



January 23, 2018

Puget Sound Regional Council  
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500  
Seattle, Washington 98104-1035

**Re: 2018 Regional Transportation Plan**

Dear Puget Sound Regional Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan (“the Plan”). 350 Seattle is a grassroots organization that works toward climate justice by organizing people to make deep system change: resisting fossil fuels; building momentum for healthy alternatives; and fostering resilient, just, and welcoming communities.

350 Seattle’s Transportation Team has a mission **to advocate for a fossil-fuel-free transportation system**. Global warming caused by fossil carbon pollution is bringing catastrophic events locally and worldwide more quickly than we expected. Last summer the smoke from wildfires stretched from California to northern Canada and choked our skies with smoke. Hurricanes devastated Houston and Puerto Rico. The 2017 cost of these natural disasters broke the record. We need to rapidly de-carbonize our economy to avoid even worse climate scenarios. In our region, where transportation is the source of nearly half of the region’s carbon emissions, we must do all we can to transition to a fossil-fuel-free transportation system **as quickly as possible**.

In reviewing the Plan, we are pleased to see PSRC promoting **changes to land use patterns** which are necessary for a sustainable transportation system. Specifically, we agree that transit-

served centers should be mixed use, compact, walkable, safe for biking, and should include ample affordable housing. We applaud the Plan's vision for transit-oriented communities and PSRC's ongoing Growing Transit Communities Partnership strategy. We also appreciate that the Plan anticipates replacing the current gas tax with a new funding source and identifies road usage charges as a promising alternative.

That said, the Plan does not go far enough. In fact, the Plan **minimizes concerns around climate change**. The first chapter, "Toward a Sustainable Transportation System," states, "(t)he Regional Transportation Plan sets the region on course to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with state limits through a flexible and balanced approach of land use, pricing, choices, and technology." Yet, to be sustainable and to avert the worst catastrophes that climate change will bring, "significant reduction" is not enough. Climate science is clear — we need to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible.

The Executive Summary clarifies that "significantly reduction" means that the Plan "shows the potential to reduce greenhouse gases by as much as 75 percent by 2040 with key local and regional actions." We cannot settle for strategies that "show potential." PSRC must articulate firm targets, based on the best available climate science, for a transportation system that has no greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan should be clear: responding to climate change is a matter of urgency requiring immediate mobilization.

The plan is also unclear in stating that this reduction will be "consistent with state limits through a flexible and balanced approach..." Please provide a citation for the state limits to which you refer, and clarify what you mean by a "flexible and balanced approach." We note that the physics of climate change is not flexible, and our response needs to set **hard targets in line with climate scientists' best estimates of what is need to stabilize our climate**. Despite the key importance of setting such science-based targets, the Plan fails to include a summary of, or reference to, the climate science that alerts us to the need for rapid and dramatic reduction in greenhouse emissions.

We are encouraged that the plan emphasizes walkability and bike-ability. **Active transportation provides a sustainable, resilient, healthy, economical, and community building solution to the first and last mile problem of transit oriented communities**. Yet, the Plan fails to

adequately address how we can promote the development of walkable communities. **Slowing traffic** is a key factor in creating a walkable neighborhood. Not only is speeding one of the biggest **safety** factors (see [this NTSB study](#)), but also, to be really walkable, a neighborhood needs to be **enjoyable for walking**, and free from speeding traffic. The Plan does discuss “minimizing conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles” in these areas, however a conflict minimizing approach does not slow cars. The plan should include guidance on a range of [traffic calming](#) methods that can be used to make transit served neighborhoods walkable.

Promoting active transportation is not just an engineering problem, it is fundamentally about people’s perceptions and behaviors — it is a *cultural* problem. The plan fails to acknowledge this or discuss how planners might engage with communities to promote this cultural shift. The plan should **encourage planners to** stage public information campaigns on how active transportation can improve public health, reduce pollution, promote community, and increase the cultural and economic vitality of neighborhoods.

Other areas where the Plan could be improved are:

- The plan includes no discussion of **reducing or eliminating off street parking requirements in transit-served communities** (such as Seattle is considering). Reducing or eliminating subsidized parking is critical to furthering housing density and affordability, as well as encouraging walking, biking, and transit use. Reducing **on-street parking** is also needed to make room for walkers and bicyclists. Finally in all transit served areas off- and on-street parking needs to be priced, in transit served areas the days of free parking should be over. Finally, parking revenue can be a source of funding for neighborhood improvements, yet it is not mentioned in your Sustainable Financial Framework section.
- The Plan does not discuss of **airplane transportation** and the associated greenhouse gases and other pollution. The aviation industry has a disproportionately large impact on the climate system and warrants consideration.
- The plan should include more on the need for the **electrification of vehicles**, which is a vital part of any plan to reduce carbon emissions in our transportation system. Charging stations need to be installed, but there remain legal questions about where they can be

located and how they will be regulated. The Plan should support legislative efforts to clarify these issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Vision 2040 and hope the Council will take these comments into consideration. We look forward to working with PSRC as it undertakes scoping, research, and planning for Vision 2050 and continues to urge the council to prioritize addressing climate disruption and work toward creating a carbon-free transportation in the region.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle Transportation Team

Andrew Kidde, team lead