

June 8, 2011

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Tracy Burrows
Office of the Director
Seattle Department of Transportation
PO Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Dear Ms. Burrows:

Feet First, the state's only pedestrian advocacy organization, has been promoting walkable communities in the Puget Sound region and across the state since 1995. We have been following the CTAC3 process over the past several months with great interest. We strongly encourage you to include investments to provide a network of safe walkways in neighborhoods that currently don't have them in your recommendations for the city.

Walkable neighborhoods are a big part of what makes most of Seattle such a great place to live, connecting communities, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and reducing environmental pollution. Unfortunately, some neighborhoods, particularly those in the northern and southern portions of the city, lack a complete network of sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities. As a result, residents in these areas cannot walk their own neighborhoods safely. This is a particularly serious issue in some low-income areas of Southeast Seattle where the lack of safe walkways contributes to inactivity, which in turn contributes to numerous health problems including obesity, diabetes, and hypertension.

Strategic investments in pedestrian improvements encourage walking. Twenty-eight percent of all travel trips in the United States are of one mile or less.¹ The vast majority of these trips are currently by car, but they are short enough to be converted to walking trips. This is corroborated by a University of Washington study of twelve neighborhood centers in the greater Seattle area. This study found that communities with sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly transportation design elements had per capita pedestrian volumes three times greater than communities that lacked them.² For Seattle to meet its ambitious climate change goals requires a commitment to providing a complete pedestrian network throughout the city.

The Pedestrian Master Plan contains \$840 million in Tier 1 improvements for pedestrians. This is an ambitious plan, which will likely take a generation or more to implement. We understand that maintaining current transportation facilities has to be a top priority for any new funding, and we appreciate that your proposed \$20 vehicle license fee package includes \$1.7 million per year for sidewalk maintenance. At the same time, we are concerned that it contains no new money for sidewalk

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation; 2009 National Household Travel Survey.

² Moudon, Anne Vernez, et al; *Effects of Site Design on Pedestrian Travel in Mixed-Use, Medium Density Environments* (University of Washington, 1997).



construction. Any new funding package submitted to voters should include some money for new sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements. Creating this pedestrian infrastructure is crucial to the future of our city.

To get the most out of our transportation investments, any new funding package should focus any new sidewalk dollars on locations that would improve transit access. This includes improvements along major arterials that serve Metro transit routes, and roadways leading to Sound Transit light rail stations. Planning for these facilities should be done in conjunction with the Transit Master Plan currently under development. We would also focus funding for pedestrian improvements at dangerous locations near K-12 schools. This is particularly important now due to possible reductions in school bus service currently under consideration by the Seattle School District. Additionally, as the baby boomer population grows older, there will be an even greater demand on the system to provide safe and accommodating conditions for seniors to walk. Children and seniors are our most vulnerable populations. The current design of our city, in many instances, does not provide the important connections for these individuals to simply walk to the store, to the bus, to school.

In addition, we encourage CTAC3 to consider other funding sources beyond the vehicle license fee to fulfill the desperate need for additional transportation revenue. We are particularly supportive of some kind of tolling or other user-based fee. We believe, further research into these potential long-term revenue options would be well worth the committee's time.

Walkable communities with safe streets, strong neighborhood connections, and convenient access to transit are a vision nearly all Seattle residents share. Creating such communities in the northern and southern reaches of the city will take many years to accomplish, however if we do not start now, it will not happen. These neighborhoods have been waiting for sidewalks for decades. It is time to begin building them now.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Quinn". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

Lisa Quinn
Executive Director

cc: Peter Hahn, Director, Seattle Department of Transportation
Ref Lindmark, co-chair, CTAC3 Committee
Kate Joncas, co-chair, CTAC3 Committee