



CeCe Ibson – Ward 1 City Council Candidate Survey Responses

4. Transit Funding & DART

DART is redesigning its system for the first time in nearly 20 years. The City Council recently increased the franchise fee on utility bills to 7.5%, generating approximately \$6.2 million annually for transit.

- **Beyond the franchise fee, what additional strategies should the City consider to secure long-term transit funding?**
- **If some suburbs scale back their participation, should Des Moines continue pursuing a regional funding model, or focus more on building a city-centered transit system?**
- **How would you balance those priorities?**

When I first moved to Des Moines (in 1988), rush hour traffic flowed in one direction: west to east in the morning, east to west in the evening. That is no longer the case given, for example, the explosion (which continues) of attractive (not necessarily affordable) housing in the City and employer migration to the suburbs. Suburban employers have a vested interest in reliable public transportation for their workforce. One Ward 1 resident told me about her disabled son who takes the bus as far as he can into West Des Moines then has to Uber to his workplace. Large, suburban, employers could cover the gap by providing scheduled shuttle service from the end of the bus line to their campuses.

Your second question has me thinking – what if we told the suburbs they are on their own while we focus on public transit within the City limits? My guess is that sort of pronouncement would get suburban leaders motivated – particularly as they be under pressure from suburban employers – to up their games and their contributions to metro-wide transit.

In terms of balance, this whole urban-vs.-suburban conflict takes me back to when I was first working on housing (in the 1990s). Virtually every shelter bed was in the City, as was the bulk of tax-exempt property. But we served people in need from anywhere, many of whom came from the suburbs, as there were no services for them there. I hope that suburban participation will balance itself out if the City cuts back or eliminates service outside the City limits. In an ideal world, ever-increasing federal funding would be made available for public transportation systems, like DART. Given the current administration

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views on fossil fuels, EVs, climate and other related subjects, we clearly are not living in that world and will need to rely on local funding, public and private.