices are important, especially the time it takes to get from one place to another. My response to question #1 still stands, not only improving safety but having the perception of safety is critical. There are no easy answers to complex problem.

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

Of course I support this, but electric is not a single solution for emission reduction, the more we use the greater the need for generation. Are we just moving the pollution to someone else?

Locally we need to focus on the greatest impact. A small downward change in the gas mileage of a vehicle is not significant, to a lot of high gas mileage vehicles standing still in a traffic jam. The best impact over the longer term might be to reduce the traffic bottlenecks.

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

We do use Max, and I am looking forward to May where I will become an Honored Citizen. Looking at using a golf-cart in Rock Creek to go to the store, and sell our two cars for one electric vehicle. Currently I do not have the time to get to work from Rock Creek to Wilsonville where I teach at the university in any sort of feasible manner other than driving. Other than that both my wife and I work out of the house an efficient commute, as technology continues to develop I would hope many others could do the same. This also puts more wages in the hands of parents vs. daycare.

11. 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?

I am very proud of my accomplishment in getting a stoplight (before Westview) as a part of the MSTPII development on 185th across from Rock Creek Elementary School I would be happy to elaborate on this one!

12. 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?"

Strong emphasis in connecting the older communities with sidewalks, and meeting a safe walking environment conducive to a healthy lifestyle. Continue the vision of Land Use & Transportation with their work on metrics to offer developers some options which design the community to best suit the needs of the people who live there.

I hope to see I have had an impact with a happy community which is safe, and prosperous, and they feel the county cares about what is important to them and they have had their needs met

13. Campaign Viability. What makes you a viable candidate for county commission? How do you differentiate yourself from you opponent?

I wish to return to the community what it has given to me. I will be happy to elaborate on why I have this passion as well as the specific skills I will bring to the position.

14. 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?

I believe there is room for significant improvements. Such as, for some routes is the time schedule currently used the best one? Before we just cut services, we need to look for options. I am a person who asks a lot of questions and challenges the existing system, looking for a process improvement. Its what I do, and have done for of 30 years. Saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, this is documented.

15. Infrastructure. Given the strong support among county residents for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, what kind of infrastructure improvements would you like to see? What are your thoughts on bicycle lanes on arterials, cycle tracks, bike boulevards, as well as pedestrian facilities like sidewalks and crossings, and multi-use paths?

There are times when the best solution depends on the study to be done prior. Again as I said before each case is its own in terms of cost effectiveness, # of users, design efficiency, safety, local community desires based on demographics.

All of the options listed above are viable and great options, I would support each one. But a realistic and best cost scenario needs to be applied to each location. If you were to stripe a bike path in front of my house it would a serious waste of money better utilized in another neighborhood.

16. 34-210. What are your views on Measure 34-210 in the City of Tigard? How would you respond to future measures that oppose high-capacity transit projects?

Just because you build it does not mean they will come... I believe this is best left in the hands of the voters. We do need to have a vision and a plan for the future, and for that we do have to make an investment. I think its important to educate the ones who this affects regarding why the projects are important.

17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I believe that the approach of getting citizens to share their vision and promoting understanding vs conflict will go a long way in a unified vision as well as a future for Washington County.