



City of Seattle

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Seattle
Freight
Advisory
Board

October 2, 2018

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The Honorable Jenny A. Durkan

Mayor, City of Seattle

600 4th Ave, 7th Floor

Seattle, WA 98104

Sent electronically to jenny.durkan@seattle.gov

Re: SDOT Director Recruitment and Screening

Dear Mayor Durkan and Review Committee:

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board (SFAB) is a proud advisor to the Mayor, City Council, and SDOT in the development of a safe, efficient, and productive freight system. As such, we thank Mayor Durkan for establishing the SDOT Director search committee and inviting an SFAB member to participate. We respectfully request this letter be forwarded to all search committee members and candidates, in order to communicate the challenge our new director will face in balancing stakeholder needs with freight mobility.

Like many coastal port cities, Seattle continues to grow around a deep-water port that remains essential to the regional economy. Other rapidly-evolving freight-based economic drivers in our region include last-mile package delivery (e.g. Amazon, UPS, etc.), technology and aviation. Freight activity in these sectors is inextricably tied to Seattle’s success as a global technology hub and a major regional provider of family-wage jobs.

Long-established intra- and interstate trade also remains central to Seattle’s economic health, as our city enjoys a linchpin position along global freight routes. Seattle has gone to great lengths to develop the marine, rail, air, and roadway freight infrastructure that support this trade, along with the thousands of associated family-wage jobs. This local economy is centered around the two Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MICs) and the Port of Seattle within the City.

Described by some as suffering a slow “death by a thousand cuts”, SDOT along with their SFAB have led Seattle’s charge to strengthen its valuable freight infrastructure. By updating the Freight Master Plan, SDOT has spotlighted freight’s importance to numerous stakeholder groups. The department’s one-of-a-kind partnership with the University of Washington Urban Freight Lab brings together academia and private industry to study freight transportation challenges.

The SFAB identifies some of these primary freight transportation challenges as:

- Increasing regional roadway congestion
- Increasing competition amongst transportation modes for right-of-way space
- Encroachment of non-industrial land uses on MICs, which threatens family-wage jobs and increases freight vehicle conflict with more vulnerable road users

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

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- Threats to the preservation of safe, efficient railroad right-of-way that serves family-wage employers

The SFAB would like to draw specific attention to challenges faced by the freight rail network in Seattle, Rail freight in Seattle is the backbone of an economy that supports thousands of sustainable family-wage jobs, making preservation of rail freight networks both economic and social equity issues.

Our new SDOT Director will face the tremendous challenge of implementing not just the Freight Master Plan but all modal plans, despite sometimes conflicting demands. As such, the SFAB requests our next Director be extremely knowledgeable as to the importance of freight to our City, State, and region. The search committee should seek a director with experience ensuring the freight needs are met within a modern, multi-modal landscape. Specifically, they should understand the essential safety and economic development components of a high-functioning urban freight network.

Additionally, we recommend the next Director be mindful of SDOT's various modal plans and boards while also encouraging staff to expeditiously implement the modal plans free of political and other influences. We also request the next Director support ongoing SDOT collaboration with the Urban Freight Lab, including efforts to nurture emerging freight technologies and develop performance-based assessments for quantifying and substantiating freight mobility decisions.

The SFAB commends you for supporting the Freight Master Plan update and for soliciting our participation in the hiring process. We remain committed to seeing the updated Freight Master Plan through to fruition under the leadership of the Mayor, City Council, and new SDOT Director.

Regards,



Johan Hellman
Co-Chair, Seattle Freight Advisory Board



Hal B.H. Cooper Jr.,
Co-Chair, Seattle Freight Advisory Board

cc: SDOT Director Search Committee
SDOT Director Candidates