



**Seattle  
Design  
Commission**

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**17 January 2002**

Gregory J. Nickels,  
*Mayor*

Donald Royse  
*Chair*

Tom Bykonen

Ralph Cipriani

Jack Mackie

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

David Spiker

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,  
*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell,  
*Commission Coordinator*

Projects Reviewed

Woodland Park Zoo Discovery Village  
Waterfront Streetcar Improvement Project  
ProParks Open Space Acquisition  
Beacon Hill Library  
Jefferson Park Golf Maintenance Facility  
Potlatch Trail  
Design Review Update

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 5:00pm

Commissioners Present

Donald Royse, Chair  
Jack Mackie, Vice Chair  
Tom Bykonen  
Ralph Cipriani  
Iain M. Robertson  
David Spiker  
Sharon E. Sutton  
Tory Laughlin Taylor

Staff Present

John Rahaim  
Layne Cubell  
Brad Gassman  
Sally MacGregor



Department of Design,  
Construction & Land Use

700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000  
Seattle, WA 98104-5070  
phone 206/233-7911  
fax 206/386-4039

**17 Jan 2002 Project: Potlatch Trail**

Phase: Update

Previous Review: 5 August 1999 (Briefing)

Presenters: Roger Fernandes, Seattle Arts Commission Project Artist

David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects

Margo Polley, Seattle Center

Attendees: Jeff Benesi, Hewitt Architects

Lyle Bicknell, CityDesign

Marcia Iwasaki, Seattle Arts Commission

Don Loseff, Seattle Center

Ron Scharf, Seattle Transportation

Time: .75 hour (SDC Ref. # 220 | DC00197)

**Action:** The Commission commends the team for the presentation and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

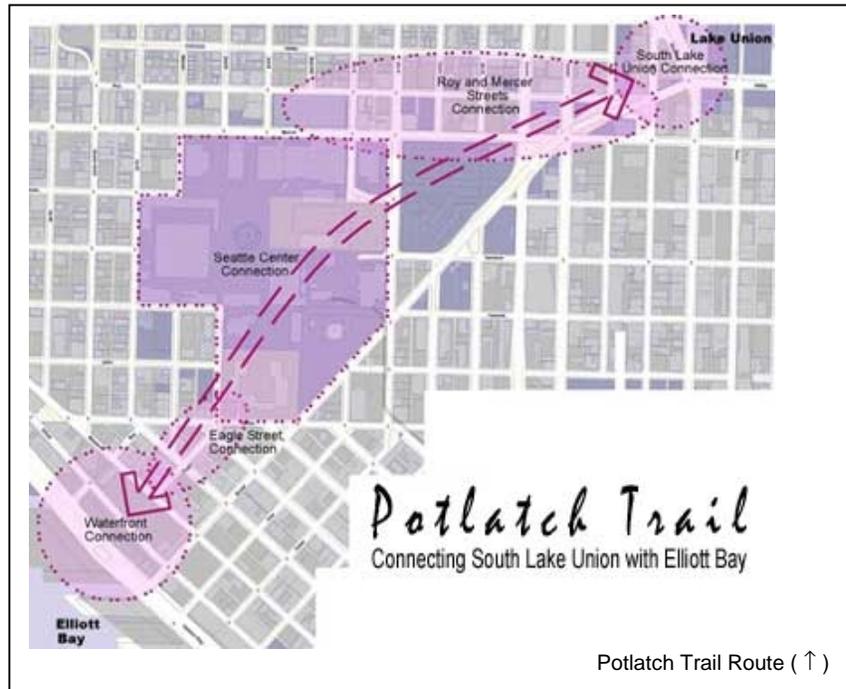
- The Commission would like to reiterate the actions of the previous Commission meeting on 5 April 2001;
- supports the general direction and rethinking of the project, including the name of the trail;
- encourages the team to develop an implementation strategy that allows the trail to be built incrementally, so that pieces can be done as opportunities arise, to determine the overall concept of the trail;
- because the future of the project is uncertain and depends on the Alaskan Way Viaduct alternatives, the Commission encourages the project team to identify temporary and inexpensive ways in which the public can begin to understand the meaning and design intent of the trail; and
- encourages the team to develop a web site and host special events along the trail to begin to tell the story of the trail.

Historically, Seattle Center has been a site and an area for ceremonies; this bicycle and pedestrian trail, connecting South Lake Union to Elliott Bay, is meant to celebrate this history. The project proponents explained the “Potlatch” is actually a misnomer, and the Native Americans of this region did not typically have potlatch. South Lake Union, Queen Anne, and Belltown neighborhoods have all incorporated the Potlatch Trail in their neighborhood plans, and the proponents have received support from other City agencies. The concept plan was completed in March 2001, and the Seattle Center hired Hewitt Architects to work on the design, and has worked with the Seattle Arts Commission to identify a project artist.

The schematic design is under development, and the team has been working on a technical analysis of the route and an examination of the utilities and other existing elements. The team has also been working to refine the intended character of the trail, to better understand the nature of the interpretive exhibits, and the story behind the trail. The Alaskan Way Viaduct is a primary concern along the route; the concept alternatives for the Viaduct will all significantly affect the route of the trail that was developed in the concept design stage. The technical analysis has stopped, and will not resume until the Viaduct alternative has been identified.

Seattle Center hopes that the trail not only a transportation link, but a destination that inspires and

surprises people. The team hopes that the design itself would express the Native American view of the world, not in a gratuitous manner or in an applique manner, but as a philosophy. To begin to define the character of the path, Seattle Center hosted a Day of Learning. The dialogue focused on three primary themes; the name of the path, how to honor Native Americans, and the attributes or character of the path. The name “Potlatch” is incorrect, but it is also insulting. The future name of the trail will develop throughout the design process, but will be a Native American word.



The concept design of the path recognizes the need to honor historic Native American wisdom that applies to perceptions of the differences and connections between cultures. The path will make this dialogue visible. The design team hopes to set aside traditional perceptions of physical things, instead addressing the trail as a story and different form of communication. The design team has been meeting with the project artist to identify the tone of the stories, and how these stories would apply to the design of the trail.

The project artist explained the culture of the Puget Sound Native American tribes, and how these tribes could be honored through the trail. These tribes recognize that the northwest is a rich and abundant paradise, and honored their relationship with the environment and the animals of the environment. These tribes honored this abundance by living simply and humbly, without altering it significantly. “The Changers” represent stories that explain those who change their environment, and Native Americans applied these stories to the pioneers in the Puget Sound, who have changed the landscape to a point beyond recognition. The trail should capture the essence of these stories, and the essence of Puget Sound’s Native American culture. The design team has some early concepts regarding the ideas of judgement, myth, environment, cultural attitudes, materialism, wealth, and gratitude, but is not yet certain how this will be expressed on the trail.

### **Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns**

- Commends the proponents for the current direction of the project. Feels that the story, showing the tensions between an historical humble existence and the current culture that constantly demands change is compelling. Would like to recognize that the Washington state’s Growth Management Act (GMA) has recognized the need to minimize these changes. The boundary will encourage some sacrifice from those in Seattle to protect some of the land beyond. Recognizes, however, that these tensions still exist and there are many symbolic stories to tell.
  - Proponents agreed and stated that judgement is another story that must be told on the trail, and the trail should recognize that people are still trying to learn about the impacts

of change.

- Recognizing that the path of the trail is undetermined. Hopes that the proponents may still follow the “changing” story of the trail, and consider this an opportunity to develop a system of educational or interpretive prototypes.
  - Proponents agreed and stated that they have considered this. The team would like to do some type of demonstration of a temporary nature.
- Recognizes that in downtown Los Angeles office lobbies, there are monitors displaying traffic conditions around the city. These monitors are not bound by a physical limitation; encourages the team to consider a similar high-technology interim program to locate some of the stories, in an artistic way, to create a virtual trail.
- Encourages the team to consider children and the nature of their stories about their surroundings. Believes that this project could help children develop a sense of civic responsibility. Believes that dialogue requires reflection space, and the path should encourage people to slow down and begin to tell and understand the story.
  - Proponents agreed and stated that the nodes along the path must be proactive enough to get people interested. Further stated that the cadence of the path will help to tell the story, and encourage people to slow down. Further stated that Native Americans believe that current cultures feel the need to be anonymous, and do not converse, while Native Americans were taught to welcome and speak with strangers. The trail must train people to trust each other, and there needs to be opportunities along the trail for this to happen.
- In addition to the temporal aspects of the trail, feels that the trail should teach people to make eye contact, and encourage people to see beyond their blinders.
- Encourages the team to continue to consider children and their unique perspective when designing the route. Feels that most exhibits are oriented towards the average adult.
- Urges the team to organize a broad community-engaging event to encourage the community to begin to imagine the trail.