



City of Seattle

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Seattle
Freight
Advisory
Board

January 31, 2018

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Josh Brown, Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Ave # 500,
Seattle, WA 98104
Sent electronically to jbrown@psrc.org

Re: PSRC Regional Plan Update

Dear Mr. Brown:

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

This letter reflects the comments of the City of Seattle Freight Advisory Board (SFAB) regarding the PSRC draft Regional Transportation Plan update dated December 2017. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this regional plan that guides the transportation future of the region. The Freight Advisory Board was founded by Seattle Council Resolution to advise the Mayor and Council and all departments on matters related to freight and the impact that actions by the city may have on the freight environment. Our comments on the Regional Transportation Plan are as follows:

Economic Benefits – Freight needs to be recognized as central in support of local family wage jobs and integral to the overall economic health of the region. The Report provides a relevant discussion on the economic benefits of moving freight (see page 11, Exec Summary). Appendix “J” - The Regional Freight and Goods Movement, Figure 1, shows truck tonnage estimated to increase 56% between now to 2040. This would be good information to include in the body of the main document. However, if this information remains in the appendix, it would be helpful to include an acknowledgement and address the importance of accommodating growth in freight and also that most of this freight is currently moving on trucks. Notably 80 percent is local and regional distribution truck volumes and we need to preserve freight mobility on regional arterials. This demand for movement of goods will be further exacerbated by a shortage of trucks expected later this year.

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Protection of Critical Trade Infrastructure – We support the plan’s recognition that “the Puget Sound region is a major North American gateway for trade with Pacific Rim countries and is a major economic engine for Washington state” and that a “transportation system that provides for the efficient movement of freight and goods is critical for the region’s economic prosperity.” To this end, we respectfully submit that the discussion of land use practices and planning tools should more fully support compatibility with existing trade infrastructure, such as freight rail corridors, rail-served industrial areas, and rail yards. Additionally, rail-served sites should be preserved, protected, and encouraged to upgrade infrastructure in land use plans to accommodate growing freight demands for the region. Additionally, rail-served sites should be preserved, protected, and encouraged in land use plans to accommodate growing freight demands for the region. This is especially important within designated and proposed MICs.

Freight Networks and Heavy Haul – As you know, the unique physical features that distinguish the Puget Sound Region also present serious impediments to the movement of people and goods. Freight is especially sensitive to this constricted system. Putting movement of freight at the forefront of planning along key corridors is crucial for continued growth in the region. Appendix “J” does a good job of cataloging freight important networks but does not show the integration and overlap or gaps of the STRAHNET/STRACNET, National Freight Strategic Plan and provides little mention of developing and supporting a Heavy Haul network. It would be useful to see these designation gaps and future planning for preserving this critical system across these system designations.

Performance of Freight Networks – The documents describe the importance of delays to freight and within the performance monitoring note the important performance measure of reducing truck delay. Other performance measures that are important to freight include maintenance of the freight network and establishment and progress towards a Heavy Haul system. Additionally, congestion in the regions primary network (freeways) impacts freight dramatically as Vehicle Miles Traveled and Vehicle Hours Traveled increase. As networks used by trucks are impacted by congestion for longer periods of time each day, the window of opportunity for trucks to operate is reduced. This can dramatically impact freight mobility and delivery operations. With this growing population there needs to be an emphasis on meeting the public’s need for getting everyday commodities to local distribution facilities. This distribution system continues to rely on large trucks that operate in congestion and gridlock. These delays and congestion eventually increase costs to the consumer.

Emerging technology – The Report describes and attempts to anticipate emerging technologies. You may wish to consider discussing and describing the dramatic shifts that on-line shopping has had and will continue to have on supply chain and delivery of goods. This shift has changed the needs for the last mile (loading zones) and even the last 50 feet of delivery of goods. Also new technologies like autonomous delivery, electrification of vehicles, and Intelligent Transportation Systems will reshape how freight operates on the overall transportation system. These trends are emerging but may change how we prioritize and measure transportation performance.

Safety – It is encouraging to see the growing and anticipated growth in bicycling. This growth in bicycling also means increasing demands for bicycle access to limited transportation systems. Where trucks are a priority, such as on the freight network in the City of Seattle, there should be conscientious attention to safety where the mixing of modes occurs. The number of bike fatalities suggests that this is an issue to consider in the future as we develop multi-modal systems. We appreciate the description and discussion of rail crossing and rail safety. We believe positive train control will help improve rail safety and it would be important to monitor and measure crossings and safety.

Funding – Movement of freight has dividends not only in the economic growth of the region but in providing family wage jobs. These benefits should be a consideration as funding is allocated throughout the region to expand, enhance, and support Manufacturing Industrial Centers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Our board meets monthly and we look forward to staying engaged with PSRC in the scoping and development of the 2050 plan.

Sincerely,



Johan Hellman
Co-Chair, Seattle Freight Advisory Board



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