

Bike Walk Vote

Deborah Kafoury for Multnomah County Chair
February 2014

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

Answer: First, I would like to say that climate change requires that we make a concerted effort, with some pretty drastic changes in our way of life, otherwise, it's only going to get worse. This includes changing the way we get to and from work – and around our community in general.

Certainly, the top barriers are safety, accessibility and connectivity. Even though we have made measurable progress, we certainly need a more robust and connected system of transit, more sidewalks in every neighborhood – particularly in east Portland and east County – and bike lanes. With each level of government having a different portfolio of transportation responsibilities, getting there certainly takes not only more funding, but also a continued coordination on both the policy and investment fronts.

Also, in addition to taking responsibility in our personal lives and seeing that government works across jurisdictional divides, individual employers can take the lead and help to foster change with how employees get to and from work. I've done this as a county commissioner.

Last year, my office conducted a survey of County employees to determine the barriers that exist for people bicycling to work. From that I know what my next steps will be as Chair. I will create more bike parking facilities, alert employees to which buildings have shower and locker facilities and provide additional travel time between meetings for those employees that choose to bike commute.

As I had to resign my position to run for Chair, this project is on hold, and I'm excited to get back to work on it after the election.

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?

Answer: I've certainly heard this complaint, but have found that making the case that these investments reduce congestion on our roads is a strong one. In one-on-one discussions, it has been my experience that it is effective.

The second argument that helps is a more practical one. Not only can our roads not handle continued increases in traffic capacity, but there is also a limited ability to expand the roads that do exist. There is no room to expand most of our major arteries – and with this having little sustainability value in the long term – it also means that this is not a wise use of our limited dollars.

The writing is on the wall and our transportation policy carried out by our elected leaders needs to follow suit.

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?

Answer: No, I don't – and I'm proud to share that in practice, Multnomah County spends more than one percent of state highway revenues on bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This practice of exceeding the state requirements will continue under my leadership.

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?

Answer: Multnomah County's transportation portfolio does not include roads within the city of Portland. All roads and streets within the incorporated boundaries of the city of Portland were transferred to the city in 1985. Transfers also occurred with the cities of Fairview, Gresham and Troutdale at later dates. However, we do retain jurisdiction over the six Willamette River bridges and about 300 miles of roads, in the regional network outside of Portland.

We certainly need to take responsibility for the safety of the roads that are within our jurisdiction, but the Chair certainly has an additional responsibility to use his or her voice when it comes to transportation policies that affect the cities – and the

community members – that are within our borders. As you know, the city has experimented with different bike lane placements and I would like to look closely at what has been learned.

Moreover, as recently reported in The Oregonian, east Portland experienced a major expansion of affordable housing in the late 90s and early 2000s – as prescribed by the city of Portland. What the city failed to do was to include associated improvements, like sidewalks and parks. This can never happen again – and because of the families the County serves and the need to focus intensely eastward, I can assure you that as Chair, I will pay close attention to this issue.

The County's primary focus is the health, well-being and safety of our families. This includes ensuring that working parents can get to and from work –and in between two different jobs – and kids can get to school – efficiently and safely. That means more sidewalks, crosswalks and bike lanes – in every neighborhood.

◦ 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?

Answer: Safety is the highest priority – and as Chair, I will commit to working with you on the components of a Vision Zero strategy. Certainly speed is the number one factor; next, I've seen various studies on traffic calming strategies – speed bumps, traffic circles, separated bike lines – and these have different impacts on traffic safety in general, and on bicyclists, specifically. This effort requires coordination with our cities and with our community partners in the transportation arena.

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?

Answer: I would appreciate knowing more from the bicycle community on this question and to learn more about the experience in Idaho. As someone who commutes by both car and bicycle, I want to hear from bicyclists that they would in fact feel safe – and to compare the density of the bicycle traffic in Idaho with that of

Portland and surrounding communities. Additionally, I think roads deep within neighborhoods are different from those on the edge and that link to main arteries. Again, would appreciate hearing your thoughts on this issue.

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?

Answer: I do believe we need an I-5 bridge able to withstand the earthquake scientists predict is coming, but it needs to be done right – both in terms of incorporating alternative forms of transportation that will reduce congestion long into the future (light rail, bikes and ped) and in terms of the funding package. Without the financial support of Washington State, the cost and future financial risk to Oregon taxpayers is too high.

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 Chair?

Answer: The County budget certainly can't afford to add transit operation dollars to its budget – as our bridges, roads, bike and pedestrian needs are large and growing. However, I would be willing to explore, in partnership with TriMet, the history and potential of changing federal law to allow federal dollars be used for transit operating expenses. It is in our best interest as a nation to increase the use of public transit so, it's worth the effort to see if the federal government would expand the grant dollars currently available for operations and having a small portion of capital construction dollars be used for either.

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

underinvested neighborhoods are revitalized for their current residents? How would you improve transportation choices for low income communities and communities of color?

Answer: Every neighborhood and every family deserves an equal and equitable distribution of services, including the benefits that make a neighborhood a safe, welcoming place to live, work and raise a family. While the County is primarily on the human services side of the equation, I think we've learned from the affordable housing expansion in the late 90s and early 2000s as directed by the city, that there is a need for greater accountability. But the approach can't be just telling the city to do better – no government, business or nonprofits – in a world of declining resources and complex problems – can solve these problems alone; we all need to work together. As Chair, that's the approach I will take.

Before I had to resign my position to run for County Chair, I was working with city officials to coordinate our financial resources and expertise on homelessness and housing. Continuing this work will be one of my top priorities as Chair.

I recently attended an event at Glisan Commons in east Portland. Glisan Commons is an affordable housing development project, done in coordination with Ride Connection and Human Solutions. When the affordable housing project is complete, there will be over 120 homes for low-income families and seniors - with easy access to transportation options and services. This is how to do it right – and it's something we can replicate going forward.

At Multnomah County, we are currently funding bike and pedestrian upgrades in Wood Village and Fairview. The improvements will take place in economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

Additionally, to further answer this question, I will take the opportunity to give credit to all those participating in the truly grassroots effort of the East Portland Action Plan – and specifically the transportation committee that is currently working on a priority list of projects for their area. The work of EPAP is to be commended – and as Chair, the county will be more deeply involved in this effort. We have been at the table, but I think we can be an even stronger voice for this group in their work with the city.

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

Answer: First, at Multnomah County, the commissioners, including myself and in partnership with the city of Portland, adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2009. The goal is to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. As of FY11, emissions from County operations are down 19.4 percent below FY01 levels.

As County Chair, I will ensure that Multnomah County continues to be a leader in this effort.

Second, as mentioned previously, last year, my office conducted a survey of County employees to determine the barriers that exist for people bicycling to work. From that I know what my next steps will be as Chair. I will create more bike parking facilities, alert employees to which buildings have shower and locker facilities and provide additional travel time between meetings for those employees that choose to bike commute.

Third, we should always incorporate green goals in infrastructure projects. The Sellwood Bridge replacement project, which I led as a Commissioner, is the first registered project in Oregon – and one of the largest in the country – to pursue Greenroads certification. Its sustainable features include multi-modal design, waste reduction during construction, and re-using the existing span as a detour bridge to reduce environmental impacts. A similar effort will be made on our next major infrastructure project to replace the downtown county courthouse.

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

Answer: As county commissioner, I led by example and joined our building's team for the BTA Bike-to-Work challenge. While I consider myself a fair-weather biker, I always made an effort to minimize my driving and use carpools as much as possible. My family owns and drives a Prius.

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?

Answer: There are five actions/projects I would like to highlight. The first is the leadership I demonstrated on biking to work that I've mentioned already and will continue as Chair.

The second is that cuts to bus service specifically in east Portland are of deep concern to me – and I have been a strong and vocal opponent to these cuts in the past. Not only is accessible and frequent bus service a must for many of the families we serve – as their economic well-being depends on it – but it is also how we can get people out of their cars and on public transit. We all know that if it's easy to access and efficient in its service, people will use it. I will continue to be an advocate of ensuring equity in our transportation investments – and to hold accountable the city and TriMet in this way.

Third, I will continue to incorporate green goals in infrastructure projects. The Sellwood Bridge replacement project, which I led as a Commissioner, is the first registered project in Oregon – and one of the largest in the country – to pursue Greenroads certification. Its sustainable features include multi-modal design, waste reduction during construction, and re-using the existing span as a detour bridge to reduce environmental impacts. A similar effort will be made on our next major infrastructure project, replacing the downtown county courthouse.

Fourth, I am proud that the new Sellwood Bridge will also include bike and pedestrian lanes that far exceed what is currently offered. As the Sellwood Bridge is an important route for bike commuters, the new bridge will have two 12' shared sidewalks (for bikes and pedestrians) and in addition, two 6.5' bike lanes for faster bike travel.

And lastly, the most fun and iconic project I had the opportunity to work on was installing the bike counter on the Hawthorne Bridge. The funds were raised privately, but County facilities staff installed the counter on the bridge ramp. I would like to see additional bike counters installed on our other commuter bridges.

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?"

Answer: I would like to complete my biking to work project for our employees – and also see that the connectivity and accessibility of transit in east Portland is fully addressed. Our families – and their economic success – depend on it. No working parent should have to stress about waiting an hour at a bus stop in an effort to get to a second job – or wait so long that they miss seeing their children before going to bed. These things matter – for every family.

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

Answer: First, I have served on the commission for the last five years. I have the experience and the relationships necessary to get the job done – and my endorsements prove this point. Of the commissioners that have taken a position in this race, I've got all four standing with me.

I've also got Governor Kitzhaber, Governor Barbara Roberts, former county chair Bev Stein, social service advocates, teachers, business leaders – and over 700 community members listed on my website. I've also got the endorsement of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters.

They are with me because they know I care very deeply about the County's mission and the families served and that I work hard. They have seen me in action and know that I am the honest, accountable leader who can keep the County moving forward.

Second, my main opponent and I have different visions in this race. I want a greater focus, discipline and excellence in the core services the County provides every day. Based on what I've heard from my opponent and seen on his website, I'm worried that the County would lose focus, trying to do and be everything, and in the process doing nothing well, while endangering the services our most vulnerable rely on and our hard won financial stability.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I would appreciate your endorsement in this race. I look forward to working with you to increase the multi-modal opportunities for transportation, not only in East Portland, but in East County as well.