

(Date)

Honorable Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Chair, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Seattle City Council
via e-mail

RE: Pedestrian Master Plan

Dear Councilmember O'Brien,

The Planning Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide this letter in support of the update to Seattle's Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP). This Plan establishes an aspirational vision for Seattle to be the most walkable and accessible city in the nation.

Many studies have demonstrated that inter-connected pedestrian environments help to sustain healthy communities and support vibrant economies. Recent data shows that more people are walking throughout Seattle. For example, the percentage of citywide residents who walk to work increased from 8.6 percent of all commuters in 2010 to 10.7 percent in 2015.

As the stewards of the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission has been a consistent supporter of proactive planning that considers the inter-relationship between land use and transportation. **We applaud the leadership of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for developing a vision, goals, and priority investment network that reflect this proactive approach.** We also commend the Department for engaging with the public meaningfully and allowing their guidance to inform the plan.

High Priority Projects Identified Through Data-Driven Process

The Planning Commission **strongly supports the criteria and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping analysis methodology for determining the priority network**, which will guide funding of capital investments in sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. We support the decision to **select just two criteria** for identifying pedestrian improvements, and the two that were selected - **¼ mile walkshed to frequent transit stops and schools**. We are pleased that **input from the public informed the choice of criteria**. When combined with data on streets currently without sidewalks and streets with high rates of collisions involving pedestrians, the results of this priority investment network will enable SDOT to focus resources in areas with high existing and potential pedestrian demand, ongoing safety concerns, and populations with the greatest need.

We understand that SDOT has received comments from the public encouraging the use of other or more criteria for identifying priority investments. However, incorporating **additional criteria into the analysis would weaken efforts to focus limited resources effectively**. By adopting the Plan's data-driven methodology, SDOT will identify and prioritize top-tier projects in high-priority areas that will not only improve pedestrian access to transit and schools, but will also improve walkability and connectivity for all pedestrians within walksheds across the city.

Prioritizing Pedestrian Investments Based on Equity, Demand, and Safety Needs

The Planning Commission **strongly supports including equity as a key consideration** in the PMP policy framework. Based on the PMP demand, safety, and equity analyses, the Plan will target investments based on need as opposed to aiming to distribute projects evenly across the city. If these analyses illuminate a disproportionate amount of the need in a certain area, the Planning Commission sees great value in directing investments to those locations first.

The Planning Commission also **supports overlaying Safe Routes to Schools** for priority consideration. Targeting new or repaired sidewalks and street crossings for safe walking routes within close proximity to schools will not only benefit the increasing number of children attending our schools, but will increase pedestrian safety, access to amenities, and livability in those neighborhoods for everyone.

Monitoring and Measuring Implementation Performance to Maximize Investments

The Planning Commission encourages SDOT to use data-based performance measures to monitor and update the Plan based on ongoing condition assessments, funding availability, and in relation to other ongoing transportation priorities. We recommend **completing a comprehensive inventory and condition assessment** of Seattle's current walking infrastructure to serve as the baseline for performance monitoring.

We also recommend that SDOT **use the analysis and findings of this updated Pedestrian Master Plan along with the other recently updated modal plans to identify new opportunities for high-priority multimodal corridor investments**. Additional opportunities to integrate PMP priority projects with other transportation programs, such as Neighborhood Greenways, should be explored to leverage and maximize capital project investments.

Lastly, we recognize that the total need for pedestrian improvements throughout Seattle greatly outweighs the available funding. We ask that SDOT continue to seek out funding sources and explore low cost solutions. The reality of limited funding emphasizes the importance of moving forward with the highest priority projects now to begin addressing the significant need for pedestrian infrastructure.

We appreciate your interest in our feedback on the Pedestrian Master Plan. The Planning Commission would be happy to discuss our recommendations and/or provide additional comments in support of this important document. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or our Interim Executive Director, Valerie Kinast, at 233-7911.