



# City of Seattle

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January 29, 2016

Seattle City Council  
Seattle City Hall  
600 Fourth Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl.  
PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

RE: Request to defer any consideration of the Occidental Avenue South street vacation

Dear Councilmembers

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

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board has significant concerns about the proposed vacation of Occidental Ave S. in the SoDo district of Seattle to make way for a proposed arena. Our concerns are centered on the additional vehicular traffic the vacation will generate, and its negative economic and environmental impact on Port of Seattle operations, existing sports facilities, Seattle commuters, the maritime industry, and the SoDo business, manufacturing and industrial district all of which have an effect on freight movement in the area of the proposed street vacation.

On September 3, 2015, the Seattle Design Commission voted to recommend to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) that a portion of Occidental Ave. S. be vacated for purposes of providing land for and access to the proposed sports arena. Under Seattle procedures, the Commission's recommendation moves to SDOT and the City Council.

We respectfully request SDOT and the City Council defer any consideration of the Occidental Ave. S. street vacation petition until all "final transaction documents" (which were defined by

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SFAB letter Request to defer any consideration of the Occidental Avenue South street vacation 1-29-16 the December 3, 2012 Memorandum of Understanding) have been agreed upon by all parties. We believe that neither SDOT nor the Council can today make the requisite finding that the street vacation is “in the public interest,” and will not adversely affect freight. Only after the final arena transaction documents have been negotiated, and all mitigation measures—and impacts that cannot be mitigated—are known, can SDOT and the Council understand the full impacts of the proposed street vacation and make a determination that is based on facts and grounded in the spirit of the MOU.

Our request for deferral is based on the fact that, at this point in the arena approval process, there are numerous open-ended and unresolved mitigation issues that need to be addressed. Until these issues are resolved, it is impossible for SDOT or the Council to make an informed “public interest” determination that does not adversely affect freight movement. The following highlights several open-ended, unresolved mitigation issues and outlines why they are relevant to whether the street vacation is in the “public interest.” Consideration of Alternative Sites: The MOU requires the City of Seattle to conduct a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review of the proposed SoDo arena; this SEPA review requires the City to consider alternative sites, including the Seattle Center. Whether the proposed SoDo arena, and the vacation of Occidental Ave. S. underlying the arena, is “in the public interest,” and will not adversely affect freight movement however, hinges heavily on whether the Council concludes the SoDo site is preferable to alternative sites. Until the Council resolves this issue neither SDOT nor Council can meaningfully make the determination whether the vacation of Occidental Ave. S. is in the public interest and will not adversely affect freight movement. The Council-sponsored study evaluating future options for Key Arena, and the impact of a new SODO arena on Key Arena and Seattle Center finances, was recently completed. It provides a fact-based analysis that should support the decision process.

- Consideration of Nearby Mitigation: The MOU requires the City, in its SEPA review of the arena project, to consider “a comprehensive traffic analysis, impacts to freight mobility, Port terminal operations, and identification of possible mitigating actions, such as improvements to freight mobility, and improved pedestrian connections between the arena and International District light rail station, the Stadium light rail station, and the SoDo light rail station.” Similarly, the MOU requires the City to determine, based on the SEPA documents, whether “it is appropriate to proceed [with the SoDo arena project] with or without additional or revised conditions based on the SEPA review.” This means that the City must determine the extent of mitigation and infrastructure improvements and who (the City, County, or WSA) should be required to finance and implement these mitigation measures. SDOT and the Council must make these important mitigation decisions before determining that the vacation of Occidental Ave. S. is in the public interest and will not adversely affect freight movement. This should include an accurate and comprehensive identification of impacts that cannot be mitigated and how they impact the “environment,” as that term is defined by SEPA.

SFAB letter Request to defer any consideration of the Occidental Avenue South street vacation 1-29-16

In Conclusion the SFAB feels that until the full impacts on freight and mitigation is identified to resolve those impacts the Occidental Ave S. Street vacation should be postponed until on impacts on freight are addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Warren R. Aakervik, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Warren R. Aakervik, Jr.  
Chairman, Seattle Freight Advisory Board

Cc: Mayor Ed Murray  
Lisa Herbold, Councilmember District 1  
Bruce Harrell, Councilmember District 2  
Kshama Sawant, Councilmember District 3  
Rob Johnson, Councilmember District 4  
Debora Juarez, Councilmember District 5  
Mike O'Brien, Councilmember District 6  
Sally Bagshaw, Councilmember District 7  
Tim Burgess, Councilmember District 8  
Lorena Gonzalez, Councilmember District 9  
John Shaw, Office of Planning and Community Development