2020 ACHD COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS

BIKING AND WALKING IN ADA COUNTY

CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE

PREPARED BY
BOISE BICYCLE PROJECT,
IDAHO SMART GROWTH,
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ALLIANCE, & TREASURE
VALLEY CYCLING
ALLIANCE
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There is no ignoring the significance of this year’s election day, both national, regional, and local. At Boise Bicycle Project, we are reminded daily how impactful the decisions made by our transportation planning leaders are. We see the dangers kids who receive bicycles face on our roads, and while we do our duty educating kids of face riding practices, these skills cannot be used if our communities are simply too dangerous for kids to bike and walk to schools, activities, jobs, and more. This is why we care deeply about the future of Ada County Highway Districts (ACHD) elected board of commissioners.

The majority of seats are up for ACHD’s commission, which is why Boise Bicycle Project, Idaho Walk Bike Alliance, Idaho Smart Growth and Treasure Valley Cycling Alliance has our eyes on this race. While most of the mentioned organizations cannot make endorsements, we can create opportunities to educate voters of the options they have, and let them choose the candidate that represents their transportation needs the best. This booklet includes questions developed from local walk & bike organizations with the answers from every candidate. Help us get the vote out by reading through the candidate’s answers, sharing this booklet and discussing the topics with your friends and family, and of course, to vote this November!

– Nina Schaeffer, Boise Bicycle Project
2020 ACHD COMMISSIONER CANDIDATES

District 1
Incumbent Jim Hansen
Kara Veit

District 2
Incumbent Rebecca Arnold
Alexis Pickering

District 5
Dave McKinney
Emilie Jackson-Edney
From Treasure Valley Cycling Alliance: How do you intend to incorporate the ACHD Bike Advisory Committee, ACHD Pedestrian Advisory Group, and other active transportation stakeholder groups into your decision making?

DISTRICT ONE CANDIDATES

**INCUMBENT JIM HANSEN:** I believe it is each commissioner’s responsibility to attend as many Advisory Committee meetings as possible. Committee members are selected because of their experiences, knowledge and willingness to share their time and talent with the commission and the staff. I have learned an enormous amount from them. Listening to them discuss issues is very helpful. They have pointed me to good research on designs and processes that work in other communities. When they come up with ideas, it is every commissioner’s obligation to make sure they get a full hearing to improve policy.

**KARA VEIT:** I am running for ACHD Commissioner because I have over a decade of proven experience involving and engaging the public in decision making for transportation and infrastructure projects in the Treasure Valley. Input and public involvement, combined with technical analysis, is how we create solutions and meaningful changes that meet the needs and expectations of our community. I think that absolutely, input from these advisory groups should be taken into account in decision making. To make these groups more effective, as Commissioner I would recommend that each ACHD project is assigned a member of the BAC and the PAC who follow the life of the project, then make regular reports back to the larger advisory group. From what I observed it seems that the advisory groups are left out of the loop and are not providing input until after right-of-way has been purchased and design plans have been drawn up. I think ACHD should follow the NEPA scoping process for long-range transportation planning and involve diverse stakeholders.

DISTRICT TWO CANDIDATES

**INCUMBENT REBECCA ARNOLD:** ACHD already incorporates these groups in our decision making process. We provide information on proposed projects, proposed neighborhood plans (such as neighborhood bike and pedestrian plans) and other plans to these advisory groups, to local governments (cities, Ada county, COMPASS and VRT) and to the general public through our public involvement process to seek input from these advisory groups and from the public. All input is communicated to the ACHD commissioners and taken into consideration in the decision making process.

**ALEXIS PICKERING:** As a previous member and Chair of the ACHD Pedestrian Advisory Group (PAG), I know first-hand the time, commitment, and the expertise of those who participate on ACHD’s advisory committees. They are a tremendous resource and come from diverse backgrounds and communities. I intend to work with all of the advisory groups and take their recommendations seriously, attend their meetings when I can, and request their recommendations be shared directly with the Commission. We have to rely on our advisory groups for insight and input to make sure we’re considering all users, abilities, and paths forward. When I was part of the PAG, our recommendations were passed onto staff and we never heard if the Commission reviewed it and what their feedback was. As we continue to face unprecedented growth, our communication channels have to be open both ways. My experience on the PAG was one of the reasons that motivated me to run and bring a fresh perspective to the Commission.
EMILIE JACKSON-EDNEY: Building our transportation infrastructure right the first time is my top priority. Building our roads right means actively engaging all roadway users from the beginning, not merely responding to the needs of one kind of user. Over my 37 years working for ACHD, I have seen projects that are designed with this input and support multimodal transportation, and I have seen projects that would have benefited from further stakeholder engagement. I know the kind of creativity ACHD can exercise in our roadway design, construction, and maintenance.

As your next commissioner, I am committed to seriously considering the input of those stakeholders that are intimately involved with the various forms of multimodal transportation options like driving, biking, and walking in their daily lives. I don't have a learning curve when it comes to this position. I am ready to jump in on day one. I will use the knowledge I gained over my career to guide more effective conversations with various stakeholders at every step of a project. I can focus on establishing and strengthening these relationships.

Even though ACHD's transportation planners are consummate professionals in their areas of expertise, having input from those that access the various transportation amenities in their recurrent travels can provide an invaluable perspective. Advisory groups must continue to be included in the early stages of the plan development process.

DAVE MCKINNEY: Transportation stakeholder groups of all kinds have the same right as any other individual or group to have their voices heard. As an ACHD Commissioner, I will favor including representatives of these groups in advisory bodies that make recommendations to ACHD, and I will consider the opinions and input from these groups in making decisions that affect bicycle, pedestrian, and other facilities throughout ADA County.


**INCUMBENT JIM HANSEN:** The safety of vulnerable road users must be evaluated in ALL projects. ACHD must quantify that by incorporating level of service metrics for people who use bicycles (all people, of all abilities) in our projects, as well as pedestrians, people with disabilities and people using transit. When metrics for all road users are included in the design of new streets and improvements to existing streets, ACHD will be able to strike a better balance.

ACHD has a Roadways to Bikeways Master Plan. It underwent a major rewrite in 2018 thanks to excellent advocacy by the Bike Advisory Committee and other community leaders. It must be updated and fully incorporated into ACHD plans. A safe bike network takes pressure off the demand to use cars for all trips. It is also a key investment in economic development. Studies show that people who ride their bike to a business spend on average more than people who drive. Those businesses are also more resilient during economic downturns.

Completing the safe network described in ACHD’s Roadways to Bikeways Master Plan must be a priority. Leaving unsafe segments in the network makes the rest of the network fail. As new growth brings more people to an area, new bike, pedestrian and transit infrastructure should be built with transportation impact fees. ACHD must make reforming the impact fee law a priority.

**KARA VEIT:** Separating bicycles from traffic is the key action to improve overall safety for everyone, particularly children. ACHD has been working on several low stress bicycle routes and improving connectivity such as on Leadville and 11th Street. While this is a good intention to identify low traffic streets as routes for bicyclists, we need to do more. As Commissioner, I would advocate for bicycle boulevards, also known as neighborhood byways/greenways, quiet streets, or bicycle priority streets -- simply put, we need designated streets that prioritize bicyclists.

Many local streets with low speed limits run parallel to high traffic roads. The local streets are the routes that offer the basic components of a safe bicycling environment. These streets can be enhanced using a range of design treatments, tailored to existing conditions and desired outcomes, to create bicycle boulevards which would provide the following benefits:

- **Route Planning:** Direct access to destinations
- **Signs and Pavement Markings:** Easy to find and to follow
- **Speed Management:** Slow motor vehicle speeds
- **Volume Management:** Low or reduced motor vehicle volumes
- **Minor Street Crossings:** Minimal bicyclist delay
- **Major Street Crossings:** Safe and convenient crossings
- **Offset Crossings:** Clear and safe navigation
- **Green Infrastructure:** Enhancing environments

This approach would help create and maintain “quiet” streets that benefit residents and improve safety for all road users. Many factors should be taken into consideration when branding a bicycle boulevard. The term bicycle boulevard may be offputting to motorists, or people who don't cycle so to make it appealing, the routes should be bikeway definitions used by the state or city, citizen ideas and input, and specific features and activities expected to take place along the route (jogging, green infrastructure, etc.).
From Boise Bicycle Project: Children on bicycles face a higher risk of motor vehicle crashes on our roads, especially rural/suburban roads such as Amity where Edward Prokopchuk was hit last year. As ACHD Commissioner, what safety measures do you plan on supporting to improve bicycling safety for children?

DISTRICT TWO CANDIDATES

INCUMBENT REBECCA ARNOLD: Safety for all users is the top priority evaluated in every project. One of the most significant steps that we are taking at ACHD is the implementation of a Low Stress Bicycle Network to provide connected routes for bicyclists on lower motor vehicle volume streets to provide alternative, safer routes. I also have been in contact with city officials and staff regarding the possibility of creating Urban pathways. While ACHD cannot legally spend funds on separate pathways such as those proposed along canal banks, I can volunteer my time to explore whether such pathways are possible and to help implement them.

ALEXIS PICKERING: We have to do everything we can to ensure that our most vulnerable, especially our children, can walk, bike, and scoot to their friend's house, to school, and the corner store, regardless of whether or not they live in an urban or rural community in Ada County. There's several aspects I'd work on as ACHD Commissioner to better protect our children on our rural roads and prevent others from getting hit.

First, we have to focus on safe routes to schools, especially in our rural communities. We need safer routes everywhere, but we've seen larger disparities in our rural roads and pathways. This means allocating funding towards studying the routes to school in rural settings, prioritizing projects that create safe routes and placing them higher on the ACHD five-year integrated workplan. Another way to protect our rural kids and families is by working with cities to make sure that we're building our schools and subdivisions close to one another and building off of existing growth. If these connections don't exist, we can partner with development to make sure those connections are made reasonably. This allows us to utilize our resources more efficiently and effectively. Lastly, we (ACHD) can do more education and partner with schools to identify less hazardous routes (lower-stress alternatives) for kids and families to use. Families and children should know where the lower-stress routes are to minimize the risk of riding or walking on a busier, potentially dangerous road.
DISTRICT FIVE CANDIDATES

EMILIE JACKSON-EDNEY: First of all, the death of Eduard Prokopchuk and the injury of another young bicycle rider is a tragedy a parent should never have to endure. I drove that portion of Amity Road between Cloverdale and 5-Mile where this particular accident occurred. This rural 35 MPH 2-lane roadway is not designed to meet the needs of the surrounding community - a place where children, their parents, and other citizens bike, walk, roll, and drive. The existing roadway pavement section is probably only 24 feet in width with gravel/dirt shoulders. The exterior painted fog-lines are located at the extreme edges of the pavement. There are numerous widened pavement areas fronting the newer subdivision developments. However, there are lengthy gaps where there is no continuity in pavement widening between the sporadic subdivision improvements. A review of the 20-year ACHD Capital Improvement Plan revealed that this particular section of Amity Road is not scheduled for any major facility improvements other than routine maintenance until at least 2035.

I am a recreational cyclist, but I by no means have biked every corner of Ada County. I will rely on sustained conversation with groups like the Bike Advisory Group and the Pedestrian Advisory Group to identify existing areas of concern, as well as for shaping future projects. Though there might be little that can be done with general fund maintenance dollars, I will bring the concerns of the pedestrian and cycling public to the table as I work to improve our effective maintenance programs. I believe that including considerations for these populations in design and impact fee discretion will mitigate future accidents.

ACHD does also invest in public outreach and education. I would support any bicycle safety education efforts through partnerships with organizations like the Boise Bicycle Project, especially for juvenile cyclists. I would encourage the use of the lower volume roadways within improved subdivisions through education and bicycle route signage, and would support continuity between subdivisions so a bicyclist wouldn't find it necessary to access the higher speed narrow rural roadways.

DAVE MCKINNEY: The most important thing we can do is continue to expand and improve the roadway system throughout ADA County. If Amity road had already been improved with curb, gutter and sidewalks, the Eduard Prokopchuk tragedy probably would not have happened. As another safety measure, I am in favor of bike lanes and multi-use pathways that are separated from vehicle travel lanes, including multi-use pathways that are outside the curb. This will help improve safety for cyclists and others.
INCUMBENT JIM HANSEN: Measuring level of service for people who walk, cycle, drive, use a wheelchair or use transit must be fully incorporated into all of ACHD’s project evaluation and design. If you want to know what an agency’s priorities are, look at what it measures. Just saying there are lots of sidewalks or bike lanes does not mean people feel safe using on them. If they don’t, and they are underused, it is a waste of taxpayers’ money.

After many years of advocating for level of service metrics for all transportation choices, I am pleased my other commissioners finally took the first tentative steps towards that goal in August, 2020 when the impact fee ordinance was updated. We still have a long way to go and I look forward to pushing ahead to have ACHD take a leadership role in multi-modal transportation. If ACHD is going to own the right-of-way, it should be a leader in ensuring it is used to safely serve more people in more modes of transportation.

KARA VEIT: ACHD is perfectly positioned to serve as the facilitator of structured process where Ada County cities can discuss growth, collaboratively map out a conceptual plan growth, and identify mutual goals for growth. Currently, each city is on its own page and some do not even make decisions in accordance with their own comprehensive plan.

As Commissioner, I would recommend that ACHD form and facilitate a Treasure Valley Mobility Advisory Committee. The Committee would be comprised of the Mayors or a City Council Member from each city and a planner from each city. It would also include COMPASS, Valley Regional Transit and Ada County. For about six months, the committee would meet once a month to participate in a series of intensive planning workshops, which would be facilitated by an objective third-party.

The first workshops would be to educate the cities on where we are today: cities' leadership and planners, together, would discuss together what currently is working and what is not working, and they would then identify each city's values, goals, and vision for how they want to see their city grow. This information would be used to form "community criteria," which in addition to comprehensive plan and zoning data, would serve as a direction to make decisions about growth. Working together, the city's leaders and planners would literally draw out on GIS and hard copy maps where their city wants growth occurring in Ada County over the next 10 years. Each group's mapping data would be given to ACHD, and ACHD's staff would then compile and integrate the data to find the most common similarities of geographic mapping and areas of conflict. Based on mapping and community criteria, the conceptual 10-year growth plan would be brought back to the committee at a follow up workshop. At that time, the city leaders and planners would confirm together whether they agree with the plan, and if not they would identify what needs to be fixed. The Committee's map of planned growth would then be presented to the public for input by holding a public open house in each city. After the public meetings, the committee would meet again to review and integrate public input into the growth plan and finalize the plan which would be integrated into local comprehensive plans.

This committee structure would help resolve the disconnect between Ada County elected officials and their planning staff. It would bring Ada County leadership and planners all together to develop a collaborative vision for growth, which is supported by technical analysis and public input. The community criteria would serve as the "how and why" growth could occur and the map would show "where" growth could occur.
From Idaho Walk Bike Alliance: What immediate action do you plan to take to create a more balanced transportation system in the valley so everyone, no matter if they drive a motor vehicle, walk, ride a bicycle, or roll in a wheelchair, is able to travel safely to their desired destination?

DISTRICT TWO CANDIDATES

INCUMBENT REBECCA ARNOLD: ACHD evaluates all modes of transportation in every new project that ACHD undertakes and provides facilities for all users. ACHD has also evaluated existing deficiencies in, for example, ADA compliance and has a formal plan for remedying those problems over time - the first iteration of the plan was the Pedestrian Bicycle Transition Plan that was adopted in December, 2005. The plan is now known as the ADA Self-evaluation and Transition Plan and is currently being updated. ACHD also seeks input from school districts and cities to identify preferred routes for children to walk and bike to school and makes improvements to those preferred routes through the Safe Routes to School Program. ACHD currently seeks input and prioritization from neighborhood groups, citizen advisory groups and local governments to identify other areas where pedestrian and bike improvements are needed (such as gaps in sidewalks, cross walk enhancements, traffic calming, etc) and implements improvements through Community Programs.

ALEXIS PICKERING: We can’t have a balanced transportation system without a balanced budget that reflects the needs and values of its communities supporting multiple modes. A key component to a balanced budget and transportation system is completing regular evaluations and analyses that projects and treatments are giving taxpayers the return on value and investment that they are looking for. The ACHD budget is made up of capital projects, maintenance and community projects. We have a fixed budget and growing needs, so I would look at tweaking the formula to make sure our resources are being spent on projects that reflect our needs, and shifting funding from maintenance projects that may not be providing the return we’re looking for to be spent on elevating and improving our other modes. This will create safer, accessible routes for all types of transportation modes and spend our taxpayer dollars efficiently.

As a result, I would request that ACHD complete a cost-benefit analysis of specific maintenance projects to see where we can reallocate funding to improve community projects to fill sidewalk gaps, build safer routes to schools, increasing our capacity while also making it easier for folks to get out of their cars. Some of the projects I’d like to review is the chip-sealing program and planning our projects more efficiently. I’ve heard from countless citizens who’ve mentioned that their streets have had projects completed, only to be torn up and fixed again a few years later. One voter who lives on Cloverdale mentioned that she’s lived there for 20 years and the road has been worked on 9 times and they still lack sidewalks in places. Fixing the road 9 times when it could have been5, saves us money, reduces congestion, and allows us to use our money smarter and creates a more balanced transportation system.
From Idaho Walk Bike Alliance: What immediate action do you plan to take to create a more balanced transportation system in the valley so everyone, no matter if they drive a motor vehicle, walk, ride a bicycle, or roll in a wheelchair, is able to travel safely to their desired destination?

DISTRICT FIVE CANDIDATES

EMILIE JACKSON-EDNEY: I plan to use my expertise to improve our maintenance program and build our transportation infrastructure right the first time. Through more effective maintenance, we can identify long-term cost savings, which I will push my colleagues on the ACHD Commission to direct toward community safety projects and a buildout of our bicycle/pedestrian master plan. In the shorter term, I aim to direct the savings on any projected construction contract bid estimates, budgeted but deferred projects, and any other interim budgetary cost savings toward improvements to our bike/walk infrastructure maintenance programming and previously unfunded community safety projects.

DAVE MCKINNEY: Current roadway standards include bicycle lanes, sidewalks and curb ramps for wheelchairs on all major collector roads in Ada County. These are important features and should naturally continue. As noted above, I am in favor of increased provision of multi-use pathways and separated bike lanes where possible. Naturally, since we live in a county where much of the development is widely separated, people are still largely dependent upon the automobile for most of their trips. I am in favor of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly development, and will use my influence to encourage developers to include these types of facilities that interconnect with ACHD-built bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
INCUMBENT JIM HANSEN: Priorities need to change. 1) ACHD should measure the return on its investments in public infrastructure. Just because ACHD is a “special purpose” district does not mean it cannot measure the impact of its decisions on future taxpayers. Taxpayers have a right to know what they are getting in return when ACHD spends their money and obligates them to maintain the infrastructure in perpetuity. Will their town be stronger and more resilient because of that investment? 2) ACHD should support the freedom of our residents to have real transportation choices. It does not need to pay for it all, but it must integrate all modes in its decisions. The public only has so much right-of-way. Yet every year, it must ensure more people can safely move to their destinations. The economic health of our businesses and the physical health and safety of our residents depends on it. 3) Too many parts of our county have unacceptable levels of speeding. All projects – whether its repaving, replacing a utility, installing a curb ramp, etc. – must be evaluated to determine if designs can be incorporated to discourage speeding.

KARA VEIT: ACHD receives revenue from four sources: property taxes, impact fees, the state highway fund (i.e. gas tax, vehicle registration, user fees) and federal funds. I think it should be considered that there could be an unforeseen shortfall in ACHD’s state highway fund projections for 2021. Gas prices are going down quite a bit because oil prices are low, fuel efficiency is higher, and with COVID there are less cars on the road which means less tax is being collected from gas. Property taxes should not be used to make up for the shortfall from user fees. Instead, we need to come up with new user fee revenue streams. Perhaps bringing back the vehicle registration fee increase is a possibility (but with much, much, better messaging and public outreach this time so it passes) or putting fees on rental cars. The Governor formed a Task Force in 2011 that issues a report called Modernizing Idaho's Infrastructure Funding which describes the shortfalls we face, the consequences of deterred maintenance and options to consider as new revenue streams. I think we need to go after innovative revenue stream; this could include a state infrastructure bank (https://www.msconsultants.com/what-is-an-infrastructure-bank/) or applying for credits through TIFIA – aka Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/financing/tifia) or the FAST Act (https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/).
DISTRICT TWO CANDIDATES

**INCUMBENT REBECCA ARNOLD:** Yes, I believe the priorities are pretty much where they should be, with flexibility to move funds to accommodate needed projects and to respond to emergencies, changing needs, and changing priorities. We are also evaluating using cost savings and proceeds from surplus property sales to add to the current amounts budgeted for Community Programs.

**ALEXIS PICKERING:** I believe our budget priorities should be safety and investing in projects that increase capacity beyond simply adding road lanes that we won't be able to afford to maintain in the future. We shouldn't be prioritizing widening projects when we have a backlog of community and connection projects that continue to get pushed further down the five-year integrated workplan. With just one multi-million dollar project that would be at capacity within 5-10 years, we could be spending that money on ten other projects that add capacity, improve access to other modes, and increase safety for all.

One way I’d work to change those priorities is to review our design philosophies and be more flexible with communities, ensuring we’re getting a better bang for our buck. For example, many of our rural roads lack curb, gutters, and sidewalks. One reason for that is that it is expensive due to putting in a storm drain system. I’d look into building more detaching pathways that are less expensive and don’t need a storm drain system.

This is a great way to build safer pathways serving a wide array of users, adding capacity until the roads need to be widened or worked on twenty years from now and putting in a storm drain system makes fiscal sense.
DISTRICT FIVE CANDIDATES

EMILIE EDNEY-JACKSON: I have the utmost respect for the staff who conduct the design, construction, and maintenance of our roadways. I believe ACHD is stretched too thin in its current set of priorities, and needs an experienced voice at the decision-making table to hone its ability to meet the varying needs of Ada County roadway users. Between balancing Operations and maintenance and Capital Enhancement to adequately fund the needs of community projects and other developments, the priorities aren’t always the problem - it’s the execution.

This year, the ACHD Commissioners approved a budget that allocates $9 Million toward community projects that address safety enhancements and other multimodal modes of transportation facilities. This really excites me, and I will work to continue this trend of investing in community projects as the next Commissioner.

My top priority is building right the first time. Through effective partnerships between ACHD, citizen groups, and developers and other organizations, we can design roadways and assets that reflect our priorities for safety, multimodal transportation, and healthy communities. When we build right the first time, and maintain our assets effectively, we will find both long-term and short-term cost savings. The maintenance and enhancement work that ACHD conducts in any given year is massive and costly, and there never seems to be enough money to catch-up and get ahead of the District’s transportation infrastructure responsibilities. With smarter design and maintenance programs, made possible through open and thorough conversations with citizen stakeholders, we can improve these programs and save taxpayers money in the long run. There is no individual more equipped with the knowledge and skills to make this happen than me. My 37 years working for ACHD has shown me the immense potential of our roadways to build our long-term cultural and economic prosperity.

DAVE MCKINNEY: ACHD currently spends about 7%-10% of their total capital improvements budget specifically on community programs, of which a large portion is dedicated to providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This is in addition to the money spent on sidewalks, bike lanes and the like as part of normal roadway and intersection improvement projects. I am pleased to see greater use of our bicycle facilities, and hope this trend continues.

In a community where nearly all of the people make nearly all of their trips of all kinds by automobile, our primary need is to improve the highway system to reduce congestion and delay. Ada County still has a large quantity of two-lane country roads that have no more capacity now than 100 years ago. But our population and vehicle traffic has grown tremendously. For the foreseeable future, our primary need is to expand and complete this highway network to help the people get where they need to go. Improved highways will reduce wasted time, wasted fuel, pollution, and will improve safety. This is where our greatest need lies.

I believe the current level of spending on bicycle and pedestrian facilities is appropriate, especially in view of the current level of use of these facilities. At this time I do not see compelling reasons to significantly alter this level of expenditure either up or down. I believe current budget priorities are generally appropriate, though I have my own views about which roadway improvement projects should have the highest priority.