



Metro Policy Advisory Committee Application

* response is required

First Name*: Omar

Last Name*: Qutub

Pronouns: He/Him

Occupation & Employer (if applicable): Physician, Dermatology by Design LLC

The Metro Policy Advisory Committee addresses policy areas that include regional transportation, management of the urban growth boundary, and protection of lands outside the urban growth boundary for natural resources, future urban zoning, or other uses. What is your interest or background in these issues, and why are you interested in joining this committee?*

As a Portland native, born and raised, I spent a significant amount of time commuting through my youth with my Grandmother, who never had a driver license or owned a car. Walking almost half a mile to the nearest bus stop from the suburban home she lived in with myself, my parents and my siblings, an outing shopping with Grandma was a regular occurrence. Our nearly 1-hour long commute included our walk, waiting for the bus -hoping we didn't miss an early arrival, riding to the transfer station in downtown Milwaukie, and then waiting for the next bus and the ride to downtown. The independence that our bus trip together afforded both she and I was not lost on me, even at a young age. The value, the conveniences, and the inconveniences: late busses, no shows from a break down, lack of shelter on the typical rainy days among others, are memories I won't soon forget. When I was old enough to be able to travel alone, around 12 to 13 years of age, I knew my way around town and the nuances about the trip when I headed to downtown Portland to the library or to simply browse magazines new music at the old Border's Bookstore near Pioneer Place. Watching the entire transit system evolve through the years has been fascinating, from light rail to the trolley, and I realized first hand very early how necessary the modes of transportation mattered in Portland, just as much as our pride in our city's natural resources. Public transit not only allowed for city and work access for thousands of Portlanders acting as a lifeline, but also was and continues to be a means in which to limit unnecessary fossil fuel pollution from being pumped into our clean Northwest air. As a resident in the downtown area now, my home and my work are within a few blocks of each other, on purpose. I understand first-hand the benefits and growing pains of an ever-expanding population, and as an entrepreneur I have a particular interest and understanding of the nuances that make Portland great. Just as much, I understand what may diminish our city's great uniqueness. As a lifelong Portlander, I feel an inherent sense of pride in our city and feel strongly that those of us that have been there the longest may best understand which direction we must move as we continue to innocently entice a rapid influx of new metro area citizens. Most of whom have come here for similar reasons: clean water, easy and affordable access to public transportation with a focus on the underserved and the most dependent. Then there is the inevitable need to increase the urban population density in the metro area in order to welcome our new arrivals. Having cherished our wetlands as a child and teen on field trips through the years, I believe there is a way to protect these vital ecosystems while still being able to safely and wisely welcome our new arrivals without a need to touch our urban growth boundary.

Based on my experiences, I believe that affordable access to reliable, safe, and readily available transportation to all in and around is the key to our overall success for livability in the Portland-Metro area.

Guided by input from many regional partners and informed by research, Metro has identified racial equity as the approach to ensure that all people who live, work and recreate in the Portland region have the opportunity to share in and help define a thriving, livable and prosperous place. Metro strives to cultivate diversity, advance equity and practice inclusion in all of its work. What experiences, perspectives and values would you bring to Metro's equity work?*

I believe that I have a deep understanding of Portland and the metro area has to offer, and what it needs to continue to develop and enhance in order to maximize its potential as a truly equitable city. Born at Emmanuel Hospital in North Portland, I have lived in Portland and the metro area for nearly my entire life. Having left Portland for my medical training in Washington, DC seeking a more diverse life experience with a desire to treat a variety of ailments as well as people, I returned with a more inclusive world view realizing the cosmopolitan diversity that larger cities on the East Coast had to offer. Living in a majority African American City and attending a historically black University for my medical training at Howard, I came to realize upon return to Oregon that Portland was indeed considerably behind in its inclusivity and diversity, especially at the corporate and elected office levels. Just as well, our city still has work to do in order to give better access to many of its minority communities. My perspective is of course unique being from a bi-racial family of different religions, and though Portland's tolerance to families such as mine felt genuine, equity in education, opportunity and even access to healthcare across the city was clearly divided by socioeconomic circumstances. Now as a minority physician, I do feel a responsibility to make our city focus on ways in which we can improve overall outcomes for all walks of life as we finally realize and understand the significant systemic faults and imperfections in our city as a whole. Recently, I was selected over many established board-certified dermatologists to become the inaugural director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) for a large annual medical and cosmetic dermatology conference, ODAC, and my sole duty will be to ensure that our lectures and continuing medical education prioritizes equity, including all skin types and conditions that affect minority populations. My goal is to ensure that every practitioner can cast a wider net in regards to their patient populations, and also feel prepared and competent to treat those who often have felt distrust in the hands of medical professionals. Also, we will be sure to include a more diverse lecturing faculty so that all perspectives and experiences can be better understood and likely inspire younger physicians to be more inclusive. These are the values that I hope to bring to Metro.

Please describe your current and past community involvement. What organizations, issues and communities have you been involved with?*

"Since I returned home to Portland after my residency training, I became first engaged in the NAACP local chapter for medical professionals, building bonds that have lasted to this day. Being able to create a mini-network for underserved and minority communities has been more than rewarding, it has been a necessary way to bridge the gap that often pushes one faction of our community out of what we consider mainstream health care networks resulting in subpar outcomes. I have had an interest in public service for many years, and now that I have established my new business in Portland, three years in private practice, I have been able to get involved in local business groups, including the Pearl District Business Association (PDBA) where I have been able to support other local business as well as network on ways in which we can empower entrepreneurship in our greater community. In 2020, I was fortunate enough to be selected to become part the Portland Business Alliance's (PBA) Public Service Training cohort. In our many meetings, we were able to work as a cohesive group learning

about civic opportunities, ways in which to empower small businesses and their interaction with local government, and of course we were able to discuss pertinent matters including COVID and its effect on our community. Through lectures and interactive sessions, we brainstormed ways in which we can improve engagement in politics for the average citizen, and of course learning the most effective options for ourselves to become involved in not only elected office, but understanding the local and state relationships, finding out where we can make an actual difference- whether it be running for elected office, and/or supporting initiatives at the local and state levels.

How did you learn about this opportunity?

During my experience with the PBA's Public Service Training sessions, we were given direct access to discuss vital issues facing Portland- and the metro area- not only with elected city officials, but also with other policy makers and commissioners. While learning about the value and function of the many boards that have a significant hand in planning and implementing major Portland and Metro City initiatives, I realized that I could immediately best serve my community in a role such as this, giving insight as a private citizen on how vital transportation and urban growth are to the success of small businesses and the to the framework of Portland as a whole. I was lucky to have Karis Stoudamire-Phillips as a guest speaker at one of our PBA meetings, and I was fascinated by the amount of oversight she was involved in with her work as part of MERC. Having known Karis and her involvement on different commissions in Portland, I realized that there were unique opportunities to use my point of view as an entrepreneur, a small business owner, as a minority, and as a professional in order to help guide the changes that will inevitably push our growing city and metro area into the future vision of an inclusive, accessible, and environmentally sound home that Portland has always been to me.