

# Nick Fish for City Council Position 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 (especially your legislative district) become an even better city to bike in, as well as a great city to walk and take transit?

During my tenure on City Council, I have proudly supported City investments in light rail, streetcar, and bike infrastructure. In order to effectively prepare for growth and reduce car miles traveled, City leaders need to demonstrate the value of an integrated network of transportation options. We can and must do a better job of framing the conversation around saving money, improving public health, and reducing our carbon footprint.

Everyone is a pedestrian. But too often, there is a desire to segregate people into categories: motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, etc. Successful transportation planning requires coordinated investments and equitable access.

One of the biggest impediments to more bicycling is the perception that it is dangerous. We need to continue to improve safety for bicyclists and ensure that prospective bicyclists are aware that a safe active transportation network currently exists in Portland.

By helping to make transit more convenient and accessible to all, we can encourage a balanced multi-modal approach where people feel comfortable and empowered to transition into active transportation options.

**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 vast majority of adult bicyclists also own motor vehicles, with vehicle registrations going to support road infrastructure even when their cars are parked at home. Fewer single-occupancy cars on the road mean less traffic for freight to navigate, reducing shipping costs, and reducing pollution. Investing in a multi-modal transportation system is not only good for public health, the environment, and livability, but it's also good for business.

**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 support a larger allotment of highway funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

**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?

o 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?

In 2013, there were 10 pedestrian deaths in Portland. While that is an improvement over previous years, I agree with the Vision Zero goal of zero pedestrian fatalities. One pedestrian fatality is one too many. We should also remember that in 2013 Portland lost 16 to homicides and 35 to traffic fatalities. Traffic safety should also be seen as a public safety issue.

I will continue to support Commissioner Novick's push for safety improvements in East Portland, where the majority of pedestrian deaths have occurred. The East Portland Motion Plan identified safety improvements that we have begun to make. By investing in safety equipment and sidewalks, we will continue to work toward our goal of pedestrian safety throughout the city. We expect to get federal money to build a Southwest in Motion (SWIM) plan that will improve safety as well.

Finally, I agree that reducing speeds in our greenways, where bicyclists can safely commute, is critical. Getting more flexibility from the legislature in 2011 (HB 3150) to set lower speed limits has allowed Portland to be safer for everyone.

**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 understand the sentiment behind the push to change traffic laws, given that this is a fairly simple way to make bike commuting easier and faster and thus more desirable. This issue should not become a wedge in the "driver vs biking" debate, reducing public support for other biking projects.

**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?

I have consistently supported replacing the existing I-5 bridge with one that is seismically safe, and which positively integrates light rail and bike lanes.

**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?

I was proud to support the City-County Climate Action Plan, with a goal of a 40 percent reduction in emissions from 1990 levels by 2030 and an 80 percent reduction by 2050 in Portland and Multnomah County. And I am proud of the work of our partners at Metro, who are doing their part to address global warming. It would be ideal to develop mechanisms to support smart land use planning across the state.

**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?

City, county, and regional governments across Oregon struggled the last several years with tight budgets and rising costs. TriMet, which operates almost all public transit within the Portland area, is no exception. Since TriMet relies upon local payroll tax for approximately half of its revenue, the recession has been especially hard on them. Fortunately, the city has been able to maintain streetcar fares at \$1. With the help of federal grants we have also expanded the streetcar to Portland's Eastside.

As the former Commissioner for Housing, I am painfully aware that service cuts and increased fares hit low-income Portlanders the hardest. I am hopeful that new state and federal initiatives will help control costs over the long term. Continually cutting basic services is unacceptable.

**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 am deeply concerned about the growing inequality in our community – it is one of reasons that I ran for office and placed equity at the heart of my agenda. Throughout my time on Council, I have been a vocal advocate for bringing more opportunities and resources to under-served areas: including E-205, Section 8 reform, 1000 Gardens, meals programs, SUN Schools, and ball fields.

While a vibrant urban core is essential for a healthy city, we must also prioritize transportation options for low-income neighborhoods that often have the greatest need. More importantly, we need to support programs that promote alternative methods of transportation among low-income communities, including the Multnomah County Youth Advisory Council, SUN School Bike Programs, and the Community Cycling Center.

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

By working on both short and long-term projects to create walkable neighborhoods and encourage active transportation, we are preparing for a future less reliant on single-occupancy motor vehicles. Our legislative team continues to prioritize equity for non-motor vehicle improvements in our state transportation funding formulas. I will work to keep our region at the forefront of both climate change and active transportation policy.

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

I walk to neighborhood activities and businesses; ride the MAX, streetcar, and bus; and bike for recreation. Unfortunately, the demands of my job across the city require me to drive my car to work more than I like. But I always look for opportunities for ride-sharing or other ways to reduce my carbon footprint.

**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?

I voted for the Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030, the City-County Climate Action Plan, and supported the allocation of \$2 million of federal funds for a bike share program. I have been a champion for innovative trails and greenways, including the South Waterfront Greenway, Sullivan’s Gulch, the North Portland Greenway, and Gateway Green.

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

Over the next five years, I believe we need a “Marshall Plan” for East Portland. That means new investments in parks and trails, as well as sidewalks and streets.

We need to identify a new revenue source for streets and sidewalks, and to continue to invest in light rail, streetcar, and bike infrastructure.

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

I was elected to the City Council in May, 2008 with 60% of the vote; and re-elected in May, 2010 with 80% of the vote.

I have hired a professional campaign team: Jake Weigler (my consultant), James Barta (campaign manager), Blaine Palmer (fundraising) and Kari Chisholm (digital consultant).

We have raised approximately \$90,000 to date., and earned endorsements from a broad coalition of environmental, labor, education, neighborhood, small business, civil rights, parks, and housing leaders.

I believe I am the best candidate in the race to offer leadership at City Hall on issues of equity and active transportation infrastructure. I also have a record of working collaboratively with our local, regional, state, and national partners.

**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?

Transit corridors bring clear value to our community. They help revitalize neighborhoods and connect low-income residents to better employment opportunities. But it is absolutely true that the benefits of this investment are geographically concentrated. An effective transportation network should embody both high-capacity transit and bus service that connects all of Portland and the surrounding area.

Planning must anticipate not only the capitol construction costs, but also the long-term expense of operation and maintenance. The one solution that is clearly not sustainable is continued fare increases and reduced service, which will only drive ridership down and create further budget pressures on our transit agencies.

**16. Project Funding.** Federally funded improvements, such as the 50s bikeway & SW Vermont projects, are often delayed months or even years because the contract bids come in over budget. What will you do as commissioner to help ensure Portland finishes these projects in a timely manner?

As a Commissioner who has now managed several bureaus, I appreciate the need to bring infrastructure projects in on time and under budget. During my tenure as Parks Commissioner, we were able to achieve a lot with very constrained budgets by focusing on partnerships, outcomes, and accountability. I will continue that approach with the Bureaus under my management and will closely track contractors' progress on all projects.

**17. Future Improvements.** What is your preferred option for future improvements to the 20s bikeway? Would you support removing street parking to connect bike lanes on Foster with bike lanes on 52<sup>nd</sup> Ave in SE?

Since public comment on the 20s bikeway is still being solicited on the options developed by PBOT, it would be inappropriate for me to comment. I look forward to reviewing the results and hope the plan continues to move forward.

**18. PBA and PBOT.** Will you work to convince the Portland Business Alliance to sign off on a plan for a per-month street fee to improve local transportation? If not, why, and what will you do to increase funds for the Bureau of Transportation?

I will work with Commissioner Novick, Mayor Hales, Director Treat, and the community to find a new revenue source for our streets and sidewalks.