



July 29, 2022

Radcliffe Dacanay, Principal Planner
Seattle Department of Transportation
PO Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Dear Mr. Dacanay,

As you prepare the SEPA analysis for the **Seattle Transportation Plan**, we would like to suggest the following ways to improve the process and make it more representative of our community and responsive to its needs. The U District Mobility Group formed in 2017 to raise funds, engage stakeholders, develop and broadcast a community-driven station area mobility plan in time for the opening of the U District light rail station this past October.

Our desired outcome was *a holistic, multi-modal station area mobility plan for the U District* and, in fact, our Guiding Principles align with your expressed criteria for a successful Seattle Transportation Plan. As our plan was developed through diverse and extensive engagement, it reflects and distills community priorities for mobility within and throughout the University District high-rise urban center. It offers collective wisdom for the improvement of the imminent SEPA analysis in these ways:

- 1. Mode-Shift:** Strategies to facilitate rapid mode-shift for the most people in an equitable manner should be the *main priority* of the Seattle Transportation Plan, where impacts are measured in the number of people affected, regardless of mode of travel. This equitable approach recalibrates the amount of public right-of-way that is currently allocated to the least efficient mode of travel, namely single-occupancy vehicles, and instead, to modes that are low-emission.
- 2. Equitable Access:** Ideally, to serve the largest number of people equitably, our limited public right-of-way must also be leveraged to address the 2-acre deficit of public open space in the University District (see GMA and City targets). As a shared patrimony, our streets and sidewalks must serve people first, even when they are not moving from one point to another, at their highest and best use for all regardless of age, ability, and income.
- 3. Affordability:** Although surrounded by much more affluent neighborhoods, 49% of the residents in the University District live below the poverty level (32% < \$10,000/year, 17% < \$25,000/year; Source). Perhaps as a result, our neighborhood also has one of highest levels of zero-car households in the City. One measure to mitigate the pernicious inequity would be to incentivize mobility as a service, and for this target group (and similar ones elsewhere) provide free public transit as part of your plan.
- 4. Displacement:** Designated an area of high displacement risk (Source), the University District's precarious state affects both residents and small business owners. The upzone of 2017 increased the development heights from an average of 1-3 stories up to 33 stories overnight, further exacerbating the risk of displacement. 90% of business owners lease and 15% are on month-to-month leases. For residents, what little affordable housing existed previously is being replaced by high-rise tower development projects that almost exclusively opt for the 'payment-in-lieu' option of the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program, which does not build affordable housing *in* the neighborhood.



5. **Bold Action:** We agree with Seattle Neighborhood Greenways' advocacy for deleting Alternative 2 and replacing it with a bolder alternative that acknowledges the dire, imminent consequences of ignoring climate change.

Specific Complete Streets strategies for which we have been advocating, and that should be included in the Seattle Transportation Plan are the following:

- a. **Safe Crossing Over I-5:** To make crossing Interstate 5 on NE 45th Street safe for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially as the last mile to/from the new U District light rail station.
- b. **Green Street on NE 42nd Street:** Development of a 10% design plan for NE 42nd St to implement prioritized community strategies to make the U District, Seattle's most walkable neighborhood.
- c. **Pedestrianize The Ave:** Since the 1950's, our community has advocated for the pedestrianization of our main shopping street to address the 2-acre deficit of public open space through the creation of our 'urban living room.'

These local projects will "improve travel conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit." They "prioritize transportation investments that support social equity, safety, environment, and public health." They "accommodate anticipated growth by expanding transit, walking, biking, and other transportation infrastructure." And, most consequentially, they help "eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on Seattle streets." In summary, these projects align with your objectives.

Therefore, these ongoing, active projects that are specific to the University District, should be included (even featured) in the Seattle Transportation Plan. Our U District Mobility Group has demonstrated an ability to conduct equitable public engagement and to nurture public trust to improve transportation and quality of life. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the City on the development of the city-wide plan. The first step is to incorporate the most salient and relevant strategies of our community-driven U District Mobility Plan, and where it diverges from the Seattle Transportation Plan, provide transparency in those decisions.

Thank you,



Cory Crocker, on behalf of the U District Mobility Group

