

I'm Victoria Woodards I'm currently the mayor of the greatest city in the universe, Tacoma, Washington. And I'm running to be reelected to do another term as your mayor. Today, I'm going to have an opportunity to talk to you about transit issues, which are so important to our community. When we think about the environment, when we think about infrastructure, transit is such a crucial part to that. And we really need to grow our transportation infrastructure here in Tacoma. So I'm delighted to be able to have this conversation with Downtown on the Go, and we'll be riding Route 16. So look forward to talking to you all a little bit more.

What do you think is the most pressing mobility concern in your Tacoma?

I think we have quite a few barriers to mobility in Tacoma, and there are things we've been focused on and work is working on. Number one, while we have good bus service, we don't have great bus service back in the recession, when we had to cut so much of our bus service, that really took a toll on our community. And we really need to increase the amount of bus service that we have. Bus service has to be convenient for folks. They've got to be able to get there quicker or as quick on a bus as they can in their car. And that's how we're going to get people out of their cars riding the bus. When I think about infrastructure, I have to think about sidewalks and roads and bike lanes. So when we talk about mobility, people's ability to get out of their cars and out of their houses and walk places or ride places for those who don't own cars. And so through some infrastructure projects, we've been doing a really great job of fixing our roads and adding bike lanes. But certainly we need to continue to seek funding and to expand our bike lanes.

We also need to continue to build up our sidewalks. In some of our communities, sidewalks weren't required when they were built. So really filling in those missing links of sidewalks in our community and making them walkable. We've done a lot of work over the past several years in terms of using the money that that our community has given us to increase sidewalks and and and school crossings. And so we've used funding to do that, fill potholes. But we need to continue to do that work in order to increase mobility in the city of Tacoma.

And the only other thing I would add to that is certainly our partnership and work with Sound Transit and expanding the link light rail, which will be going up to hilltop and coming down from Seattle. So we've got to keep our eye on the prize to make sure that those two things happen, especially given the economic downturn that happened because of Covid. So I'm proud to be a board member of Sound Transit and and just finished voting on the realignment package, which keeps getting light rail to Tacoma intact. And so those are the kinds of thing I've been advocating and will continue to advocate for expanding light rail in Tacoma and increasing our access to busses.

What do you think is the most important transportation project in Tacoma currently?

So there there are several things happening in Tacoma right now, I think, that are going to that are going to be advantageous for our community. One is the completion of light rail to Hilltop, I think that absolutely. It's going to provide that link from the hilltop area to downtown. Again, as I stated earlier, really important to make sure that light rail get to Tacoma from the airport. So I really think completing

light rail from the airport to Tacoma in partnership with the city of Fife and the Puyallup tribe, I think that's going to be incredibly important for us, for us.

I think as we talk about local transit, the Pierce Transit board is looking at how to restore service hours and how to get more service hours into the system. For Pierce County. And I think as we look for ways to have that funded and look for ways to find efficiencies so that we can provide more bus service, I think that's another way that that's going to happen in the next couple of years. I think that's another way we're going to increase access.

And then finally, again, getting back to the infrastructure, I think as we look at that, as we look at making biking more safely in Tacoma and adding more bike lanes, it is in our master transportation plan to increase bike lanes in Tacoma. And also, again, when we talk about access, we're talking about sidewalks and curbs and curb cut outs. All of that is in our current plan. And we're going to continue to push those forward to get those things funded. And actually, most a lot of them are already funded. We just need the time to get them completed.

Pierce Transit is considering going to the ballot to ask voters for a 0.3% sales tax increase for public transportation funding. If Pierce Transit were to go to the ballot in 2022, would you support the measure?

So Pierce Transit will be coming out to the voters next November for a transit ballot measure, my personal vote will support it. But I also recognize and understand that that we have the highest we have the highest sales tax almost in the entire country. And so while I will be supporting it, I'm going to support whatever it is our community calls for. And so but personally, I'm going to be behind it. I'm going to do everything to educate folks about it and why it's important. But I also think that we've got to look beyond sales tax and find other revenue streams in order to support our transit system, because that regressive tax structure then falls, unfortunately, to those who can't afford it the most. And but we have to use the tools we have in our toolbox, but we've got to continue to work with the state legislature and the feds to find more revenue streams for transit.

Is there anything else you want to tell us about your goals around transportation?

So, you know, again, I'm a big supporter of of transit and transfer and access in Tacoma. One of the things I didn't talk about that's another that's another way for us to increase mobility in our city is BRT, and that's the Bus Rapid Transit, of which I had an opportunity to write in other cities. Actually, I rode it in another country. But it's really exciting to see BRT coming to Tacoma. It is. It is faster. It is cheaper to build. And we're really excited that we're going to have a BRT route that comes down Pacific Avenue. And as a kid who at one point spent a little bit of time in Spanaway to be able to have that Bus Rapid Transit

get from Spanaway to downtown Tacoma, actually further out than Spanaway to downtown Tacoma is going to be incredibly important for increasing mobility and giving people access to jobs.

You know, some people choose to ride the bus, but most riders in Tacoma, Pierce County, who ride the bus ride the bus because it's their only form of transportation. And that's why it's so important to make sure that we are providing as much access as possible to everyone who needs to be able to get around. Also, we talk about the environment and we talk about what's happening in our environment. We know that the number one contribution to climate change is greenhouse gases. And the best way to combat that is to get people who are even in their cars, out of their cars, still building more compact neighborhoods, making sure that people can just hop on a bus or walk to where they need to go. But in doing that, that does get to accessibility. You can't just build housing and and and try to build compact neighborhoods if you can't connect them with bike lanes and and with sidewalks. So you have to make sure that neighborhoods have safe access. So those are just a couple of additional things I wanted to talk about.

But but really what's important is that everyone get engaged in the conversation around access and transportation in our city. We all have to get around. And I think so often when you're a driver and you don't look at the importance of riding a bus or if you're riding a bus, you don't look at the importance of riding a bike, being able to focus on every mode of transportation. It's what our responsibility is as a city and my responsibility as mayor. I take it seriously and want to continue to find additional ways to that we could provide that access for everyone.