

Good afternoon Councilmember's

- My name is David Cutler and I currently have the distinction of being the Chair of the Seattle Planning Commission. I am joined here by some of my colleagues on the Commission. As you know the Commission is a body appointed by the Mayor and City Council.
- Our membership includes people from a diversity of perspectives and disciplines; community activists, urban planners, low income housing developers, transportation and environmental planners, architects, civil engineers, public health experts, land use attorney, etc.
- We are all volunteers and I can attest to the fact that we spend thousands of hours collectively each year to fulfill our mission of providing independent and objective advice to the Mayor, Council and City departments on land use and zoning, transportation, housing as well as neighborhood and community development issues.
- Let me start by thanking you for letting us have this time at the beginning of the agenda. We just came from our regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting downstairs.
- The Commission is also the 'steward of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan' and therefore we champion and protect the integrity of the Plan as a guiding document for the City.
- As is mandated by city resolution the Commission provides you with comments and recommendations on proposed changes or amendment to the comp plan. In February of this year we sent you detailed comments on all of the proposals.
- Let me begin by saying how pleased we are that there is a lot enthusiasm by many to reconsider the phased approach to the major update and to provide resources and staff for a more appropriate approach to tackling this work. Thanks to the members of the PLUS committee.
- The main reason we are here today is to speak on behalf of the Transit Communities proposal. Let me start by giving you some background on our work on this effort.

- Way back in 2008 the Commission was checking in with Council and the Executive about important issues and what we heard from city officials at that time was ‘the city needs a more coherent strategy for thinking about the relationship between land use and light rail station areas, BRT, streetcar stations, etc.’
- About the same time we were engaged in big status check with communities about updating neighborhood plans. Through in-person and online meetings we heard from over 5000 people. We learned many things in that effort. One of the big themes was the need for more clarity about how the city should integrate transit with neighborhoods.
- The Commission then set to work doing research, looking at best practices, reading all the current literature, talking with officials, stakeholders and the community. Then, you know, in November 2010 we released our report; *Seattle Transit Communities, Integrating Neighborhoods with Transit*.
- This report was met with widespread praise. The overwhelming response from leaders, stakeholders and community members was, “This is GREAT! How do we make it a reality?”
- Since then we’ve engaged in a broader dialogue to come up with a logical, data driven approach to creating equitable communities with opportunities for residents and workers to enjoy an enhanced quality of life, more affordable living options, lower household transportation costs and better access to economic opportunity by providing equal access to jobs, schools, critical services, and healthy food.
- The transit communities proposal before you is the first step in “making this a reality” and will signal the city’s intentions to better coordinate land use, transportation, as well as capital and programmatic investment decision.
- While the Commission’s initial proposal was more ambitious than what DPD has forwarded to you, we think the policy put forward by DPD does a good job of putting the basic policy framework into the comprehensive plan.
- This proposal is a big first step. It sets a broad vision, articulates the values and goals of a citywide transit communities approach and helps to better define them.

- As a piece of our overall outreach, last November we held a Leadership Discussion Series. We invited business, labor, community and civic organizations, housing, equity and urban sustainability leaders to provide feedback on the comp plan proposal. Participants provided feedback on this approach and mentioned a lot of ways we can ensure its success going forward. All of that feedback is included in a supplemental report we sent you last month. Our Director Barb Wilson has these reports if you'd like another copy.
- We forwarded revisions based on that feedback, and strengthened the language to highlight equity as a central goal. We also proposed revisions to better clarify the method for how we identify a transit community.
- We've had a lot of questions lately and would like to clarify a couple key points. Let me assure you and everyone that this is just not the case. Those questions are;
 1. Would any place with a bus stop be designated a transit community?
 2. Would any old place be rezoned?
 3. Will there be opportunity for public input and community outreach?
- **First** – A transit community IS NOT just any old place with a bus stop. We proposed a methodology that based on a **very high threshold** of frequent and reliable transit service, PLUS existing land uses, demand generators, corridor function and social equity factors. Then we propose a boundary based on a “walkshed” (instead of one of those crow flies concentric circles). The walkshed approach uses real data of the street network and topography.
- We see this as a replacement and refinement of the **station area overlays** grounded in data with a much more robust and meaningful methodology. It's also just much more of a common sense approach. In the report we sent you in the beginning of the month we included a map (on page 15) of some likely places that would meet this threshold.
- **Second** - This comp plan proposal would not rezone any land. In addition this policy includes direction to designate ‘place types’ that help clarify that every transit community is unique. These typologies take into account the level of land use intensity of different areas. As this proposal proceeds we would expect any rezone proposal to include the usual outreach and engagement efforts. Would any single family areas be rezoned? Maybe in some places, where it makes sense. But most likely, any density changes would be incremental and based on a robust dialogue with the community.

In conclusion let me just say this...we listened back in 2010 when you said, "this is great! How do we make it a reality?", and now we have acted. We have worked hard to help the city shape a meaningful strategy.

We know there will be a lot more community dialogue as the major update proceeds and then as we proceed toward aligning land use code and investment decisions.

Providing more opportunities for jobs and housing near transit is both good economic development as well as good environmental policy. From a funding perspective, it makes a lot of sense to create these compact and connected communities around great transit service by focusing scarce resources. Since transportation is the second highest household cost after housing, it makes sense to locate housing affordable for all incomes within a 5 or 10 minute walk of frequent and reliable transit.

The many policies in the Comp Plan hint at the goals of integrating land use and transit. The proposed transit communities policy just makes it more clear and intentional in the Comp Plan that land use, investments and programs should be better aligned to leverage the billions of dollars in major transit projects to create great communities and neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time!