



Mayor Michael McGinn
Council President Richard Conlin
Transportation Committee Chair Tom Rasmussen
City of Seattle
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

July 14, 2010

Dear Mayor McGinn, Council President Conlin and Councilmember Rasmussen:

As you are undoubtedly aware, earlier this year SDOT initiated a much-needed 5-year update of the Seattle Transit Plan. The public process for the plan update was to begin in the early part of 2010 and be completed before the end of 2011. We were pleased with the timeline and scope as presented and were looking forward to contributing our time and resources to its development.

For our part, we supported the immediate commencement of a mode-neutral plan, conducted by career professionals in SDOT, guided by council-approved stakeholders, as well as transit and regional planning agencies serving our city. By necessity, this was to include a full modal analysis component, developed concurrently, in order to be of maximum benefit to those who live, work and play in Seattle.

Ordinance 123325, a proviso passed by the council this summer, interrupted this process and could not have come at a worse time for a number of reasons:

Sound Transit 2

Supported by our organizations and passed by voters in 2008, ST2's projects and investments weren't firm, funded commitments when the Seattle City Council adopted the Seattle Transit Plan - To Get Seattle Moving (Resolution No. 30799) in September 2005. The sooner we integrate these projects into our transit and land use plans, the more benefit will be seen when the city's growth rate returns to prior levels.

Metro Transit Cuts

The impact of cuts to Metro transit service in the next biennium has the potential to be mitigated if SDOT can plan for, and accelerate, the implementation of Transit Priority Corridor projects and other strategies to improve transit speed and reliability. Seattle will also need current data to help prioritize the remaining service hours available to the city.

Federal Action

Perhaps the most important reason to expedite the plan-update is that Congress is likely to pass the successor to the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation bill in 2011. Some of the major components Seattle and other cities around the country have been lobbying for include more funding for transit operations,

mode-neutral flexible funds, dedicated metropolitan mobility funds, an infrastructure bank and small starts and other grant funding for streetcar and bus mobility projects. Having a robust, updated plan in place is the easiest way for Seattle to compete with other cities for funding from these new urban mobility programs now being advanced by the Obama administration. Putting off the modal-analysis until 2012 could put the city at the back of the line behind Portland and other better prepared cities for tens if not hundreds of millions of federal dollars.

You are each well recognized as supporters of transit, and, to some degree, for your commitment to updating the city's Transit Plan. We ask the Council and the Mayor to put aside their differences on other issues and remove the taint of politics from the transit planning process. We should not let political motives and disagreements spill over into an area where there is near-uniform support.

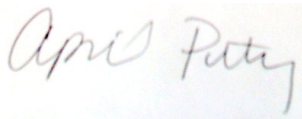
In the end, our ask is simple, that the Council remove its funding restrictions while continuing to support this planning effort and that the Mayor agree to reasonable conditions necessary to assure a full modal component in this year's planning process.

This plan must be guided by the best ideas and the best data, without regard to outside distractions. To that end, our organizations are willing to convene a meeting with Council and the Mayor to work through the obstacles and get this critical process back on track.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
Transportation Choices Coalition



April Putney
Co-Director
Futurewise



Martin Duke
Editor-in-Chief
Seattle Transit Blog



David Hiller
Advocacy Director
Cascade Bicycle Club



Jesseca Brand
Director
King County Conservation Voters

Cc: Councilmember Nick Licata
Councilmember Jean Godden
Councilmember Sally Clark
Councilmember Tim Burgess
Councilmember Bruce Harrell
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Peter Hahn, SDOT