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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

December 3, 2013

Kerri Woehler

Planning and Strategic Assessment Manager, WSDOT Rail Office
Washington State Rail Office

Re: Seattle Freight Board Comment on State Rail Plan

Dear Ms. Woehler,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Washington State Rail Plan, and for your presentation to our Board in August. We appreciate your efforts to provide us with an early view of the plan and enable us to ask questions. For the members of Seattle's Freight Advisory Board, two issues are critical to be addressed in the Plan: the efficient movement of freight rail and the ability of truck traffic to cross rail lines at grade, in particular in the City's Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center.

The draft plan clearly shows the importance of the rail network to Washington's economy. Yet, to meet the state's needs, it must serve both freight and passengers in a variety of ownership, service, and running rights arrangements. Because of the complexity of these arrangements we agree with the draft plan's assessment that there is a role for the state in monitoring the rail system's capacity, preserving and maintaining public short lines, seeking funding opportunities, directing state grants and loans and fostering communication between stakeholders, communities and rail line owners and service providers. The Freight Advisory Board supports the plan's recommendation for WSDOT to focus on "actions that improve the state's interests, including a thriving and diverse economy, environmental efficiency, resiliency and safety."

The Freight Advisory Board also agrees with the draft plan's assessment of the rail system's role in supporting economic development, and its recommendations for meeting the economic development goals identified in the plan. The state, we believe, should recognize the growing importance of the rail mode as the most efficient and most environmentally sensitive way to grow the Seattle and Washington economies.

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We are particularly heartened by the recommendations for the state to support efforts to identify first and last mile connectors and facilitate inclusion of this designation in future project prioritization processes, such as projects that enhance connectivity to ports, in particular the Port of Seattle, in Washington's Freight Plan. The Board also appreciates the draft plan's mention of the importance of protecting industrial lands to support continued economic growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan. We hope that its guidance can help facilitate future needs analysis and support public investment decisions in the rail network in a way that maximizes benefits.

Sincerely,



Warren Aakervik
Chair, Seattle Freight Advisory Board