



Date: April 23, 2017
To: Moira Gray and Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation
From: John Feit, Chair, Lid I-5 Steering Committee
RE: **Updated Comment on the Washington State Convention Center Addition Street Vacation Petition (Clerk File 314338)**

The Lid I-5 Steering Committee wishes to resubmit and clarify our public benefit requests associated with the street and alley vacations proposed by the Washington State Convention Center Addition (WSCC). These requests were previously submitted through the Pike Pine Urban Neighborhood Council (PPUNC) on March 18, 2016; these requests are now managed by the independent Lid I-5 Steering Committee and endorsed by PPUNC.

The Lid I-5 Steering Committee, sponsored by the Seattle Parks Foundation, supports the concept of the expansion to the Washington State Convention Center. The project is an exciting development for Seattle and will positively contribute to the urban form and energy of our Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

We are strong advocates for a more robust public benefit package as compensation for the five street and alley vacations. The WSCC Addition preferred alternative cost estimate is \$1.7 billion and the largest real estate development in Seattle history. The project is unprecedented in its scale and the number of requested street vacations (Clerk File 314338).

The developer and the WSCC have an obligation to exceed their current proposal and provide greater public benefit to Center City neighborhoods. Consistent with City Council Resolution 31142, we respectfully request the Seattle Design Commission, Seattle Department of Transportation, and Seattle City Council ensure the following items are included in the public benefits package:

- 1) **Lid Feasibility Study:** Consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies T 3.12 and P 1.17, have the WSCC fund a comprehensive, City-led technical study of extending Freeway Park and lidding Interstate 5 in the Center City.

The study will evaluate where lids are most reasonable and cost effective in Seattle's Interstate 5 corridor. The WSCC-funded study areas will include Downtown and South Lake Union, Denny Triangle, Capitol Hill, Pike/Pine, First Hill, and Yesler Terrace. Other neighborhoods will be included as determined by community feedback and as the Steering Committee identifies additional funding sources.

Study elements will include: structural and transportation engineering; urban design; land use opportunities including parks and open space, affordable housing, schools, and other civic uses; social and economic equity; funding options, construction phasing, and best practices. The study will include public outreach and coordination between local government agencies. The findings of the Study will form the basis of design and program for a future Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that will select the consultant team to design future lids.

Based on similar projects we are requesting an in-lieu public benefit contribution of \$1.5 million for the City of Seattle to conduct the study. We have provided a draft study outline to the Design Commission and the WSCC's developer Pine Street Group.

- 2) **Pine-Boren Lid Park:** Consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies T 3.12 and P 1.17, we strongly endorse the Seattle Department of Transportation's proposal to have the WSCC build a lid park at the east corner of the Pine Street and Boren Avenue intersection in Capitol Hill.

This will be an approximately 14,000 square foot addition to Plymouth Pillars Park and act as a modern “proof of concept” lid. It is the first, modest step to lidding the rest of the Center City I-5 corridor for parks, housing, and other uses.

The previous item, the lid technical study, may need to be completed prior to the implementation of the park. Due to need for environmental review and coordination with multiple public agencies, we recommend implementing the Pine-Boren Lid Park as an off-site public benefit after the study is completed and not requiring the park to be completed concurrent with the WSCC Addition. Based on similar projects this public benefit will be valued as at least \$8-10 million.

These requested public benefits were the top two choices selected by the public at the WSCC’s December open house.

We believe these items will strengthen the connection between Downtown, Capitol Hill, First Hill, and South Lake Union by repairing our urban fabric. As demonstrated across Seattle and the Puget Sound region, and increasingly nationwide, freeway lids knit together neighborhoods and provide public open space and civic buildings above transportation corridors. Lids provide numerous public health and environmental benefits, including the improvement of air quality, storm water filtration, wildlife habitat, reduction of urban heat island, and the encouragement of walking and bicycling over motor vehicle trips.

There is a strong nexus for including these requested items in the street vacation public benefit package. It is in the best interests of the WSCC to be situated next to vibrant neighborhoods and park space, and the project itself prefers to cantilever over a portion of Interstate 5 right-of-way.

These public benefit requests are endorsed by Seattle City Councilmembers Sally Bagshaw and Rob Johnson, and State Senator Jamie Pedersen. They are also endorsed by a diverse and representative array of community organizations, including: Capitol Hill Community Council, Capitol Hill EcoDistrict, Capitol Hill Housing, Central Seattle Greenways, First Hill Improvement Association, Futurewise, Jim Ellis Freeway Park Association, Parents for a Better Downtown Seattle, Melrose Promenade, and the Pike Pine Urban Neighborhood Council.

We are in solidarity with several of these organizations and others requesting a “Community Package”. The Lid I-5 components of the Community Package strongly complement the other requests for parks and open space, affordable housing, and active transportation improvements in the Center City. We will continue to be engaged on this issue and help develop the public benefit package of the WSCC Addition. Thank you for your attention to this matter and the opportunity to provide public comment.

Lid I-5 Steering Committee

John Feit, Chair
Dana Behar
Scott Bonjukian
Jim Castanes
Jordan Cowhig
Gemma Daggatt
Liz Dunn
Bruno Lambert
Thomas Pitchford