

Jonathan Maus ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the BikePortland Podcast. I'm your host, Jonathan Maus. In this episode, I have something special for you. This week at Bike Happy Hours, that was Wednesday, November 8th, I had the pleasure of standing in Southeast Ankeny with a great group of folks standing in the plaza there. That's the Rainbow Road Plaza. Thanks, city of Portland, for making that car-free plaza possible. We are in front of Ankeny Tap & Table for happy hour as per usual, and I was able to interview someone who I've known for many years.

([00:31](#)):

And somebody who I've worked with in doing all this transportation policy stuff over the years. Her name is Steph Routh, and it just so happens after years of organizing and leading in our community, she's somebody who has thrown her hat in the ring to be a member of Portland City Council. So she's running for council district number one in East Portland, and instead of just doing a quick little stump speech like we've had several candidates do in the last few months.

([01:00](#)):

I thought it'd be fun to actually try to do a little interview with her and have some Q&A from the audience. So that's what we did and I'm just so happy that it worked out and we were able to do it outdoors in a plaza as people were biking by on a cold but clear November night, and I think you're really going to love it. Here's our conversation. First ever interview in a car free plaza in Portland. I don't know what this is. I am up here with Steph. Speaking of the mic for a sec. Say hello.

Steph Routh ([01:32](#)):

Hello.

Jonathan Maus ([01:33](#)):

Can everybody hear us? All right. We were going to do it inside, so we're just winging it since everybody's camped out already. I feel like we should have a little fire going or something. Steph, thanks for coming out. Steph is running for City Council District One, East Portland.

Steph Routh ([01:47](#)):

East Portland.

Jonathan Maus ([01:50](#)):

And we have had several other council candidates come to Bike Happy Hour and chat, but I thought given the fact that I've known Steph for a while and her absolutely amazing background, of which I'm going to list a little bit here because I think it's important for folks to know the amazing Renaissance person background of Steph Routh if we are going to be considering voting for her for city council. Steph is a founding board member of Umbrella Streets, which folks may not know, but it's a nonprofit that provides all the permitting and insurance background for stuff like World Naked Bike Ride, Pedal Palooza, Sprockets.

([02:25](#)):

Tons and tons of other really cool things. She was the first ever executive director of Oregon Walks back in the day. There you go. She worked for the community cycling center. She was their interim ED last year for a bit. She even worked at the Portland Bureau of Transportation for a short while. She worked

This transcript was exported on Nov 10, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

at Sightlines. She's got just amazing, she's led political campaigns. You were on the team that helped get the Fixing Our Streets tax measure passed, right? All kinds of interesting things.

Steph Routh ([02:53](#)):

At the beginning of the pandemic. No problem.

Jonathan Maus ([02:56](#)):

She's also been on the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission since, what, 2019?

Steph Routh ([03:01](#)):

Yeah.

Jonathan Maus ([03:01](#)):

Oh my goodness. That, folks, if you don't know, the Planning Commission of Portland is a very thankless, but very important job. Extremely, a lot amount of work for no pay and a lot... Anyway, so that's a fascinating thing. We'll talk a little bit more about your work on planning commission in just a sec, but beyond all that regular amazing community organizing leadership stuff, she's done some pretty amazing things beyond that. Working at a cannery in Alaska. What the heck? You were living in Northern China during SARS?

Steph Routh ([03:34](#)):

Yes.

Jonathan Maus ([03:36](#)):

It's all these experiences. She has a BA-

Steph Routh ([03:38](#)):

How did you remember all of this?

Jonathan Maus ([03:39](#)):

She has a BA in theater... The internet. Steph has a BA in theater performance. She's worked leading skin diving teams to rescue Coral Reefs in Thailand after the tsunami. You lived in New York City during 9/11. I'm starting to, is this all true?

Steph Routh ([03:57](#)):

Yes.

Jonathan Maus ([03:58](#)):

That's just amazing. And then-

Steph Routh ([03:59](#)):

Lived a long life. I earned every gray hair.

Jonathan Maus ([04:04](#)):

And now here she is at Bike Happy Hour, which is really the capper of the whole-

Steph Routh ([04:07](#)):

Which is the cap of my life.

Jonathan Maus ([04:09](#)):

So Steph, welcome and thanks for being here, and I just thought I would ask you a few questions. We could have a chat and then we'd open up for Q&A, but I do also know that before we get going into that portion, there's something that Steph wanted to share with folks and mention.

Steph Routh ([04:22](#)):

Oh, thank you. First, thank you all for being here. One thing that Jonathan mentioned a few weeks ago, I think, on social media was some studies that demonstrate that when you walk and you cycle and you take transit, you're more connected to other humans, that it actually builds empathy, and I think that that is one thing that I think is so special about active transportation and advocacy in this, that we recognize we feel connected to each other's humanity.

([04:57](#)):

That we understand the sanctity of human life and appreciate it, and that's why I want to say team, we need to call for a ceasefire. There is a group called, if you have not heard, Jewish Voice for Peace. They're on Instagram, they're on socials, and they have a wonderful... You can go on this evening. They have a wonderful action webpage that makes it very easy to contact President Biden, to contact our congressional delegation in Oregon.

([05:34](#)):

And to take other actions to become more, develop understanding because I have a lot to learn about what is happening in Gaza and Palestine, and so I would just, we are connected. I think we recognize each other's humanity in this space and how we are connected to others in other spaces. So I would just, if there's one thing you do after this, that is one thing I would very much delight in. Thank you.

Jonathan Maus ([06:04](#)):

Thank you for that, Steph. On a less serious note, something I like to start out a lot of the conversations I have with folks is if you could share with us your relationship to cycling and if not, just cycling mobility and how you've gotten around all your life and the impact that's had on you.

Steph Routh ([06:24](#)):

So I'll just start with saying my name is Steph Routh. I am running, as Jonathan said, for Portland City Council District One, East Portland. I grew up in Parkrose, I live in Lents so East Portland is the home of my birth, it's the home of my heart. I was car free for 45 of my 47 years. I did get half a car two years ago because I have a rescue puppy, that's why, but I have been primarily biking as I married my bicycle in 2006.

Jonathan Maus ([07:06](#)):

Wait, wait, wait, wait. You did what?

Steph Routh ([07:08](#)):

I married my bicycle in 2006, Sparky. My dad gave me away.

Jonathan Maus ([07:13](#)):

For those-

Steph Routh ([07:15](#)):

It was a beautiful ceremony. This was actually where I met you, Jonathan. You were our photographer.

Jonathan Maus ([07:19](#)):

I was photographing. This was, for people that don't know if you're newer to Portland, people used to marry their bikes. Okay. You can still do it now. It's fine. If you want someone to document and be a photographer, happy to show up, but-

Steph Routh ([07:33](#)):

I am a reverend. I do weddings.

Jonathan Maus ([07:34](#)):

At the Multnomah County Bike Fair, I think it was 2006 or so, there was a booth, marry your bike booth. There was a minister kind of person there to do the officiating and everything, and there was Steph rolled up. She even had, there's a photograph of it on BikePortland. I could dig it up, but you can find it if you go on there. So she even had a dress and everything, a veil and it was like, now you may-

Steph Routh ([08:00](#)):

Veils go great with bike helmets.

Jonathan Maus ([08:01](#)):

Now you may kiss the bike, and there you go. So anyway, people marry their bikes. It was a thing. It was a thing.

Lois Leveen ([08:07](#)):

Have you cheated on it with another bike?

Steph Routh ([08:13](#)):

I do have another bicycle named Josh. It's okay. That's okay. I know it's true. Yes, it's an open, loving relationship. My current Surly, I have 65,000 miles on her. Sparky, the one that I married, I had an unfortunate incident. I have moved by bike. I've done that 85 times.

Lois Leveen ([08:40](#)):

Who?

Steph Routh ([08:40](#)):

Bike move number 58, I learned the hard way that in fact, it is true that the weight limit on a load is about 600 pounds, so the seat stays separated and that was pretty much the end of Sparky. Biking is just

what I did. I moved to New York City. Cycling is the way to get around, and then moving to Northern China, similarly. Going to Thailand, I was one of the only folks that had an acoustic bike.

[\(09:15\)](#):

Most people had scooters. Yeah, I love cycling. I think it's neat, and I'll say I was thinking about this when I was riding down earlier today for a meeting. It's the one mode where you get to smile at people. I do how many smiles I can get. I do a scavenger hunt every commute, and I think it was a 12 smile commute to my meeting this morning and that's pretty good.

Jonathan Maus [\(09:43\)](#):

Love it. On your website, you say I am running for city council to advance community-based solutions to our city's needs.

Steph Routh [\(09:51\)](#):

Yes.

Jonathan Maus [\(09:51\)](#):

I wonder if you can share with us what you think a community-based need that's not being met that you would look forward to working on if elected to city council.

Steph Routh [\(10:04\)](#):

Oh, that's a great question. I think one that has already happened and how do we make it happen more, Mt. Scott-Arleta neighborhood saw a significant issue in terms of traffic crashes, but also gun violence, that we had been seeing an increase in gun violence. They worked on with then PBOT Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, they worked on a traffic-calming project that was functionally place-making. It was beautiful. It included traffic-calming. It decreased gun violence in that area by, I want to say well over 40%. That's conservative within a short period of time, and that was commensurate.

[\(10:55\)](#):

That was in stark contrast to other neighborhoods in the area. So I think that one thing that we see when we come together and we talk about what are all of our issues, we find remedies that have a lot of co-benefits, that what is good for traffic safety is also good for reducing other forms of violence such as gun violence. I think that there's also, we have an uptick, especially in East Portland. I live in Lents. I was the policy and equity committee chair for the Jade District when it was starting to get.

[\(11:37\)](#):

There's been a lot of hate crimes, particularly through the pandemic along 82nd Avenue and around the city, but definitely there, and so how can we create those co-benefits through place-making, through belonging, through these ideas that we can create lovable, walkable places, that we see walkability is also disability justice, is also aging in community, is also climate action, that when we do something that is an elegant solution, it's not easy, but some of these are simple and they become easier when we engage more members of the community.

[\(12:17\)](#):

I also think when we're talking about community based solutions, we need to recognize that we have a lot of differences of opinion and that a lot of the low hanging fruit has been plucked for a lot of our issues. We are experiencing a housing crisis, we are experiencing a climate crisis. We are experiencing incredible traffic violence, and so how do we come together across difference to find perhaps not

consensus, but a deeper understanding of how our needs intersect. Also getting rid of parking minimums.

Jonathan Maus ([12:59](#)):

Yeah, those are all great things. I think what we've seen unfortunately, and you mentioned Commissioner Hardesty, is that we can do something really amazing in community and then maybe the infrastructure or the policy or something's not there so that someone else can come along and maybe not push it forward or not take it to the next step.

([13:19](#)):

Do you have any ideas or solutions you could say for if you were on council, taking something that had been done and taking it to the next level? Even the Mt. Scott-Arleta thing, something like that, a community solution that we've seen in Portland, depending on who's on council, these things can just basically stop and sometimes be dismantled to some degree or reversed. So what can you bring to council so that we can make sure that those things don't happen as much in the future?

Steph Routh ([13:43](#)):

I think at a deep level, that is such an important and good question. I think it's important to remember, I am obviously running for city council because I care and I want to be part of a solution. No one candidate, no one politician is going to solve our problems and government cannot be the hero of our story. Communities are the heroes of our story and it has to be. The town is the hero and the goal and the role of government and I think of politicians is to create the conditions where communities can thrive.

([14:23](#)):

And community-based solutions can find purchase and endure. Something like Portland Street Response that has overwhelming support, it was there when the first 10,000 signatures in support of Portland Street Response a few months ago was delivered to city council and that is an enduring project program that has had a pilot. It was piloted in Lents and it has developed a deep relationship of understanding and support, and so I think it's important for politicians to realize that we...

([15:03](#)):

And I'm not saying anything about any politician that has come before, but I do think when we get over our skis, and I have done this as an advocate sometimes too, you're trying to appeal to this tension of how to meet the urgency of the moment and also the idea... I think it's NASA that says, there's something in NASA manuals that it's like our issues are too urgent to go fast. We can't afford to do something fast and then experience the inevitable backlash and then spend a very long time trying to regain that trust.

Jonathan Maus ([15:45](#)):

You're talking about rate of change. To me, I think a lot about rate of change as somebody who straddles a lot of different worlds, being frustrated that things don't happen fast enough, but also understanding people in positions of power about why things can't change as fast as I want them to. You're going to be in that same boat more so than ever if you're on council. You are, I will just say, an activist, advocate, organizer by heart, by just your nature. That's my feeling about you, which is great.

([16:15](#)):

I love that because I can relate to people like you in that regard, but I've also seen when folks like that accumulate more power or get leadership roles, their voice can soften, they can go away, and suddenly, they're just sitting there becoming part of the machine, if you will, to some degree, and I just wonder, given all the amazing work you've done, obviously, where your heart is for bending this city to a brighter place, how are you going to manage that? Are you confident that you can be an elected official in a position of power and still keep it real?

Steph Routh ([16:53](#)):

You just described all of my nightmares.

Jonathan Maus ([17:00](#)):

Oh, I'm sorry.

Steph Routh ([17:00](#)):

No, I'm not confident at all.

Jonathan Maus ([17:03](#)):

Is that your answer?

Steph Routh ([17:03](#)):

And I think that's important. I've actually, as part of the campaign, started to develop, obviously as part of a campaign, you build a kitchen cabinet of emotional support. You build and there's some here, David, Aaron, team, thank you, parts of the work of the campaign. I've also started to try to build a team of rivals, if you will, of people who are naysayers, of people that I have disagreed with.

([17:33](#)):

Because I think it's important to have people who can call me to account, and I think that that needs to be built in because I'm not confident at all, and you need to have the people who you care about, who you love and you love to fight with. One of my favorite politicians has, in the before time in Oregon politics, said that he was constantly seeking the honorable opposition.

([18:03](#)):

I think one, it's important to be and to seek the honorable opposition, but also I'll share, I had one Mike Houck, just as a story. I think he would be quite delighted for me to share this story. I fought with him a fair bit on the Planning and Sustainability Commission when we were both there and we had a few really big disagreements, and particularly around South Reach and the relationship between unhoused folks who were staying along the Springwater corridor and being in harmony with nature.

Jonathan Maus ([18:42](#)):

Mike's like an urban wild space advocate. He wrote Wild in the City, Urban Preservation. So this is a person who's big on oaks bottom park to make sure that the lights stay out on the spring water. So there's often tension between his ideas of preserving open space in the city with people that need to do things in urban space. So sorry, he's a pretty a legend. So sorry, go ahead.

Steph Routh ([19:00](#)):

He's great. And so when we've had differences of opinion, I've really appreciated and I've grown from it. So about six months ago, when I was thinking maybe I'd run, I invited him out for a beer and I asked him like, hey... Am I allowed to swear?

Jonathan Maus ([19:18](#)):

Yes.

Steph Routh ([19:18](#)):

Great. Okay. I asked him like, "Hey, there's going to be some things I think as they come up, when I think that there's something that I think that you would have a strong opinion about that might not be mine, can I call you and have you tell me how I'm full of shit," and the smile that erupted on his face. He was like, "Steph, I would love to," and that's what it should be.

([19:48](#)):

People who we agree on some things. There are a few other people who are running for city council that I'm like, we've already had the conversation of I agree with you on 70%, I would say, of issues and on the other 30%, you're the one I want to fight with about it. You're the one I want to fight with about economic development and business and incentives. Let's figure out how we can work together.

Jonathan Maus ([20:15](#)):

Okay.

Steph Routh ([20:15](#)):

Is that an answer to your question?

Jonathan Maus ([20:16](#)):

Yeah, that's great. I appreciate that. So continuing on that, I wonder if you can say something about how you would manage opposition to stuff, let's say, that's in long range planning documents and things we've already adopted as a city, whether they're bike related goals, climate goals, traffic safety goals, whatever they might be. How would you manage what happens often in reality when we go to do those things on the ground and there are people who aren't quite comfortable with those changes being made in that moment in front of their house. How would you manage that kind of opposition as an elected official?

Steph Routh ([20:57](#)):

Oh my gosh, this is so wonderful. One, I want to pause and say and appreciate you, Jonathan, one, and can we give it up for Jonathan. And I'll speak in third person because I think that's what you should do when you're complimenting someone, that he, as you've seen, he is dogged, he is thoughtful, and he has been the through line of a lot of these projects over time that take a lot of time, that take that institutional memory and has been it, but also, I just really want to thank, there are also sometimes going into from the last question, there are times that Jonathan and I have disagreed.

([21:46](#)):

And on the other side, when we are going through some of those disagreements, most people don't see them. I would say we text, we call. I think there was one time you came to my house because some things, when you have disagreements on the other side of, I think, the true test of a friendship and the

true test of your passion is what is your relationship like on the other side, and I have come to the other side of a lot of those disagreements, one, being changed by them and also feeling a deeper respect and appreciation and love for our friendship on the other side of those disagreements, and I think our last disagreement was two weeks ago and so I just really appreciate-

Jonathan Maus ([22:32](#)):

Tell me more about that. We disagreed about that?

Steph Routh ([22:33](#)):

Did we disagree? Did we disagree?

Jonathan Maus ([22:34](#)):

I thought that was just a conversation. Well, that's related to my question. That was actually kind of my question was based on that phone call, which to some degree where we have, you're a planning commissioner. Google that. I don't know if folks are tuned in and plugged in, but that's a big deal. They're the folks that-

Steph Routh ([22:55](#)):

Bike parking, we're talking about it.

Jonathan Maus ([22:56](#)):

Yeah, we're talking about, it's a great example. Housing Regulatory Relief is going to be at planning commission next week, you said. This is as far as the decision point, this is a big deal. Part of that is basically to how to speed up production of housing in the city. So part of that are some bike parking code regulations that you might've seen the coverage on BikePortland, but they were a pretty big deal when they got put in.

([23:17](#)):

A lot of people worked really hard to get those adopted and there was a huge celebration when they got adopted, but now in the shorter term, people are like, maybe we don't need those. Let's make some housing and stuff. So it's a complicated thing. So yeah, that was kind of my question. We also, like we saw on 33rd, I think it's another good example. Maybe that's what spurred you to call, is that the nexus of those two things happening within the same week almost where we have 33rd.

([23:42](#)):

We have something already spoken for in a long range plan, but then when it gets done, the people on the ground are like uh-huh, I don't think so, and the politicians react to that and you kind of get this mess. So the thinking is we're never going to get to our goals if we have to litigate things block by block, especially things that are already in a plan. So do you have any ideas or thoughts about how to make that happen less?

Steph Routh ([24:07](#)):

Yeah. Oh no, that's a great question. One of the other, I'll say there are a couple... The housing regulatory relief, there have been a couple of articles on BikePortland about it. There's a lot happening. We're talking about live workspace, what are these because we're looking at how do we get more housing, but how do we get it quickly? There's been a lot of underproduction recently where we are in a

housing crisis. One thing about bike parking and active space, active use on the first floor are the two most agonizing amendments for me.

[\(24:46\)](#):

I will just say it is hard. I really appreciate the work of Portland Neighbors Welcome and Bike Loud and the Street Trust and Chris Smith and others for looking at, we can manage our expectations in the very near term, but we need to have oversight and we need to be talking about because all of these are dials, not a switch, and I'm looking at you, Nick, that it is a dial, it's not a switch.

[\(25:11\)](#):

So how are we going to modify in real time because we are in uncharted waters. I feel slightly, I will say just related to bike parking, I do feel slightly better about modifying that because we removed parking minimums statewide last year. If we had not done that, that would for me be an absolute non-starter, but the fact that we have done that makes me a little more, I won't say comfortable, but less averse to futsing with bike parking in the near term because I too have a cargo bike.

Jonathan Maus [\(25:49\)](#):

Okay. Yeah, I appreciate that. Okay. Just to dial it-

Steph Routh [\(25:51\)](#):

Wait, can I-

Jonathan Maus [\(25:52\)](#):

Go ahead.

Steph Routh [\(25:52\)](#):

Add in a slight, I want to say another aspect. This is where I might end up fighting with some of you in the near term because East Portland, and I was thinking about this and talking about this with Kyle and with Jonathan a few times, if you remember the Holgate bike lanes, we've been talking about bike lane issues, which is the Holgate bike lane is right near my house. I use it a lot, and they called it, in mainstream media, they did a whole series on... Do you remember what they called that?

Jonathan Maus [\(26:31\)](#):

Bike path to nowhere.

Steph Routh [\(26:33\)](#):

Bike path to nowhere.

Jonathan Maus [\(26:35\)](#):

The newscaster sat a chair, one of those little camp chairs in the bike lane on the 5:00, 5:00 primetime news, sat down, said, as you can see behind me, this controversial bike lane's not even being used. That was the start of the thing.

Steph Routh [\(26:48\)](#):

That's right. Yep. Yeah. And so folks were talking about just like what is the purpose of this bike lane, and through all of that, I was fascinated as someone who, again, has grown up in East Portland, loves East Portland, it is the home of my heart. It's like they just got a pass. I might cry on this one. They just got a pass at calling an entire part of town nowhere, and that's my house. That's our home, and it is funny and it's also funny in a sad way. It's like, and no one blinked. No one blinked.

[\(27:25\)](#):

And so it's like when I think of, of course, I want bike lanes. I think that cycling access in East Portland is critical and also we have underinvested in parks, in local business districts, in economic opportunity in East Portland so much. We need to start with place-making and then bikes become easy. Then it becomes notes for public transit, but so there's an order of operations, and so if someone were saying we need a bike path right there absolutely, right now, it's like do we need that first or do we need a park?

[\(28:05\)](#):

Do we need to look at what the East Portland division midway Rosewood tax increment financing district that they're talking about, do we need to give that legs before we look at how we're going to connect that to other places in the city? So I just want to say there might be an order of operations where you're like, in the future, if I'm lucky enough to be on city council, you might be like, you're not doing it fast enough and it's like I'm not doing it fast enough for you. That is correct, and I will fight with people all day.

Jonathan Maus [\(28:37\)](#):

So on that note of order of operations, if there were any PBOT people here, which typically, there are, but it doesn't look like there are tonight that I can see. I think they'd be thinking in their head that if you look at the numbers in terms of investment and infrastructure, they've been spending more for the last several years out in East Portland than they have in inner neighborhoods, which runs counter to the narrative that I know you've been around this stuff as long as I have, it not longer. I can remember when that conversation first started around geographic equity.

[\(29:07\)](#):

I think in a big way, it was 2008, Sho Dozono was fighting with Sam Adams for the mayoral candidacy or mayor, and he brought up this thing about the Sauvie Island Bridge going across I405. Remember that, which is now the Ned Flanders Bridge, but Sam Adams, former mayor, wanted to use the one from Sauvie Island, reuse it out there. It turned into this huge fight because he was in a run for mayor and his competitor was an East Portland guy, Sho Dozono, and Sho started to make it a big point to fight Sam by saying, there's an old lady in East Portland without a sidewalk. We need that before you're going to get your bridge over the wealthiest part of town.

Steph Routh [\(29:42\)](#):

Right. And I remember at end of that, and how many sidewalks did we build?

Jonathan Maus [\(29:45\)](#):

Well, my question is though, that was then and I think that became such an East Portland action plan started, there's so much energy around advocacy in those years after that, that the amount of money started showing up and PBOT really recognized that and started putting a lot of money out there. So based on what you said a second ago, do you think that, how are they doing on there... They would say monetarily, if you just look at the numbers, it's there, but are you saying that maybe we aren't investing

in the right things in East Portland or that what's missing out there that you can't just say, we need more money? What does East Portland need?

Steph Routh ([30:19](#)):

I think we also still have so much catching up to do just across the board and I think that that's, again, why I'm really excited, cautiously optimistic based on the Cully. Cully has a new project, a new version of the tax increment finance that gets wonky. I think that there is some cautious optimism, again, around place-making because a lot of the projects in East Portland are things like the gravel streets. How are we going to just level the gravel streets because we still have a huge lack of sidewalks.

([30:58](#)):

It sucks. We're not going to get those anytime soon. Sidewalks are really expensive. How do we get there, especially, I don't know if you noticed, we need to have a different conversation about how we're funding transportation at the local, state, and federal levels. We need to talk at some point, this is above my pay grade, about the state highway trust, but I think in the near term, we still have a fair bit of catching up to do. Just as a point, we have the green loop in inner east and downtown, but we also have the green ring that has not been funded. So we have a lot of catching up to do.

Jonathan Maus ([31:45](#)):

You remind me of the green ring and that was, I think, probably one of the arguments that we had in the past where you maybe thought I was a huge advocate for the Green Loop. Not necessarily. I just happened to do a lot of stories of it, about it, whatever. I do think it's awesome for sure, but I remember you probably brought that up, maybe it was at a hearing or something, but that idea that, well, where's the Green Ring in Lents? Why don't we have that? There's another disagreement we had was when you actually testified against Bike Share.

Steph Routh ([32:09](#)):

Oh yeah.

Jonathan Maus ([32:13](#)):

So when bike share got triggered by a \$2 million federal grant, they had to go through Metro. So there are hearings at Metro and everybody had to show up and say if they wanted it or not. There was a big feeling at the time that because it was only downtown, basically, that's where they were going to put the bikes, that folks like Steph were like, ain't going to happen. So you didn't necessarily want bike share to happen at that point, or you didn't want-

Steph Routh ([32:35](#)):

I did want bike share to happen so badly.

Jonathan Maus ([32:39](#)):

But I wanted to ask is do you think now looking at it, do you think if bike share was to expand greatly in East Portland, would that be a big benefit? Is that something that you would be in support of?

Steph Routh ([32:48](#)):

Oh yeah. I think that would be great. I will say since we're talking about it, the context. Metro, for the first time ever, had an environmental justice criteria on that grant, and I'm sorry, but bike share at that time was downtown. It was for people who were credit card holders. It did not, I felt, and Oregon Walks was part of a small group of organizations who felt it's like we love bike share. Not with this money. This money is for environmental justice criteria.

[\(33:26\)](#):

And the way they were trying to say it was like that there are a lot of poor people who live in the central city, and our response was, and I think that we were right on this. I am very glad that we got bike share. I love it, but being near poor people is not the same as being for poor people. There is a difference, and so it's like love bike share, but we don't get to say that something that excludes people who are unbanked at that time is a social justice project. We just don't get to say that.

Jonathan Maus [\(34:09\)](#):

Cool. Appreciate that. Okay.

Steph Routh [\(34:13\)](#):

Bike share's great. One thing that we've seen a couple of times like in Tigard and a few projects of cargo bike fleets that are specific to affordable housing, deeply affordable housing projects, and I think that is just such a cool potential model for seeding in specific areas as we're looking at both the working on the housing crisis and how do we have affordable, abundant access to great active transportation.

Jonathan Maus [\(34:46\)](#):

Cool. Yes.

Steph Routh [\(34:46\)](#):

While we're really working on deeply affordable transit.

Jonathan Maus [\(34:51\)](#):

Okay. Close to wrapping up here. Then I would get to some Q&A, so if you have questions, get them ready and I can pass the mics around because there's no cord. Sorry, geeking out on the tech here. Sorry. Okay. So you have a huge background in transportation and biking, and we've been talking a lot about that tonight. I want to ask you something about the saliency of transportation as a political priority. That's something I've been harping on on BikePortland for a while, how I'm selfishly bummed a little bit that it's not a top tier issue.

[\(35:19\)](#):

And given your background and everything that you're about, you don't have anything on your website about transportation as a part of your platform. You have, I think, there's three things on there. Not to say that you're done with that, but I'm just saying it's emblematic. I think I've been scanning the 20 or so candidates, a lot of them don't even have a transportation platform. I'm curious if you think if anybody could make that a part of their campaign and something that they push politically, it would be you, but if it's not on your website, do you think it is an issue that can be a strong issue to run on in Portland next year?

Steph Routh [\(35:54\)](#):

That is a great question. So on my webpage, our campaign platform at present is housing and shelter, community safety, and climate action, and shared prosperity. I believe that transportation runs through all of those. Transportation is a mode. It is a mode to housing, it is a mode to climate action, it is a mode to shared prosperity, and we're looking at, for example, PSEFs most recent, the climate investment plan for transportation decarbonization demonstrates that. Transportation is climate action, but I believe that transportation is in service to all of that.

[\(36:46\)](#):

Also, equity and racial justice are not things that are called out on my platform either, but they are woven through. Racial justice, gender justice, social justice, class are woven through all of it because that is housing, that is climate action. So I think that transportation, I think that shows up in different ways by different names sometimes in service too, but I think that what I'm hearing you say, and if I'm hearing what I think you're saying, I agree, is that it is always on the table. It is always part. I believe about one third of our city's land use are streets. That's a third of our land use as a city. Transportation absolutely has to be a part of it, but it is a mode. It is a utility.

Jonathan Maus [\(37:47\)](#):

Appreciate that answer. Fantastic. Let's get to some Q&A and we have a question. Go ahead. So I'll start with Lois and I'll get to you.

Lois Leveen [\(37:54\)](#):

So I like all the things you have to say. I'm not going to vote for you, but that's because I'm not in your district. It seems like you'd be so great on City Council. Why haven't you run before?

Steph Routh [\(38:08\)](#):

That's a good question. Well, you're so kind. Honestly, I begged to be on the Planning and Sustainability Commission because I was hoping that would be my terminal service. It's really time intensive, it's super wonky, it's low profile, it pays \$0, and it was the love letter to my city, and then I saw we worked really hard on the shelter to Housing Continuum project.

[\(38:37\)](#):

It passed unanimously and then I didn't see much happen with it, and I realized then when I saw the district lines drawn for the new system and I saw that on day one of the administration, the new administration, East Portland would have more representation than, on day one of the administration than in the cumulative history of Portland City Council, that was just so meaningful and I couldn't say no.

Jonathan Maus [\(39:08\)](#):

Okay. We have another question over here.

Mike [\(39:10\)](#):

I would love if you could expound upon the idea of shared prosperity and what you mean by that and how to implement that.

Steph Routh [\(39:18\)](#):

Yeah. Could you say who you are and introduce yourself?

Mike ([39:21](#)):

I'm Michael. I'm a Portlander.

Steph Routh ([39:23](#)):

Yeah, great.

Mike ([39:24](#)):

On a bike.

Steph Routh ([39:25](#)):

Okay. Thank you, Michael. I feel like that shared prosperity has a number of elements, but I think that idea of we all do better when we all do better. Short answer, if you have read Caste by Isabelle Wilkerson, that is the answer. I think one, we need to be supporting local entrepreneurship as one. We need to be supporting good thriving wage jobs and that has a lot of levers to it. We're seeing, I don't know if you've heard, there's a few organizations on strike right now.

([40:05](#)):

And are looking at a thriving wage and that teachers' conditions are learning conditions as well. With another, I'm an adjunct professor at PSU. I teach community organizing and social change. We averted a strike. We were getting strike ready similarly. To that end, we are currently going through a process in the city called the Economic Opportunity Analysis. I'm on the collaborative working group and we're looking at what does the future of economic opportunity look like in the city from a zoning perspective, but I think that that is one of many levers and the city of Portland is a huge employer.

Jonathan Maus ([40:43](#)):

Okay, Hami has a question over here.

Hami Ramani ([40:46](#)):

Hi, Steph. Thanks for being here. Jonathan, this wireless mic is amazing. Thank you. My name's Hami. Yes, no, I might start singing.

Steph Routh ([40:57](#)):

If you need to sing Mariah Carey, we're here for it.

Hami Ramani ([40:59](#)):

Anyway, you mentioned love many times, I think, in your answers and I want to see what you have to say about how we can bolster a loving city. I think we all have love within us. The question is how do we tap into that essence and make it the foundation of everything that we do?

Steph Routh ([41:25](#)):

Small question. I will say just in terms of the new form of government, I'll just get really tactical for a minute and I can go out. One reason that I was such a strong advocate for the new form of elections as well as government was because proportional representation rank choice voting, which is multi-member districts advantages collaboration and coalition building because, and I've been working, I've been

talking with a lot of, especially trying to talk with any endorsing organization that we can, political strategist, anyone who is currently influencing the nature of elections right now, of just the TLDR.

[\(42:21\)](#):

That if you as a candidate run a tear down election, a tear down candidacy, you will lose, that our new form of elections actually advantages collaboration and coalition building and running for a vision and building alliances with colleague candidates. We are not opponents, we are colleagues. So it's like I believe other folks who are running in district one, Tim Moore has worked at PBOT. You've probably hung out with him for better block PDX, and a number of other. He's wonderful. I'm so thrilled to be a colleague-candidate of his.

[\(43:09\)](#):

We have Candace Avalos, who's the executive director of Verde, has been until very recently on the board of Portland Neighbors Welcome, an amazing human and on the board of Street Roots. I'm just so thrilled to be in this space with them. There's others, David Lynn, Deian Salazar, Jamie Dunphy. There's great people and we get to hang out and we get to talk about what our shared vision looks like and also how we disagree and how we are different, but we're different. We can do that and still achieve consensus and try to build consensus and build relationship across difference.

[\(43:50\)](#):

So I think that that is one way, and I think that now is that critical time of shifting. We have this critical moment in our city's history of shifting the organizational culture of our city government, and that red downs to that each neighborhood, each of the four districts will have not one, but three people that they will be able to go to and that are then legislatively accountable to a specific group of folks, and I think that that building those relationships, building a sense of place is an opportunity to really identify the sense of belonging and I think one thing that I don't think that we talk about enough, Jonathan was talking about how I was a harbinger of disaster for four years, 9/11, SARS, bird flu, and then the tsunami.

Speaker 6 [\(44:45\)](#):

Thanks for COVID also.

Steph Routh [\(44:45\)](#):

I know, I know, but one thing about both SARS and COVID, I remember thinking at one point of all of those major community-based emergencies that we all went through, SARS was the worst because, and COVID has been, we have been in this space of the last three years of fearing other human beings in front of us because we don't know what they are bringing into our space, and that fear is isolating. We had a loneliness crisis before pandemic. Where are we right now?

[\(45:28\)](#):

So I think acknowledging that, honoring that, and looking at how between now and day one of the new administration and then beyond, how are we building a sense of belonging and how are we recognizing how much disconnection people have been feeling, and a lot of the issues that we're seeing, how much of that is, it's not the individual. This is about fear. This is an individualized and collective fear that we are still working our way through, we are still metabolizing individually and as communities, and just holding each other with the grace that we can. Group hug, pajama party.

Jonathan Maus [\(46:12\)](#):

Any questions? Questions? Alon.

Alon Raab ([46:14](#)):

Thank you for your good work over the years.

Steph Routh ([46:16](#)):

You too, Alon.

Alon Raab ([46:18](#)):

So the city has a wonderful bicycle plan from 2010 that envisions 25% ride-share and we're stuck at 7%, and even though usually, quality is more important than quantity, but it'd be great to have 25% or 79 or 99, but I'm wondering if you have specific ideas and proposals out to get there. I'm thinking of encouraging school kids. The school bus is wonderful. Having a class in school about cycling, closing the downtown to cars, more bike lanes and so forth.

Steph Routh ([46:54](#)):

Yeah. I think I go back to making the case for cycling is a lot easier when you have places to cycle to, and again, I think of as the former executive director of Oregon Walks, I think there's walkability and rollability is the elegant solution to so many of our issues and makes the abundant case for cycling clear, and I think that there's that triptych of transit and walkability and cycling and we need to do all three. I think that one thing that is a little bit that we need to be working better with and we need to really look at how transit is funded and how we're working on operations because transit is the backbone to a land use that makes both cycling and walking inevitable.

Jonathan Maus ([47:53](#)):

Yes. Well put. Scott, I'll give Scott the last word here.

Scott Batcheler ([47:57](#)):

First, wanted to make a little observation about your neighborhood. You know I've lived in Portland for 61, in the Portland area for 61 years. Well, my sister lived within a mile of your place for almost 25 years. Let's put it this way, simple, matter of fact. Lents gets, if it's lucky, 5 cents of every dollar spent on their neighborhood. The simple reality is they have never been able to get. If you get in, how are you and everybody else going to work to help?

Steph Routh ([48:43](#)):

That's a great question. That's one of the reasons I filed early is because I think the collaboration and coalition building needs to happen on the campaign trail and that's why I wanted to start early. So that's why I've started.

Scott Batcheler ([48:57](#)):

Thank you.

Steph Routh ([48:57](#)):

Oh, thank you.

Scott Batcheler ([48:58](#)):

This transcript was exported on Nov 10, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Because you know how long I've been waiting. Almost 15 years.

Jonathan Maus ([49:05](#)):

He's probably not the only one.

Scott Batcheler ([49:11](#)):

No, I just moved to Lents so I can vote for her. Yes. I'll be sending you some money.

Jonathan Maus ([49:17](#)):

Thanks, Scott, for the question, and thank you, Steph, for having this chat out in the street on a cold night. I appreciate you being here.

Steph Routh ([49:24](#)):

Thank you all for being here. You're all heroes.

Jonathan Maus ([49:31](#)):

That was city council candidate for District One, Steph Routh, standing outside with me on Southeast Ankeny Street between 27th and 28th at Bike Happy Hour. Thank you so much for listening. As always, remember that BikePortland is community journalism and it needs community to survive. So if you are a subscriber, thank you very much. If you're not a subscriber yet, please become one at bikeportland.org/subscribe.

([49:56](#)):

We also take financial contributions and a lot of folks like to just do that. So if you can hit us up at bikeportland.org/support, you'll find our Venmo name at BikePortland and other things like that. If you want to help us keep doing the work that is vital, not just viral, that's what we're doing here. It's human powered news, BikePortland since 2005. Would love to have you be a part of it as a financial supporter. Thank you so much for listening and until next time, we'll see you in the streets.