

## SEATTLE STREETCAR COALITION

June, 2018

Dear Mayor Durkan,

We are writing in support of the completion of the Center City Connector, to unite our neighborhoods and bolster the economic engine of our region. We understand the need for a thorough evaluation, and would like highlight the importance of the system beyond what will appear in the current review.

As you know, the Center City Connector is a project that has been nearly a decade in the making. Seattle's streetcar network now includes nearly 60 blocks, but is missing the last 17 blocks, which are required to connect the two current systems through the heart of downtown and make the whole system more efficient as originally intended. The streetcar is an essential component of our transportation infrastructure, and is currently the only high-capacity transit project planned for the center city before 2035. However, our city isn't waiting for 2035, it's growing around us every day. Center city jobs are expected to grow almost 25 percent by 2035, and downtown residents to expand by over 50 percent during that same time period.

This system will connect many of our city's significant valuable assets from MOHAI in South Lake Union to the Pike Place Market and Seattle Art Museum to Pioneer Square, the Chinatown-International District, First Hill and Capitol Hill. A connected streetcar network will also provide much-needed transit access and enhanced mobility, which will serve the growing population in South Lake Union and South Downtown. Our city's urban parks, historic waterfront, stadiums, and growing employment centers in our urban core will also benefit.

This project provides our community with an important investment of federal transit funds. It also leverages more than \$175 million of previous local investments in the Seattle Streetcar system. We all have skin in the game—Seattle has spent more than \$45M on the Center City Connector to date. The federal government has allocated \$75 million for Seattle to complete this project. This is money local leaders have fought hard to protect for years now. Should our city choose to change strategies at this point, the \$75 million would get returned. It could not be used for alternative substitute solutions like a connector bus. That would require new local funding. Returning this money would also threaten funding requests for new Rapid Ride corridors and other future investments. We need to fulfill the promise of years of money and sweat to increase the utility of our existing lines. We do this **by connecting them** as originally planned for a cohesive **system** instead of a series of disconnected half-measures of unfulfilled potential.

The Center City Connector will also reinforce city and regional commitments to social equity by providing mobility for low-income residents through the reduced ORCA fare program. We see the Center City Connector as providing much needed access to jobs for disadvantaged,

transit-dependent populations, including service to the federally-supported Yesler Terrace Hope VI housing redevelopment, and remain committed to ensuring that the streetcar is accessible to all in regards to fares and payment systems.

Additionally, this project will finally connect Chinatown-International District and Pioneer Square to the rest of our center city and South Lake Union. These neighborhoods endured years of streetcar and utility construction, for which they were promised a connected, center city streetcar network. Realizing such a network means that hundreds of minority and family-owned small businesses will have a direct, legible connection to customers that flock to other destinations and attractions in downtown like the Pike Place Market, which sees an estimated 15 million visitors annually. Portland businesses note streetcars account for a 20% increase in traffic to streetcar-adjacent small businesses. Streetcars are also key to mobility for senior residents and residents with mobility challenges. They are easier to get on and off, helping people be better connected to their daily needs.

A bus is not an effective substitute for many of these use cases and will not succeed in achieving necessary mode-split shift along this corridor. A connected streetcar system is legible both for tourists and locals who may be unfamiliar with our local bus network. The accessibility and attractiveness of a streetcar system helps these people experience more of our city and our small businesses without adding car trips.

The long-term benefits of the project are clear and many stakeholders, including property owners, community leaders and business owners and residents along the proposed route, are supportive. We thank you for taking a deep look at this project, and stand committed to work with you to make this streetcar connection a reality.

Sincerely,

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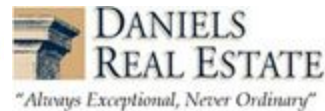


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