



Oct. 31, 2018

The Honorable Jenny Durkan
City of Seattle
P.O. Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

RE: Support for the Central City Connector

Dear Mayor Durkan:

AIA Seattle

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& Design
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AIA Seattle's 2,400 member architects work every day to promote well-designed, sustainable communities that create opportunities for everyone to prosper. In Seattle, facilitating denser, more equitable communities that rely far less on single occupancy vehicles is at the top of our agenda.

After carefully reviewing KPMG's Streetcar Cost Review report, AIA Seattle believes it is essential that Seattle build the Center City Connector to combine the existing two Streetcar lines into a fully functioning system that will serve the densest part of our city. To address climate, congestion, mobility and equity concerns, Seattle must deemphasize the use of private motor vehicles in the central city by offering additional mobility options. We believe the connected Streetcar system will be an essential component of the city's multimodal future.

We understand that the price tag is significant. But KPMG's report shows that the potential for the connected Streetcar to grow into a major transit system that connects with other modes in Seattle's core is very good. Ridership numbers are projected to be five to six million passengers annually for the connected system (by 2022) compared to 1.5 million riders for the First Hill and South Lake Union lines without the Connector. These are significant levels that would help alleviate traffic in greater downtown, supplement existing and future transportation systems and reduce carbon emissions from vehicle traffic.

As you know, continued delay will jeopardize funding already secured or under consideration. KPMG's report notes that a \$75 million Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts Grant for the Connector remains under review and could be at risk without a final decision. Meanwhile, existing contributions or grants from the FTA, Sound Transit and King County Metro may not be extended past current expiration dates. These resources are crucial to building a strong funding package for this project. Further, choosing to delay or cancel the Streetcar project could have negative impacts on related transit and public space plans for areas like the Central Waterfront, which have based decision-making on the assumption that new, nearby transit options would become available.

Like all transit systems, operating costs for the Streetcar, with or without the Connector, will have to be subsidized. But KPMG projects a farebox recovery ratio of 52 percent, significantly higher than Metro's 27 percent. There is clearly strong demand for a system to give people greater mobility downtown. Like you, we will demand more responsible and disciplined project management from SDOT, which will be an essential component of the Connector's successful completion. Meanwhile, groups like the Seattle Streetcar Coalition are willing to assist the city to help find fiscally responsible strategies around issues related to maintenance, facility consolidation and station design. AIA Seattle would be pleased to participate in this effort.

Leaving the two existing Streetcar lines unconnected would be a wasted opportunity for Seattle, a city with a history of turning down opportunities to build crucial transportation projects. Later, the same mobility problems have had to be addressed at higher cost and with more disruption. Building the Connector will also provide much needed equitable access to greater downtown for disadvantaged, transit-dependent communities and businesses, including Yesler Terrace and the International District. Lower-income communities such as these have traditionally been disadvantaged by Seattle's transportation prioritization processes.

AIA Seattle endorses the Central City Connector as a critical, high-quality transit project that will benefit Seattle for decades to come. It will help to maximize transportation options outside of single occupancy vehicles; add to a network of transit options in the city's core that will increase transit ridership and expand service; help to decrease our region's carbon emissions and facilitate more equitable and convenient mobility choices across the downtown neighborhoods. As construction costs and interest rates continue to rise, AIA Seattle urges you to allow this project to move forward and permit the city to get to work on these important transit improvements at Seattle's core.

Regards,



Lisa Richmond
Executive Director



Alissa Rupp, FAIA
President