



City of Seattle

Michael McGinn, Mayor

Office of the Mayor

April 6, 2010

Honorable Richard Conlin
President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Council President Conlin:

I am pleased to transmit the attached proposed Resolution recommending approval of a route for the First Hill Streetcar project. The recommended route would operate primarily on Broadway through First Hill and Capitol Hill and primarily on S Jackson Street through the Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square. The First Hill Streetcar will connect First Hill employment centers to the regional high capacity transit system, improve local circulation and make a unique new set of transit connections between diverse and dynamic neighborhoods. Construction would begin in 2011, creating new construction jobs in the near term and supporting economic development over the long term when operations begin in late 2013.

Project Background

The recommended alignment is consistent with the origins and history of the First Hill Streetcar project. Ten years ago this month, the Seattle City Council approved a route for Sound Transit's Central Link Light Rail project that was to include a First Hill Station on Madison Street, near Broadway. As the light rail project development advanced, the costs and risks of a deep bored tunnel and light rail station under First Hill emerged as a concern for the Sound Transit Board and for the Federal Transit Administration, the major funding partner for Central Link Light Rail. In 2006, the Sound Transit Board removed the First Hill station from the Sound Move plan, and authorized study of alternative means of connecting First Hill to the regional transit system. A streetcar connector operating primarily on Broadway and Jackson emerged as the preferred alternative means of connecting First Hill to the regional transit system.

Advantages of the Recommended Route

The Broadway/Jackson route is estimated to cost approximately \$125 M, comfortably within the maximum Sound Transit funding limit of \$132.8 M, and will provide an efficient and accessible new transit option. The route also presents opportunities to re-think the Broadway streetscape in ways that support walking, biking and riding transit. In the Chinatown/International District, the Pioneer Square loop integrates well with other transit and connects First Hill and Capitol Hill to this historic district and the adjacent stadium district.

Potential Future Transit Improvements in the Corridor

Through the public engagement process that informed this recommendation, the City learned a great deal about the transit needs of the First Hill and Capitol Hill areas and worked with passionate advocates for improving transit to support these livable, sustainable urban neighborhoods. As we

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move forward with the First Hill Streetcar, I am also committed to developing plans to address the key transit issues that stakeholders identified throughout this process, including:

- Improving transit access to the Boren/Madison area, through measures such as speed and reliability improvements to existing Metro routes;
- Developing alternatives that provide north-south transit service in the 12th Avenue corridor; and
- Extending the First Hill Streetcar to the north end of Broadway, to support the economic revitalization of Broadway and improve neighborhood access to the Capitol Hill light rail station.

I have asked SDOT to address each of these issues as they begin the development of a Transit Master Plan that will serve as a blueprint for future transit investments in Seattle.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Ethan Melone of SDOT at 684-8066.

Sincerely,

Michael McGinn
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council