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May 3, 2023

Katey Bean
(address)

Joe Markovich
(address)

Dear Joe and Katey,

On behalf of the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC), we would like to express our gratitude for the exceptional leadership of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) in the promotion and protection of the city's urban forest. Your dedication to maintaining and enhancing the health of trees in our community is admirable. The UFC is particularly impressed by your commitment to balancing tree canopy coverage and walkability in various sidewalk improvement projects.

We would also like to commend SDOT for your achievements and actions in relation to urban forestry. Specifically, the UFC appreciates SDOT's creative and efficient approach to improving, repairing, and maintaining sidewalks and street trees, as well as your commitment to enhancing public safety and safeguarding the health of the urban forest through continuous maintenance efforts. We also commend SDOT for their guidance and innovative toolkits to support new tree installations on both public and private properties. Furthermore, the UFC applauds SDOT's data-sharing. Online resources such as the Trees for Seattle map are both practical and educational.

As a commission dedicated to the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation, the UFC places a strong emphasis on promoting equity and environmental justice in our work. With this in mind, we respectfully recommend that SDOT further advances its efforts in the following areas:

1. **Expansion:** explore opportunities to plant more trees and expand the scope of street tree planting. By planting trees on the city's property, SDOT can better enforce the long-term maintenance and protection of these trees, benefitting both tree survivability and community well-being.
2. **Equity:** allocate planting and maintenance resources in historically disadvantaged areas and apply the principles of environmental justice throughout the process. The UFC appreciates SDOT's street improvement projects in Georgetown and South Park and hopes to see similar efforts roll out to other underserved communities.
3. **Urban Design:** work closely with the city's master plans and integrate urban forest strategies into SDOT's other priorities, such as accessibility, connectivity, safety, efficiency, sustainability, and public engagement.
4. **Collaboration:** seek opportunities to collaborate with NGOs, institutions, and other government agencies to achieve common goals in the urban forest and address shared topics in the region, such as tree protection and replacement, soil volume standards, and climate resilience.

UFC acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Duwamish, Puyallup, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations. As a commission, we are continuing our work to build strong and reciprocal relationships with the Indigenous lands and peoples of this city.

5. **Monitoring:** consistently monitor the performance of different construction and maintenance methods in relation to tree health and protection to ensure that resources and toolkits can be planned and adjusted for emerging challenges and public expectations.
6. **Data:** constantly collect tree data and exploit data uses to manage the city's urban forest and support environmental and social justice.

In response to the many interests in SDOT's work, the UFC would like to inquire further about certain aspects of your operation. Specifically, we are interested in:

1. The resource allocation for maintaining existing trees, and how the resources are distributed among different neighborhoods?
2. Whether SDOT collects demographic information on people who call the department and if translation services are available for these calls.
3. The current pruning cycle for SDOT trees and how it impacts tree health, public safety, or other social and environmental subjects.
4. As the Tree Canopy Assessment 2021 has identified the Right of Way as a distinct management unit, does SDOT plan to develop a strategy to increase tree canopy coverage on its streets in alignment with the city's canopy goals?
5. The plan or mechanism for updating the Trees for Seattle map and other publicly available data.
6. The budget and resources allocated for watering newly planted trees.
7. How SDOT engages communities in caring for newly planted street trees, and whether you notice adjacent neighbors with the necessary information for the purposes of awareness, education, or engagement.
8. The difference between privately owned and SDOT-owned right-of-way trees, in terms of watering/pruning responsibilities, as well as permits for pruning/removal.
9. Whether SDOT is working with Sound Transit regarding tree removal and replacement for upcoming Ballard/West Seattle construction projects.

We appreciate SDOT's willingness to engage with the UFC and value your knowledge, openness, and consistency in communicating with interest groups and educating the public. We offer ourselves as a resource for SDOT to continue to support a healthy urban forest in Seattle. Thank you for your outstanding leadership, and we look forward to future collaboration.

Sincerely,

Josh Morris, Co-Chair

Becca Neumann, Co-Chair

Laura Keil, Co-Chair