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Date: February 25, 2019
 To: Mayor's Office, Seattle City Council, SDOT
 Subject: Support for Curbless Alternative Option on N.E. 43rd Street Improvement Project

Dear Mayor Durkan,

The Seattle Transit Advisory met January 30, 2019 and we discussed the N.E. 43rd Street Improvement Project with Seattle Transportation Department Staff. The opening of the new University District Station in 2021 is a once in a lifetime opportunity and we want this project to be safe and accessible for all people.

To that end, we are delighted to learn that subsequent to our meeting, SDOT added a curbless option to its list of alternatives. We believe this fifth alternative will maximize the safety and longevity of the project, and we respectfully request your support in selecting this curbless option as the preferred alternative.

More specifically, our recommendations include the following:

Plan Now for Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

Planning to address pedestrian and bike access on this street needs to be undertaken as part of alternative selection, rather than after the street has already been rebuilt. The City of Seattle has committed itself to Vision Zero, a plan to end all traffic-related deaths by 2030. Keeping the most vulnerable road users safe means making the right design decisions when once in a lifetime opportunities such as this project arise.

Based on our conversation with the project leadership, SDOT's alternative selection criteria does not appear to consider the volume of pedestrian and bicycle traffic likely to be generated by the new light rail station. Currently, the plans are vague about how user conflicts would be addressed and the City did not provide an estimate of how many people could potentially use this street to access transit. This Urban Village is densely populated, and the majority of UW students arrive at campus by transit, bicycle, or in foot. Because of this, N.E. 43rd Street is likely to be used by tens of thousands of people on foot or bike each day. If Seattle is going to achieve its goal of zero traffic

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City on matters related to transit and the possible and actual impact of actions by the City upon all forms of public transportation.

The Board shall be provided the opportunity to comment and make recommendations on City policies, plans, and projects as they may relate to transit capital improvements, transit mobility, and transit operations throughout the City...

The Board shall help facilitate City policies, plans, and projects that support local and region-wide transit mobility efforts, to help ensure a functioning and coordinated transit system throughout the City and region.

The Board shall function as the public oversight committee of revenues collected under Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1, as described in Resolution 12 of the STBD...

The Board shall make an annual report to the City Council on the status of its work program and the achievement of its goals.

**City Council Resolution
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deaths, it needs to prioritize safe travel for all users as part of alternative selection. In addition, the design of bicycle connections to existing bicycle facilities needs to be addressed in the early stages of design. Many European cities have curbless streets with clear bike lane treatments with paint or surface texture; this could be a solution to bicycle-pedestrian conflict on a curbless N.E. 43rd Street.

We also request that SDOT consider the needs of people with disabilities in their selection of a preferred alternative. A curbless street would provide equal mobility for people with disabilities. In contrast, people who cannot easily navigate a curb would unfairly be limited in their use of the street as designed in Alternatives 1-4.

Minimize Vehicle Access

With the opening of light rail, we recommend that no private vehicles be allowed on N.E. 43rd Street between Brooklyn Avenue N.E. and 15th Avenue N.E. due to the large volumes of anticipated pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Both Alternative 3 and 4 allow private vehicular traffic, and should be rejected for that reason. However, we do support designing the street so that business deliveries can be accommodated as necessary, a design element which can be achieved as part of the fifth curbless alternative.

Similarly, while a curbless street design would not preclude buses from traveling on N.E. 43rd Street, we recommend transit not be routed on this street given the high volumes of pedestrian and bicyclists that will be using this street to access transit. We understand that King County Metro is currently planning to run trolley buses on N.E. 43rd Street and that a trolley wire is being installed. Transit planning by Metro and Sound Transit should not dictate how the City designs this street. The criteria the City uses to decide which design alternative to select should strongly consider pedestrian and bicycle safety before all other considerations due to the vulnerability of these road users and the high volumes anticipated.

Learn from Bell Street

The construction of Bell Street provided SDOT with engineering experience in curbless street design. We encourage the City to use this experience to expedite a curbless street design on N.E. 43rd Street as well as the project's design review and permitting processes to ensure that the project will be completed in time for the opening of the new U District Link light rail station.

The U District Mobility Group – a diverse community group with which SDOT, King County Metro and Sound Transit have worked to develop a U District Station Area Access Plan – is advocating for a curbless alternative. We agree with their conclusion. This Urban Village deserves safe travel for all users. SDOT should take this opportunity to get this project right.

We respectfully request that you support a curbless Alternative 5 for the N.E. 43rd Street Improvement Project.

Respectfully submitted,

Seattle Transit Advisory Board