

Candidate: Tom Rasmussen
Office: Seattle City Council, Position No. 5

STB Endorsement Questionnaire

Seattle Vehicle License Fee

1. Do you support Proposition 1, the additional \$60 vehicle license fee for transportation?

Yes, I chair the Transportation Committee of the Seattle City Council. I took the lead in creating the Transportation Benefit District and developing Proposition 1 and placing it before the voters.

2. The breakdown of the \$200m in VLF revenue is 29% for road maintenance and safety, 49% for transit speed, reliability, and access improvements, and 22% for freight, bicycles, and pedestrians. The Council will have a lot of influence on how this evolves. Does this strike you as about right? If not, why?

Yes, I believe it is the right mix of maintenance, transit investment and bicycle/pedestrian improvements for what our City needs right now. The flexibility is important so that we can direct funds for where they are most needed in future years based upon what has been accomplished and public priorities.

3. Of the \$100m transit budget, about 40% will go to bus speed and reliability improvements in some of the 15 priority corridors; 18% to engineering and matching funds for streetcar projects; 20% for more trolleybus wire; and 22% to improve access to transit lines. Does this strike you as about right? If not, why?

Yes, I believe this division of our budget priorities allows us to greatly improve our existing transit system, support development of higher capacity options for the future, and encourage more residents to use transit by making it safer, more reliable and convenient.

4. Under what conditions would you vote to send the remaining \$20 of authority to the ballot?

I believe the remaining \$20 of authority would be very beneficial to our City, but the current economic recession means that we must be careful about how much financial help we ask for from our city's residents. When our local economy is stronger and I had certainty of public support I would consider putting the remaining \$20 of authority on the ballot to expand transit options.

5. Do you support the city's recent efforts to adjust public parking rates to demand?

Yes, I do support these efforts. On-street parking rates are an important tool for generating turnover in commercial areas while making it less likely that drivers will cause traffic congestion circling the block looking for that elusive parking spot. Seattle's rates should be set with the goal of having on-street parking turnover rather as a means to raise revenue for the City.

We are continuing to survey on-street parking patterns throughout Seattle and refining the system to allow varying time limitations, day-part rates or sub-area rates.

Statewide Transportation

1. Is there anything about the SR520 bridge project that has to change for you to vote to approve it?

In general I support the SR520 project because we need to replace the bridge for safety reasons while providing better mobility for regional transit. There is regional agreement and the state has already approved the project. Seattle has negotiated an agreement with the state to ensure we continue to have significant influence over the design of improvements in Montlake/Roanoke Park. That agreement will implement a number of transit improvements on the Montlake corridor including dedicated lanes, queue jumps and state participation in development of the new UW Rainier Vista multi-modal node.

2. What new revenue sources would you like to see the state allocate to transit above and beyond the current authority? Check all that apply.

- I don't think we need new taxes for transit.
- I don't care what the state picks; we just need the revenue.
- Motor Vehicle Excise Tax
- Income Tax
- Tolls
- Repeal the sales tax exemption on gasoline
- Repeal other sales tax exemptions
- Higher Sales Tax Rates
- Property Tax
- Vehicle License Fee

3. Cities have begun to launch "road diets", in which four-lane arterials are converted into two lane roads with a center turn lane and bike lanes. Supporters claim this improves bicycle safety, pedestrian safety, and traffic flow by taking left turns out of traffic. Opponents claim this increases congestion. Broadly speaking, do you support or oppose these projects?

Yes, I support them when they can improve safety. I have supported SDOT on road diets (or rechannelizations) such as Nickerson, East Marginal and Airport Way, to ensure safer streets for pedestrians and for safer routes for both experienced bicycle riders and less experienced commuters and recreational riders. Road diets also improve traffic safety by slowing traffic down to posted speeds. Also, I am now working with a community group that is seeking to improve the safety of 35th Ave. SW by road rechannelization.

When SDOT sees opportunities to effectively employ road diets to improve safety, I support the project. In order to address the concerns of opposition I believe that it is important to have SDOT work closely with the community particularly freight companies and the Port of Seattle to show the data and the need for the rechannelization and how safety can be improved.

4. Should the state toll I-90 to balance demand and raise additional revenue?

Yes.

5. Do you support Tim Eyman's I-1125?

No.

Land Use

1. What principles are most important in determining what density limits should apply to a neighborhood?

I look at numerous factors when considering changes in density limits. I believe that we must factor in what such changes do to the character and feel of an area, and I do not want to take away the uniqueness of Seattle's neighborhoods. Also, it is important to provide open space and parks and public amenities to ensure that neighborhoods that become more dense are pleasant and welcoming places to live and work.

I will respect neighborhood plans that reflect the work of the neighborhoods and I will seek out the opinions from community members and organizations when considering these limits. I am also very aware of preserving and protecting historic buildings in our different districts.

I also consider how changes to these density limits will allow us to improve the overall infrastructure of our city – particularly with regard to transit. If the neighborhood is one that will be near to a future Light Rail station, for example, there will be a greater need for more density to encourage use of our mass transit system.

2. Are zoning decisions best made at the city level, as they are currently made?

Yes, I believe that the City has the expertise and staff to make the best zoning decisions – especially when it comes to dealing with individual neighborhoods and engaging the community.

3. Are transit priority treatments for buses (signal priority, queue jumps, bus lanes) a worthwhile expenditure of tax dollars?

Yes. I support spending tax dollars on these priorities because they improve our transit system and encourage more residents to use public transit instead of their cars to get around the city. Investing in our transit infrastructure is vital to Seattle's future and our efforts would be boosted by passage of Proposition 1.

King County Metro

1. Do you support the \$20 Congestion Reduction Charge?

Yes, I was a member of the King County Transit Task Force that successfully worked in Olympia to give King County the authority to approve this charge and preserve our Metro Service.

2. Do you support the new Metro service allocation guidelines, which place less emphasis on geographic equity and more on route productivity?

Yes. I worked on the King County Transit Task Force to base the allocation of our Metro Service on productivity – which will benefit Seattle. With lower revenues resulting in strained financial support for our Metro bus system, we need to make sure the routes we do have are as efficient as possible and focus on areas with the most ridership.

3. If the legislature doesn't grant more authority, would you rather raise fares or cut service?

I do not support raising fares at this particular time, so we would need to make adjustments to make the service we do have more efficient.

4. What other administrative reforms would you like to see Metro undertake?

I would like to see Metro do a better job of providing alternative forms of service in areas it now serves that do not have the appropriate density or demand for regular fixed route service.

Sound Transit

1. Which statement do you agree with more:

Sound Transit must prioritize satisfying local governments and neighborhoods.

Sound Transit must be extremely conservative about approving increases in scope.

2. Which should be a higher priority for Sound Transit in an era of austerity:

Maintaining the scope of signature light rail projects

Preserving smaller capital projects and bus services that spread Sound Transit's benefits over a wider area

3. What administrative reforms would you like to see Sound Transit undertake?

I would like to see Sound Transit become more sensitive to the Transit-Oriented Development plans in station areas. For example, I think they can do a better job with the design of the Roosevelt Station to support building above the station box. I would also like to see Sound Transit do a better job of working with the City to better utilize surplus properties for TOD.

4. Under what circumstances would you support additional funding authority from the legislature for Sound Transit with size and scope of Sound Transit 2?

I would like to see the legislature grant Sound Transit additional authority with the next state transportation package, but I do think we need to ensure permanent stable operating funding for Metro Transit before Sound Transit goes to the voters. With many families struggling in our current recession, we must be careful how much financial support we seek from our area's taxpayers – even when the investments in question are vital to our long-term transportation future.