



City of Seattle

Seattle
Freight
Advisory
Board

To: Greg Spotts, Director Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle Municipal Tower
700 5th Ave, Ste 3800
Seattle, WA 98104

May 24th 2023

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Re: Seattle Freight Advisory Board Comments on Vision Zero, Top-to-Bottom Review

Dear Director Spotts:

Thank you for your presentation to us at the March 2023 meeting of the Freight Advisory Board. We are responding to your briefing on the findings of the *Vision Zero, Top to Bottom Review* report.

We recommit our energy to work to ensure safety of every person who works or travels through the city's Manufacturing & Industrial Centers (MICs), and on the Major Truck Streets connecting the MICs to each other and to the regional highways. We must work together to increase awareness and promote safe practices among all road users. In that light, we offer these specific principles for planning work with city staff and others sharing the roads:

- **Provide safety education to all roadway users sharing the road with large trucks.** Safety is a shared responsibility for all users of the transportation system. Truck and transit drivers stand out due to their vehicle size, yet they must contend with large blind spots and long stopping distances that make it physically impossible to take responsibility for all users in all situations. Safety education is already a requirement for getting a commercial driver's license, and it should be for all users.
- **Engage members of the Freight Advisory Board (FAB), and people who work in the MICs, to take advantage of their knowledge to ensure safety for all, especially where different modes are in the same space.** The FAB has had focused discussions of safety where modes, specifically large trucks, must work in and around vulnerable road users. The FAB has strongly supported projects like East Marginal Way that safely separate modes without impacting the work in the MICs.

Those who work and drive vehicles in the MIC know the operating characteristics of trucks and understand the challenges faced by truck drivers. This sector of the city's economy relies on the roadway system for its very function. Everyone wants safety, predictability, and resiliency. "After action studies" should be conducted where crashes occur to inform design. FHWA's guidance for context sensitive design is clear in noting that public outreach must equally account for all stakeholders, including freight and business. As a significant concern for the city, funding for separated bike or shared use paths must be prioritized.

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City in development of a functional and efficient freight system and on all matters related to freight and the impact that actions by the City may have upon the freight environment.

City Council Resolution
31243

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5th Avenue, Suite 3800, PO Box 34996, Seattle, WA 98124-4996
Tel: (206) 684-4524 Tel: (206) 684-5000 Fax: (206) 684-3772

Web: www.seattle.gov/sfab/

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- **Ensure that major arterials and truck streets, especially--but not only--in the MICs, can safely carry the freight and goods of the city.** They must not be constrained by doing too much--and doing that poorly. As noted in the City’s Complete Streets Ordinance 122386, “Because freight is important to the basic economy of the city and has unique right-of-way needs to support that role, freight will be the major priority on streets classified as Major Truck Streets. Complete Street improvements that are consistent with freight mobility but also support other modes may be considered on these streets.” As an early adopter of “complete streets” ordinances the city of Seattle recognized that Truck Streets especially within the industrial areas were unique and the movement of freight which is intrinsic to our regional economy and the livelihoods of workers who rely on those jobs.
- **Account for the fact that trucks have different operating characteristics than smaller vehicles** (visibility/blind spots, stopping distances, acceleration). Trucks accessing businesses need to make sweeping turns at driveways and intersections. Vision Zero solutions for Seattle’s Truck Street system must account for this reality by adjusting the Complete Streets check list to include a thorough analysis of truck size, volume, and the percentage of trucks in the traffic mix.
- **Recognize that Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MICs) are unique compared to downtown and urban villages:** Safe solutions for the truck street system in the MICs must be designed specifically for this land use context. Freight activity peaks at different hours from regular commute times. Street trees should be columnar species, as opposed to branching trees, due to sight distance limitations and inclusion of over-legal routes. Sight lines are also impacted by many buildings’ zero-lot-lines. And roadway conditions contribute to safety – many roads in the MICs need repaving, sidewalks and stormwater improvements. It is critical to design for the unique industrial land use context. The mayor has recently sent the Industrial Lands Strategy to the City Council, with stronger protections for industrial land uses in the MICs. Industrial freight capacity must be preserved and maintained alongside, by wisely applying Vision Zero improvements. Where significant investments have been made in the heavy haul network it should be prioritized to serve these heavy vehicles.

Looking to the future, as Sound Transit develops the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions through the Duwamish and Ballard Interbay MICs, large buses will join trucks on the main arterials, some of which were previously on the SODO busway. This adds to the need to maintain capacity, investment in structural integrity, protect arterials that function for large vehicles, and separate modal uses to reduce conflict points.

Please reference also two technical papers recently completed regarding Vision Zero. They highlight other important issues that contribute technical input to the safety conversation.

- SDOT Vision Zero Recommended Safety Analysis.pdf, Hirschey, 4/28/23
- NWSA Safety First.docx (work in progress), 3/7/23

Thank you for your commitment to saving lives through strengthening Vision Zero appropriately throughout the city. We want to work together to prevent serious injuries and tragic deaths. We must follow the federal government leadership in the National Roadway Safety Strategy and the recently awarded Safe Streets and Roads for All grants to make appropriate improvements.

Sincerely,



Dan Kelly
Seattle Freight Advisory Board Chair