



Portland Forward Questions: Alisa Pyszka | Candidate for Metro President

1. We are off track to achieve Metro’s climate goals. Every successful candidate says they will work to meet the agency’s climate goals, but entrenched and powerful interests want to continue to invest in 1950’s era habits, which then ends up happening. a) Will you commit to oppose Metro funding/incidental support for projects such as highway capacity expansions that counteract our climate goals? b) How do we alter the power dynamic so that Metro does the right thing for the future health of the region, even in the face of opposition?

I am advocate for building the minimal size of highway improvements necessary by incorporating methods such as congestion pricing to meet the needs of regional growth. I believe mitigating climate change is critical. I am also a pragmatic leader focused on solving problems. We alter the power dynamic by balancing both positions and recognize that compromise is necessary. If we don’t take this approach, we will retain the current culture of inaction coupled with platitudes. To develop a transportation system that mitigates climate change, Metro needs to lead a vision of our regional transportation system as opposed to the current approach of reacting to and accepting distinct projects presented by ODOT.

2. Metro has recently embarked in a new direction with the 2020 houseless services high-earner income tax. How would you rate Metro’s performance, what’s working, what’s not working, and how would you improve?

The status quo is not acceptable, and voters are not receiving what they were promised. Metro has to be accountable to the public. Because of our houseless policy to focus only on permanent housing, our sidewalks are now waiting rooms for solutions to appear. We need to provide immediate interim housing as well as permanent affordable housing. We need to elevate a focus on improving access mental health and drug addiction recovery. Furthermore, it is critical that Metro and the region is measuring the ultimate desired outcome of the voters – are less people living on sidewalks. If more shelter beds are provided, we also need to know if people are using them. When identifying the people placed in affordable housing, it should be clarified if they are people that have been living on sidewalks. Metro needs to convene service providers, as well as collect the right data, to determine if our collective actions are helping houseless individuals live in safe environments and not on sidewalks.

3. Each council is presented with requests to develop over more farm and forest lands by expanding the Urban Growth Boundary. Often businesses apply pressure to the decision

by dangling additional jobs or expanded facilities, and local governments seek to influence the decision to increase their tax base. How will you approach these votes if elected?

I am the only candidate with significant experience in economic development and understands what businesses want and need to expand and thrive. While land is an important component, equally important is access to great talent and elected leadership that values the importance of healthy business for maintaining a resilient economy. As Metro President, I will be able to direct discussions away from a simplistic view that more land alone is all we need to grow the economy. In doing so, I will balance the discussion toward strategic investments regarding the appropriate amount of land and infrastructure required, to minimize impacts on farm and forest land. This approach of pragmatic compromise will allow us to continue to have a resilient economy that grows sustainably. Portland is unique because of its authentic commitment to preserving our natural and resource lands. This sets us apart from other regions across the US and needs to be amplified as a strength to attract investors seeking sustainable communities as a resilient place to invest. Economic development and sustainability are not mutual exclusive. Balancing the growth of our region is important for mitigating climate change and positioning us as innovative leaders.

4. What are the key metrics you think Metro should be using as the basis for determining the agency's success?

The key metric is delivering on the three bonds totaling \$3.6 billion under its control. The most important issue pertains to the \$2.5 billion homeless service bond that was approved in May 2020. The region still does not have a clear plan for immediate solutions to supplement permanent affordable housing. Additionally, Metro is not delivering on the \$475 million parks and open space bond. It has only invested \$9 million in the last two and half years. It has a significant opportunity to immediately clean up and restore Willamette Cove, a potential waterfront park in St. Johns. To date, Metro has only passed a resolution to start planning for development on this site that has been owned by Metro since 1996. No significant allocation of funding has been made.

5. What strategies will you support to bring community into partnership with the agency? How will you ensure community members are better aware and engaged with Metro efforts and investments?

I will establish a culture of going out to the communities and listening. I will then solve their problem or support an opportunity. While it sounds obvious and simple, this is not currently happening. I have heard from at least ten different mayors across the region that meetings with Metro leadership largely involves hearing about what Metro is working on. Few of them feel heard. I will address the problems that are important to them and their communities and focus on delivering a regional agenda as opposed to a personal one.

6. In order to achieve regional carbon reduction goals we need to triple or quadruple our transit ridership. What will you do if elected to make this happen?

I will listen to our communities and address their needs and the type of service they want to increase ridership. Specifically, I will make sure we amplify the calls from suburban mayors to improve east-west bus service. For example, elderly individuals living in Tualatin that need to access medical services in Oregon City must take a bus to downtown Portland, transfer and head back south to Oregon City. This is also an issue for residents in east Multnomah County wanted transit access to employment centers along the Columbia River corridor. Our regional residents want to access transit, but they are not being heard. We simply need to focus on providing service that is desired so that people will use it.