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December 11, 2019

To: Mayor Jenny A Durkan and Seattle City Councilmembers

Re: A call for action for developing a vision for Chinatown-International District Station

The Chinatown-International District (CID) station is the most critical element of Sound Transit WSBLE planning effort. At the final Elected Leadership Group (ELG) meeting for WSBLE on April 25, Mayor Durkan emphasized the unique character of the CID and its importance in the context of ST3 investments, stating, "We know that this whole system will probably have a greater impact on this community than anywhere else in the system...The worst thing that could happen to us is if we ended up going through an EIS and then had to do a supplemental EIS because we hadn't considered things, or there's too much resistance." This sentiment has been echoed by the other councilmembers and regional leaders on the ELG, as well as by City staff. With Sound Transit's focus on building high-quality transit, our community depends on our elected leaders to initiate and promote a vision for the King Street-Union Station Cultural and Transportation Hub.

Now is the time to set the wheels in motion. Unfortunately, time appears to be running out to create such a vision that expresses the expectations of these communities for repurposing King and Union Street stations as both transportation and cultural hubs to be studied as an integral component of the ST3 EIS. This is our chance as a city to create an iconic gateway to the city by melding a unified, omni-modal station design to a unique and vibrant historic neighborhood to achieve a once-in-a-generation outcome for the community and the region.

We are recommending the following actions be undertaken:

- **Develop a vision for the CID station** area that leverages previous planning efforts like Jackson Hub and Imagine Greater Downtown
- **Timely decision making** to move this effort forward and generate financially and technically feasible conceptual design options, supported by the neighborhoods, that can be fully evaluated by Sound Transit in the Draft EIS process for WSBLE.
- **Leverage the CID Station as a Pilot Project.** The City can use the study of the most critical area along the alignment as a pilot for determining the level of planning and investment required for other station areas along the WSBLE alignment, which can then be funded with the recently requested joint ST/City FTA Grant when the funds becomes available.

While each station is unique and has a specific context that must be acknowledged with station area planning, the CID station is a confluence of cultural and regional issues that must be carefully balanced and knit into the vision of a future CID. This future CID station must maintain and even amplify the cultural vibrancy of its Asian and Asian-American roots while also creating seamless multi-modal connections at the regional node where bus, street-car, heavy rail, and all three light rail lines converge. We must get this right!

While we are sensitive to the equitable distribution of City resources for all WSBL stations within Seattle, we also firmly believe that stations like CID, along with Westlake and Seattle Center, deserve unique attention due to their roles as critical transportation hubs that rest in a complex commercial and civic network. Hopefully, allocating City funding now to the CID will allow funding sought through the \$1.75M FTA grant funding application to be repurposed to other stations with important but less critical needs.

A proposal for a King Street-Union Station Cultural and Transportation HUB as an integral part of the WSBL project has been well documented by the adjacent neighborhoods of Pioneer Square and CID, in City planning efforts like Imagine Greater Downtown, in community-led efforts like Jackson Hub, along with the City of Seattle's communications with Sound Transit. Precedent has been set by historic train stations in Washington DC, Denver, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles being carefully restored and fully integrated into the regional transportation grid with tremendous economic benefits to the surrounding communities. The Seattle Planning and Design Commissions recently developed a proposal for a workshop with representatives of the CID and Pioneer Square neighborhoods to ask these communities about their vision for the CID station where Culture and Transportation are treated equally.

Recently, neighborhood leaders from the CID and Pioneer Square have proposed a three-day workshop to develop an integrated investment strategy and action plan for the area of impacted by the new CID station. This request was generated primarily to gain the City's commitment to their recently completed Jackson Street Hub study. Direct action by the City to implement the recommended public realm investments would be a huge step to addressing the needs of these CID and Pioneer Square communities.

Now is the time to act to develop a vision for the CID station.

Sincerely,

(signature on file)

Ben de Rubertis, Chair  
Seattle Design Commission

CC: Samuel Assefa, OPCD  
Sam Zimbabwe, SDOT  
Andrés Mantilla, DON