

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Jason Whalen I'm a candidate for the Pierce County Council position 6, which serves the communities of Lakewood, Steilacoom, Dupont, Anderson Island, Ketron Island, JBLM, and West Parkland. I'm pleased to be here today to talk to you about Downtown On the Go's questions to candidates regarding transportation.

**What do you consider the most important transportation project in Pierce County at this time, and why?**

In terms of the most important transportation project in Pierce County at this time, I think the I-5/JBLM improvements that are currently underway as well as the completion of Highway 167 are two of the most important transportation projects currently underway in Pierce County. They are significant because they allow the transportation, not just of people to and from their places of work and their homes, but also the transportation of goods and services to residents in our county and certainly to folks beyond, with regard to the trade that we have ongoing in the Port of Tacoma. So those are significant projects in my view.

**Do you consider multi-modal transportation an important topic in Pierce County? Why or why not?**

Multi-modal transportation – Critical. I have been a big advocate for multi-modal transportation in the City of Lakewood, where I serve as Deputy Mayor. One of the main projects that we completed in 2019 was a Complete Streets project at Lakewood's historic Colonial Center. It provided an incredible opportunity to provide access for all residents to a beautiful area of downtown that had otherwise been vacant and abandoned, and by putting a public plaza together with curb, gutter, and sidewalk and beautiful long extended plaza areas for seating we provided a gathering space for folks here in Lakewood.

I am a strong believer in non-motorized transportation, and we completed and are currently reviewing an updated non-motorized transportation plan here in Lakewood, because we do believe in connecting neighborhoods to the town center, and we worked steadfastly over the last few years to ensure that we've got millions of dollars of infrastructure projects in place and not only planned but now being implemented here in the City of Lakewood, and I would likewise be very supportive of those kinds of multi-modal transportation projects throughout the county. Especially in those areas of the unincorporated county that simply don't have them currently.

Sidewalks are critical. They connect us to our neighbors, they connect us to our shopping districts, and they certainly have an opportunity to connect us with safe streets to schools. All of those opportunities for non-motorized transportation will certainly impact our communities favorably by decreasing our impacts on the environment, by reducing auto emissions as we all go out and bike and walk in a much safer more connected environment. So, I'm very pleased with our progress to date, but certainly as a candidate for County Council, I would advocate for much more by way of multi-modal projects.

**Pierce Transit has considered going to the ballot to ask voters for a sales tax increase for public transportation funding. If Pierce Transit were to go to the ballot in 2021, would you support the measure? Why or Why not?**

Finally, on the issue of going to the ballot for the one tenth of one percent for Pierce Transit funding. I think this is one of those issues where we have to judge and weigh priorities. We have spent as a community, as a three county community, \$54 billion dollars that we're allocating for the Sound Transit ST3 project, which is a significant impact to folks within Snohomish, King, and Pierce County, and I know that those are projects that folks are certainly going to be interested in having completed, but in terms of raising additional taxes for transit, I think we have many other priorities to weigh. There are many of us who are looking at viability of the one tenth of one percent for behavioral health funding here in Pierce County, and we have to weigh the competing priorities for limited dollars.

So at this time, while I believe strongly in transit projects, we advocated for many in Lakewood, in terms of projects I mentioned, the I-5/JBLM improvements as well as the Highway 167 completion, and the multi-modal projects we have going on here in our city, we also recognize that resources are limited and we have to do what we can to evaluate and value all projects and all opportunities for the best use of the public's funds. So, at this point in time I don't believe I would be an advocate for a transit tax, especially coming out of this COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn. That said, I think that we could look to possible transportation projects and perhaps more dollars down the road, but at this time I would not be an advocate for that particular tax.

I've enjoyed talking to you and if you have any other questions or you need more information, certainly look at my website [whalenforcouncil.com](http://whalenforcouncil.com) . Whalen: w-h-a-l-e-n, f-o-r, council dot com. I look forward to seeing you and wish you well during the next few weeks. Please vote on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.