



City of Seattle

Mike McGinn, Mayor

*Seattle
Freight
Advisory
Board*

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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

February 22, 2011

Mayor Michael McGinn, City of Seattle
Mayor's Office
P.O. Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Dear Mayor McGinn,

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board (SFAB) writes to request clarification on the rechannelization projects on E. Marginal Way S. and Airport Way S. Although we are supportive of actions that support all modes of travel—including those for bicyclists and pedestrians—we believe that present and future freight needs should not be compromised, especially on the City's most significant freight corridors. We believe that mutually beneficial solutions exist for these and other projects, but further consideration is required to reach that end. As currently stated, we do not believe that benefits to freight from these projects have been demonstrated and that the proposed changes actually improve safety for all modes, consistent with SDOT's highest priority.

Our immediate concerns with the proposed redesigns are:

East Marginal Way: We were told truck lanes would be 10 feet and then in a subsequent e-mail 11.5 feet. We cannot make a judgment until the facts are certain. It appears that the proposed lane configuration includes a 10' center turn lane, with adjacent travel lanes 11' wide. Many large trucks have mirrors that make them wider than 10', posing a potential hazard if these large trucks are in the center lane, and passed by another truck in an adjacent lane.

Airport Way: We have not been provided with sufficient information to determine whether the proposed bulb-out locations pose problems for truck turns. We are concerned about the fact that there is no consideration of Airport Way's function as an emergency egress route from Seattle in case I-5 is compromised. We would like to know more about the impact of the proposal for bicycles to ride in the single south-bound lane. Won't all traffic be forced to stay behind a bicycle?

We appreciate that the timing of the first SFAB meeting was incongruent with the timing for project recommendations. SFAB desires to be afforded sufficient review time to consider complete analysis before recommendations are forwarded in the future. Below are several issues that should be addressed to fully incorporate freight considerations for these and future projects.

- **Complete Street Ordinance**—we feel that the SDOT briefing paper provides an inconsistent interpretation of the complete streets ordinance (included below). It is our interpretation that on major truck streets where bicycles and trucks cannot be safely accommodated, the needs of trucks should prevail. Further, it is our interpretation that improvements for all modes are not required by the ordinance. These improvements may not be consistent with freight mobility. We hope that future efforts to incorporate the needs of other modes on Major Truck Streets will follow the guidance provided by the Ordinance:

Ordinance: 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.

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Briefing: our second priority is mobility. SDOT's mission is to move people and goods safely and efficiently. For example, we know that a bus moves more people than a single occupant car, so we try to protect and promote transit mobility. Especially on Major Truck Streets, we must consider the needs of freight. **We always consider** improvements that support all modes on Major Truck Streets, ensuring that they are consistent with freight mobility.

The inconsistencies above provoke some questions about whether city transportation policy on heavy-haul truck corridors should emphasize segregation of modes – moving bicycle and pedestrian traffic to side streets wherever possible to promote safety and to reduce conflicts. This would seem to work strongly in favor of improved freight mobility, particularly in our industrial areas.

- **There is a need for an updated freight plan.** In reviewing the descriptions of these projects provided by staff, the bicycle and pedestrian plans are considered. There is no mention of how they relate to any Freight Plan. That may be because the City's last freight planning effort was the 2005 Freight Mobility Strategic Action Plan, which does not provide the same level of analysis and system-level planning as Master Plans for other modes. While SDOT considers the specific projects to not harm freight, it would be useful to have in hand an updated Freight Master Plan that provides the same level of detail as the plans for other modes to reconcile the needs of all users. Plans can articulate the benefits of the various modes. Specifically, a freight plan would begin to address the value of freight mobility to the economic vitality of our region and would be able to highlight the corridors of highest significance. The threshold analysis to determine whether these types of projects should proceed should consider truck volumes in addition to the vehicle volume thresholds currently in place.
- **Consider present and future needs for freight.** In addition to analysis demonstrating that these projects do not harm current freight needs and movements, consideration should be given to future freight needs along major truck corridors and in areas serving industry which are heavily dependent on good movement.
- **Lane Widths—** We need to establish minimum lane widths for freight corridors. The initial proposal of 10 feet is a non-starter. 10 foot wide lanes are insufficient for truck movements. The current proposal for lane width on E. Marginal Way S., which includes travel lanes of 11.5' and 11', and a center turn lane of 10', is inadequate. The mirror width of trucks ranges from 9'8" to 10'6" depending on configuration, make and model of tractor, and drivers' personal adjustment. We are concerned that the narrow center turn lane width, coupled with narrow adjacent travel lanes, is unsafe. Further, narrow lanes, especially around curves, do not allow trucks to stay in their lane of traffic.
- **Freight not represented on CTAC-III.** We believe that needs of the freight community must be represented when decisions about transportation funding and project prioritization are made. The board is concerned with the lack of explicit representation by the freight community at this board.

We would be delighted to further discuss our recommendations for these projects.

Thank you,



Anne Goodchild
Chair



Alon Bassok
Vice Chair

Cc: Hon. Tom Rasmussen, Chair, Transportation Committee; Peter Hahn, SDOT; City of Seattle Council Transportation Committee Members