

DRAFT

March 12, 2015.

Mayor Ed Murray and Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Arboretum Mixed Use Trail

Dear Mayor Murray and Councilmember Bagshaw,

Parks staff briefed the Commission on the Arboretum Multi Use Trail project. The Commission understands the access goals behind the project and is concerned about several issues:

1. The sheer number of trees to be removed to accommodate this 14 ft wide trail. Of the 168 trees to be removed, 65 are native species. 50 are 18" or greater in caliper. The eight largest trees to be removed are natives between 36" and 50" in caliper. These removals represent a significant amount of canopy.
2. There are clear inconsistencies between the current tree protection ordinance and Urban Forest Stewardship Plan goals. The existing ordinance precludes removals of trees 6" or greater on undeveloped land, and the removal of all exceptional trees, but exempts public agencies such as the Arboretum.
3. When Commissioners walked the proposed new trail's path they noticed that it runs parallel to an existing trail. Also, the Arboretum Drive provides a paved option for cyclists.
4. The project would benefit from better signage. Trees to be removed are marked with dots, but unless someone knows what they are looking for, people most likely don't know the extent of tree removal that will be required for this project. The Commission recommends clearly marking trees and placing project signs in visible places.
5. Lastly, the Commission would recommend applying the City's Two-for-One Tree Replacement Policy.

Preserving mature trees, especially native species, in Seattle's dense urban environment is challenging. In order to accomplish the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan's goal of 30 percent canopy cover the City should focus tree conservation efforts on locations that provide sufficient soil and don't present infrastructure conflicts such as Parks land and the Arboretum.

Sincerely,