



City of Seattle

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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

July 8, 2020

Mr. Sam Zimbabwe
Director of Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle Municipal Tower
700 5th Avenue, Suite 3800
Seattle, WA 98104

Subject: West Marginal Way - Roadway Revisions at Duwamish Longhouse

Dear Director Zimbabwe:

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board (SFAB) appreciates this opportunity to provide feedback on the modifications made in Fall 2019 to the striping on West Marginal Way (WMW) adjacent to the Duwamish Longhouse (DL) at 4705 W. Marginal Way SW. We endorse the importance of good access to the Duwamish Longhouse and share the goal of finding safe solutions. The SFAB is concerned with this modification as implemented because we are not sure it meets design standards, there is no clear indication how long this temporary condition will be in place, there was a lack of communication during the initial implementation process, and now, there is an emerging demand for detour routes such as West Marginal Way to address the long term closure of the West Seattle High Bridge (WSHB). A June 2020 presentation by Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) staff suggests that the interim configuration may become a permanent solution that prompts a number of concerns within our freight community. Our concerns are described below.

BACKGROUND:

Traffic Volumes are increasing: In 2019, this interim rechannelization on WMW in front of DL came to our attention having been implemented already. Since the March 2020 closure of the WSHB and restrictions on the Spokane St Bridge, traffic on WMW has increased approximately three times, while the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” orders are in effect. When the city returns to commuting, WMW volumes are expected to go even higher with the WSHB detours.

Redesign creates different safety issues: We understand that this redesign is being driven by the lack of adequate parking to accommodate events at the Longhouse, a need to facilitate pedestrian crossings of this high volume, multilane facility that is also a major truck street, and support for a bus drop-off zone for school/tour buses. The lack of parking and bus drop off has driven a temporary solution to provide a small number of

on-street parking spaces adjacent to the Longhouse, while reducing the roadway cross section from five to four-lanes (one lane southbound, two lanes northbound and a center turn lane). This lane reduction occurs in a long section of horizontal curve—southbound traffic including a high volume of large trucks may not have adequate time to react and merge until they are almost on top of the merge. Additionally, the restriping has been suggested to be a short-term, temporary solution. A June 2020 presentation by staff suggests that the existing five-lane cross section (2 lanes in each direction with a two-way-left-turn lane – prior to rechannelization) may not be part of a long-term solution, leaving the lane merge into the future.

Design standards are compromised – As with most issues where freight mixes with other modes, our primary concern is safety. In the City of Seattle adopted Freight Master Plan, WMW is classified as a Major Truck Street, and is an existing Seaport Highway Connector.

- Merging the southbound lanes for large trucks on high volume, multi-lane arterials is a concern, especially where there is a horizontal curve that reduces sight distance.
- Merging large trucks from two-lanes down to one requires trucks to decelerate and rely on mirrors. This will increase the vehicle volume in that one lane. The increased per lane volume and merging is a concern.
- After the lanes are merged and where parking is provided, the southbound lane is shown to be 10’ wide, which is insufficient for large trucks, especially adjacent to on-street parking activity: Trucks with mirrors are 10.5’ wide.
- If the parking lanes are used infrequently, it may invite vehicles to infringe on those painted-out areas and drive in the parking lane.
- Further, the lane reduction is bound to shorten the gap between vehicles. This makes it harder for pedestrians and left-turning vehicles to find adequate gaps to cross, as well as limiting left-turning trucks’ room to maneuver and to access industrial driveways.
- Higher volumes per lane, narrowed lanes, high proportion of large vehicles in that single-lane, and irregular pedestrian-actuated stops may also increase potential for collisions.

Duration of temporary modifications was/is unclear – In 2019, the restriping modifications that provide seven on-street parking spaces was described as temporary, until a long-term solution for parking and pedestrian crossing was identified. There was no certainty about how long these revisions would be in place and when or if the original five-lane striping would be restored. This was a concern for SFAB last year because this condition could become permanent without an active public engagement process for the development of solutions. We took some hope that city council budget action funded design of a permanent solution to restore all the lanes. Solutions could include increasing off-street parking adjacent to the longhouse or providing a safer crossing of WMW for pedestrians linking to available parking on the east side of WMW. An updated design concept was presented to the SFAB on June 16, 2020, indicating the interim four-lane configuration would continue into the future with a “half signal” to protect pedestrian crossings. This design, which not currently funded for construction, does not address the SFAB concerns. Further, it does not support the capacity needs during repair/replacement of the WSHB.

Design/Pilot project process – [City Council Resolution 31243](#), which created the City’s Freight Advisory Board in 2010, explicitly states (in excerpt):

Section 1. The 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.

Section 2. The Board shall facilitate City policies, plans and projects to support local, regional and state freight mobility efforts, to help ensure a functioning regional and state freight system.

Section 3. The Board shall have the opportunity to provide input on City policies, plans and projects as they may relate to freight capacity, safety, access and mobility throughout the City, with a particular focus on the City's industrial lands, and the business they support.

In the future, we hope that SDOT, and all City departments, will provide SFAB with the information it needs to fulfill its role. We believe there is benefit to all in terms of safety and economic development for SFAB to be consulted along with other stakeholders as part of the design development process prior to modifications on Major Truck Streets like WMW. The Major Truck Street classification indicates that there is a high volume of trucks relying on the roadway, as a part of a network, to deliver goods. We are concerned that the design and operations may not be consistent with the Freight Master Plan system needs. In addition to safety, our next highest priority is to preserve the network of freight facilities serving the manufacturing and industrial centers, supporting family wage jobs, and safely moving the considerable volume of goods through the city. The SFAB provides the perspective of frequent users along with an understanding of the importance to the overall freight system.

West Seattle Bridge Closure impacts: WMW’s role as a Major Truck Street makes it an important arterial for traffic leaving the West Seattle Peninsula during the WSHB closure and low bridge restrictions. The year-round activity of industry (with truck and rail) and other uses (like the bike trail and Duwamish Longhouse) are highlighted with the addition of West Seattle residents and businesses finding new routes. The safety and capacity of WMW are critical, now more than ever. The city must explore different solutions other than reducing vehicle lane capacity on WMW. The SFAB would like to be engaged in the design development process so that we may fulfill our mission including consideration of safe 12’ lanes, accommodation of heavy truck and vehicle traffic during WSHB long-term closure, and safety--both crossing and along--this busy arterial. We look forward to working with SDOT to identify the ultimate solution and encourage a collaborative process to meet a wide range of needs.

*Sincerely,
Jeanne Acutanza*



*Chair,
Seattle Freight Advisory Board*

CC: Heather Marx, SDOT Downtown Mobility Director
Adiam Emery, SDOT Transportation Operations Division
Jim Curtin, SDOT Project Development Division
Elliot Helmbrecht, Mayor's office
Sarah Scherer, Office of Economic Development