

Transportation Questionnaire for Bay Area Candidates

March 5th, 2024 Primary Election

Name: Jackie Elward

Which office are you running for?: California State Senate District 3

1. Which counties does the jurisdiction of the office cover?

Contra Costa, Napa, Solano, Sonoma

2. Which forms of transit and active transportation (bicycling, walking, scooters, wheelchair) do you use on a regular basis and for what types of trips-- and why?

I use my car to get to work and back as it is in another city. The transit system in Sonoma County isn't the best for the location I'm living in. My high school senior uses his bike to ride to school and back.

3. Would you seek additional funding for Bay Area transit and what form of funding do you think makes sense?

I strongly support additional funding for Bay Area transit. The pandemic and shifting user behavior (like remote work) is putting extraordinary strain on transit agency finance, and they need bridge funding to maintain service while adapting to changing rider needs. I'd first seek and advocate for every penny we can from the state and federal governments and am open to other regional funding sources, including bonds and tolls.

4. Public transit in the Bay Area is highly fragmented, with 27 transit agencies, each with different fares, schedules, branding, and customer information. Do you believe it should be a priority for the region to create a well-coordinated transit system? And as an elected leader or potential member of a local transit agency board, would you support state legislation that advances a more integrated, high ridership system, even if it diminishes local control?

We absolutely need seamless mobility and strong coordination within and between systems. One of the greatest barriers to using transit is the perception of unreliability, yet almost all of us walk around with technology that, when deployed effectively by transit agencies, can provide us with precise arrivals, departures, and connections.

I acknowledge the interest and potential benefits of a fully integrated regional transportation authority, although I don't think we're close to achieving that vision yet. I appreciate that Senator Wahab has introduced legislation to further this reform, and I'd be interested in speaking with all interested parties to figure out what steps we can take to enhance seamless mobility. The number of interlocking political and institutional actors in this discussion is a lot to process, but I know that when trying to solve massive, seemingly intractable problems, it helps to break down the problem into smaller achievable steps.

5. Transportation is the largest single source of carbon emissions in California, and in the Bay Area, and the largest share of transportation emissions come from single occupancy vehicles. What are your top priorities to achieve substantial reduction in transportation-related GHG

emissions?

I support robust investments in public transit, safe sidewalks for pedestrians, and biking infrastructure. New housing should be prioritized near transit and near downtown and commercial corridors. These goals have the effect of reducing vehicle miles traveled and creating more livable communities for all of us to share.

I also support accelerating our transition to electric vehicles and investing in the needed EV infrastructure, including at apartment buildings.

6. The Bay Area still has road projects under development that would increase Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution. What decisions would you make about projects that increase VMT and pollution?

As we make land use decisions, our first priority should be to forge communities that are walkable, bikeable, and transit reliable for people of all comfort levels and abilities. Every new street is an opportunity for a “complete streets” approach that considers what other infrastructure should be built simultaneously, although this takes municipal planning to achieve.

7. Transit priority improvements are proven to make taking the bus faster and more reliable, while also reducing operating costs. Should local governments be able to stop transit priority improvements on local roads?

Transit priority improvements are a vital component of seamless mobility, and we absolutely need to expand their construction across the region. Should local governments have no say in where and how they're constructed? As a City Council Member, I certainly want input before major road decisions are made.

8. What do you think are the most important actions that can be taken to make public transit comfortable, accessible, and safe for all communities?

I support Ambassador programs that add eyes and ears to transit systems and help connect people with services if they need them.

Increased ridership creates a virtuous circle where more eyes and ears deter crime and abusive behavior and create increased revenue for additional cleaning and safety measures. More frequent service on smaller trains, for example, has the added benefit of increasing dependability, thus increasing ridership, while also creating fewer cars where anti-social behavior can be allowed to flourish.

9. Traffic violence and deaths in California are increasing annually; in 2021, 4,258 people died in vehicle crashes, a 10.7% increase from the prior year. If elected, what will you do to reverse the trend, increase street safety, save lives and reduce injuries in our community? What policies or specific projects would make the greatest impact?

I wish every city took seriously a Vision Zero approach to traffic fatalities. In the State Senate, I would prioritize investment in local funding for Vision Zero, traffic calming, and complete streets measures proven to reduce injuries and deaths. The greatest impact reforms are ones that reduce the speeds of cars and increase visibility for everyone.

10. What do you think are the biggest access and mobility needs for disadvantaged populations in your district, and how would you propose to solve them?

The 3rd District is pretty spread out, and transit between cities is desperately lacking. A lot of people in my decision have no choice but to drive to work, school, and/or health appointments. We need more frequent connections between communities, and that takes lots of investment.

We also have a lot of roads that are simply unsafe to walk across for anyone, let alone someone with limited mobility. More safe streets infrastructure that allows safe pedestrian crossing is needed.

11. In what circumstances do you support removing parking or repurposing vehicle travel lanes to create safer and more efficient bus, biking, and walking options? How do you propose balancing the demands of different interest groups who may disagree on how streets should be designed?

I think new California law that ends most parking minimum requirements in the state is a great step forward. Dense infill near transit, robust sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, and places to work and thrive are a recipe for drastically reducing vehicle miles traveled or even the necessity for a car in many cases.

As for removing street parking, that needs to be considered when developing bike boulevards, rapid bus transit routes, bulb-outs, etc. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to how to balance the needs of the community in these conversations. What all parties deserve is an open, transparent, and robust public process where the pros and cons of any given improvement are discussed, changes made as needed, and a decision is reached and followed through on.

The "Transportation Questionnaire for Bay Area Candidates for Office" is sponsored by a coalition of partners- Transbay Coalition, SPUR, Seamless Bay Area, San Francisco Transit Riders, Silicon Valley Bike Coalition, and Bike East Bay to help educate the public on these important issues.

