



March 4, 2011

Honorable Mike McGinn  
Mayor, City of Seattle

P.O. Box 94749  
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Honorable Tom Rasmussen  
Chair, Seattle City Council Transportation  
Committee

PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Mayor McGinn and Councilmember Rasmussen:

The Port of Seattle has closely followed the Seattle Department of Transportation's proposal to reduce traffic capacity on sections of Airport Way South and East Marginal Way South. We respectfully ask for a delay in implementation of these changes, in light of concerns expressed by the city's Freight Advisory Board and comments from freight users.

Seattle's freight-route system is critical the regional economy, supporting jobs and businesses in the manufacturing and industrial community, as well as trade and logistics businesses around the state that are dependent on the Seattle harbor.

The port is very encouraged by the creation of the Freight Advisory Board, and we appreciate the support of both the Mayor and City Council. The FAB has recognized the need for a new City freight plan and has asked for discussions with the CTAC-III committee about important freight investments, and recently was briefed on the proposal for the reducing travel lanes on the two Major Truck Streets that serve the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center.

These changes, which could affect the function of these Major Truck Streets, warrant more specific discussion. SDOT began the process of proposing road diets for Airport Way S and East Marginal Way S late last summer, and received immediate and vigorous responses from the freight community. We appreciate that SDOT staff returned to the drawing board and presented a refined proposal at the second meeting of the FAB in February. Unfortunately, the FAB had to quickly draft a reply asking questions about the rechannelization. A reply from the Mayor's office responded to some of the questions, and announced a plan to proceed, without any opportunity for deliberation or discussion about possible changes to the proposal.

The board noted that there was no system-wide analysis of impacts to these freight routes in the city; no analysis presented of future anticipated traffic volumes (especially during replacement of the existing Alaskan Way Viaduct and in light of potential redevelopment of sites in the neighborhood); and no operational analysis about how the proposed road diets could affect freight and traffic operations along the corridors.



Along Airport Way S in particular, traffic operations in the single lane could be adversely affected by left-turning vehicles, in-lane transit stops, queues that can extend from the nearby rail crossing of Lucille Street, parking maneuvers, and pedestrian crossings.

Constraining capacity would not only impede traffic but would not necessarily favor pedestrian crossings. Pedestrians may find it difficult to cross two lanes of traffic without a center refuge because they would need to wait for a gap in both directions of traffic. Bicyclists too could be affected since vehicles would have to cross the centerline of the street to safely pass bicyclists; traffic volumes on this street may not allow that encroachment into the oncoming vehicle lane. We believe there may be alternatives worth considering before the city commits to the program.

The Port Commission is very concerned about reducing capacity for freight on both Airport Way S and East Marginal Way S simultaneously since the port has made public investments to achieve container volume of 3.5 million TEUs, and we suggest the city incorporate this goal into its freight-mobility planning. System capacity is even more critical given that we are headed toward several years of construction disruption related to replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

The Commission recognizes the interests of the Georgetown community and bicyclists in this issue, and the desire by residents and businesses to foster a livable, walkable neighborhood. This is an issue that deserves further discussion by all interests, including community members as well as freight users, before the decision is made to proceed.

We want to look forward from this point with three specific requests:

1. SDOT should recognize and respect the expertise of the FAB and return to the next meeting to resolve the specific concerns of the board members before finalizing plans and moving forward with any changes on Airport Way S or East Marginal Way S.
2. As highlighted in the Mayor's response, SDOT should not pursue any future road diets or changes to "Major Truck Streets" until the FAB has had an opportunity to discuss interpretation of the Complete Streets policy, design standards, and the city's overall policy on freight, leading to a "full-fledged Freight Plan."
3. The Commission would like to extend an invitation both to the City Council and the Mayor or his representative to participate in a Port Commission Roundtable on Urban Freight Mobility on March 29 at 10:30 a.m. with industry representatives and members of the community. The goal of this roundtable is to recognize the role of the city and its new Freight Advisory Board in supporting robust and efficient transportation networks, and the jobs that depend on those networks.

Seattle is making great progress in tackling important infrastructure and mobility challenges. We encourage you to maintain your momentum. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Bryant  
President,  
Seattle Port Commission



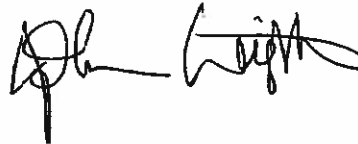
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cc:

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