

(Date)

Dear Seattle members of the Sound Transit Elected Leadership Group,

We are pleased to offer our comments and recommendations on the Chinatown/International District (C/ID) and Delridge stations associated with the Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project. We are grateful that the Elected Leadership Group has dedicated additional discussion to these two individual stations, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide our feedback to help inform that dialogue.

The Commission feels strongly that these two station areas in particular are deserving of additional race and social equity considerations. Chinatown/International District and Delridge are both communities experiencing historic and current inequities. While negative impacts may be experienced by communities throughout the West Seattle and Ballard alignments, we urge you to pay particular attention to avoiding any potential negative impacts in these neighborhoods. We are encouraged that the City of Seattle has partnered with Sound Transit on the application of the Racial Equity Toolkit on this project. The Commission recommends continued partnership and rigorous assessment of all racial equity impacts. The planning process should not only optimize the hundred-year plus benefits of this transit infrastructure, but also work to minimize any potential disproportionate short- and long-term impacts to the affected communities.

In our role as the steward of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission recognizes the intersection of population growth, land use, and transportation. The anticipation of future transit investments will likely lead to land use changes and increased density around these two stations. The study and eventual selection of light rail alignments and station locations in these communities is critical at this stage in the planning process. Decisions in the near-term will determine the potential for long-term station area planning, equitable transit-oriented development, and placemaking opportunities.

The Commission urges the City to proactively and clearly articulate station area visions, particularly for the C/ID station area, to which Sound Transit can respond, rather than wait for a final alignment to which the City will respond. Leveraging this significant transit infrastructure to the benefit of all Seattle communities served and impacted should be our priority as a city.

We offer our detailed comments and recommendations on the C/ID and Delridge stations below.

Chinatown/International District

The Commission recommends that equity should be a priority consideration in the analysis and eventual selection of a new C/ID station location and associated construction method. This historic, culturally significant neighborhood has been traditionally underserved and repeatedly subjected to an inordinate number of disruptive capital improvement projects. We are concerned about the potential short-term impacts and long-term effects resulting from construction of this station, especially displacement of residences and small businesses. Design and construction activities at this location should consider impacts on local cultural populations and activities.

The Commission has serious concerns about the proposed station location on 5th Avenue S. Cut-and-cover construction at this location would have short- and long-term impacts including significant disruption to

local businesses; property acquisitions for purposes of construction, staging, and ancillary facilities; and displacement of Metro bus routes. The Commission recommends the Representative Project C/ID alignment be removed from further consideration. We are concerned that construction impacts from a longer cut-and-cover tunnel on 5th Avenue S in the Representative Project would be significantly more disruptive to small businesses and the quality of life for C/ID residents than the other alternatives at this location.

The Commission recommends the 5th Avenue bored tunnel/cut-and-cover station and 4th Avenue cut-and-cover station alternatives move forward for further study in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We do not support further consideration of the deep mined station options on either 4th or 5th Avenue. These stations would be very deep, limiting easy connections between stations and requiring elevators for station access. A lack of escalators at a significant regional transportation hub raises safety concerns.

The 4th Avenue S station alternative has multiple benefits to consider. This location would allow transit riders convenient connections to other travel modes including bus, streetcar, and non-motorized options, as well as Sounder and Amtrak trains at King Street Station. A station at this location could also:

- Provide the opportunity to re-create 4th Avenue S as a multi-modal corridor;
- Improve the 4th Avenue S/S Jackson Street/2nd Avenue Extension S triangle, which is currently not pedestrian-friendly; and
- Realize the potential of Union Station as a vibrant regional multi-modal hub, including local business enhancement, historic and cultural recognition, and placemaking opportunities.

We understand that light rail construction along 4th Avenue S would necessitate rebuilding the historic viaduct at this location. Coordination between the City of Seattle and Sound Transit would be critical for the success of this station location. This is an exceptional opportunity to forge cross-jurisdictional partnerships to achieve a greater vision. If Sound Transit ultimately selects a 5th Avenue S station location and the 4th Avenue S viaduct is replaced at a later date, the C/ID would experience two separate and significant construction disruptions on top of those already endured.

The Commission believes that the C/ID station will serve not only as a critical transit hub, but as a gateway to the city for travelers using an integrated transportation system. As such, this location deserves the appropriate level of investment to make it accessible and intuitive for all users. The historic Union Station and King Street Station can serve as anchors for a broader community and economic development effort linking the C/ID and Pioneer Square neighborhoods. The community has already initiated a conversation about the future vision for this area designated as the Jackson Hub. Community partners including Historic South Downtown, the Alliance for Pioneer Square, and Seattle Chinatown/International District Preservation and Development Authority have developed preliminary urban design concepts for the Jackson Hub. The City's Imagine Greater Downtown project has also included Jackson Hub as one of its "Big Ideas." The Commission encourages the continuation and integration of these early concepts as Sound Transit develops its plans for a new light rail station in the C/ID.

Regardless of the ultimate location selected, the Commission believes that a new station in the C/ID is an opportunity to enhance transit connections and make the area more pedestrian-friendly. Many transit

agencies already operate here. A new tunnel will add further regional transit connections and should function elegantly and efficiently as Seattle's largest transit hub.

Delridge

The Commission feels strongly that the Delridge neighborhood needs a light rail alignment and station location that prioritizes equity and access for this historically underserved community. Any Delridge station location should provide opportunities for equitable transit-oriented development, access to community amenities, and seamless transit connections. The Commission recommends the Representative Project alignment in this neighborhood be removed from further consideration. The proposed Delridge station location in this alternative is farther from the neighborhood core, reducing the ridership potential and making multi-modal connections more difficult. We recommend the West Seattle Tunnel and West Seattle Elevated alternatives move forward for additional study in the EIS.

The Commission has significant concerns about the potential for displacement in this neighborhood. We have requested Sound Transit conduct a rigorous analysis to identify, minimize and avoid commercial and residential displacement resulting from guideway and station construction. We have also requested an assessment that describes the ability and likelihood of any potentially affected property owners to relocate within the same area.

The Commission supports alternatives that would result in a lower elevated guideway through the Delridge neighborhood. The high guideways and associated station platforms present accessibility and safety challenges, as well as significant visual and quality-of-life impacts to the communities these alignments will traverse. We have recommended Sound Transit study visual impacts and access issues at this location.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director.

Sincerely,

Michael Austin

Chair, Seattle Planning Commission