

Duncan Hwang | Candidate for Metro Councilor District 6

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?

Yes, climate justice is one of my top priorities. Last summer, I was alarmed to learn that Jade District elders had to spend their days at Walmart during the heat dome because that was the only cooling center available to them. The action that will fundamentally shift the power dynamic really lies with Oregon’s next governor appointing climate champions to the Oregon Transportation Commission. The OTC governs ODOT and approves freeway widening and other highway projects across the entire state. Metro serves as a regional check, but the primary highway champions with 1950s habits are ODOT engineers. That is why Sunrise youth, for example, are protesting the correct agency. I’m proud to have endorsements from Sunrise PDX, OLCV, and the Street Trust.

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?

Metro’s performance is an “incomplete” as resources have only begun flowing to local jurisdictions in the past few months. Voters passed the measure in May 2020 and it takes an entire year for the new income tax to be collected and then distributed and then local counties to fund their local implementation plans. What’s working is that resources are flowing now, placing 2,000 people into permanent housing and adding 1,600 new shelter beds with much more on the way. What’s not working well enough is different levels of capacity on the provider level across the region. What we’re seeing is that many existing service providers are staffing up, new profits are being created, particularly in underserved counties, and we need to have more uniform standards, training, and data systems across the entire region. I’ve been visiting many of the new providers and capacity building is greatly needed. Metro and our partners need a plan to move from “start up” to a mature service ecosystem as efficiently as possible.

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?

The UGB is a true boon for the Metro region. We are in an affordable housing crisis, so for well planned proposals that offer substantial increases to workforce housing, I would entertain land swaps for acreage within the UGB that is decades away from development. This strategy maintains the overall acreage but allows some flexibility. Overall, there are substantial existing land reserves within the UGB, but the issue has been land with the right infrastructure, including transportation, that really facilitates development. We should be working closely with state and federal partners to bring the necessary infrastructure to land within the UGB and promote density as much as possible.

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

I care most deeply about racial equity and addressing decades of historic underinvestment. How are Metro's investments and policies impacting low income and BIPOC communities? For example, are we investing transportation resources along high crash corridors that are concentrated in East Portland. Or are we looking at the urban tree canopy and investing resources that benefit neighborhoods most susceptible to urban heat island effects. The data on these types of disparities have existed for decades, but we need the political leadership to address them on the ground.

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?

As a longtime leader of a culturally specific community based organization at APANO, I understand the shortcomings of Metro's current approaches to engagement and partnership. Planners and other staff appear in our neighborhoods when a project is planned and leave after their section of work is done. When you do community engagement, you hear general themes that "the rent is too high." What Metro really needs to do is to invest in long term capacity building and leadership development. Build authentic longer term partnerships and center lived experience. That is what builds long term trust and awareness of Metro's efforts and investments, not transactional check the box exercises.

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?

Transit needs to be safe, frequent, and affordable. It also needs to get you to where you actually need to go. First, in developing a new Regional Transportation Plan, we need to be really clear in engaging the community around designing a transit system that meets the needs of those who are transit dependent rather than those who just take the MAX to a Timbers game on occasion. Second, we need a method for paying for construction of this system. The 2020 transportation failed to pass, but in the coming years we do need a regional transportation measure that substantially increases transportation options. Planning for this measure should begin early and be clear about how it will be paid for with all stakeholders from the beginning.