



**Date:** September 12, 2016

**To:** Rob Johnson, Chair, Seattle City Council Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee (PLUZ)

**CC:** Councilmembers Mike O'Brien, Lisa Herbold, and Lorena Gonzalez

**From:** Lid I-5 Steering Committee

**RE:** Supporting freeway mitigation in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Councilmember Johnson,

We are an organization of Seattle residents supporting a vision for lidding and otherwise mitigating the physical, social, and environmental divisions caused by Interstate 5 in Seattle. We are writing to support the retention and expansion of Comprehensive Plan policies which encourage the City to explore long term strategies for reestablishing connections between people and places.

For reference, the current Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2005) contains policy T30.5 on page 3.8 of the [Transportation Element](#). It states the following:

*"Look for opportunities to re-establish connections between Downtown and adjacent areas by enlarging existing crossings, creating crossings under, or constructing lids over I-5 that can also provide opportunities for development or open space."*

The [Mayor's recommended plan](#) retains most of this policy and designates it T3.11 on page 81 of the draft Transportation Element. It is written as follows:

*"Look for opportunities to reestablish or improve connections across I-5 by creating new crossings or enhancing streets where I-5 crosses overhead, especially where these can also enhance opportunities for development or open space."*

Firstly, we applaud the preservation of this language. Communities as diverse as Downtown, Capitol Hill and First Hill, Yesler Terrace, the International District, the University District, and Northgate are impacted by the barrier of I-5. Addressing the divisions caused by I-5 and the opportunities for reunification is a worthy goal for a greener and more livable Seattle.

However, while we support all methods for improving connections over and under I-5, we first urge you to return specific reference to freeway lids to this policy. This reflects growing community support for creating new I-5 lids, evidenced by [extensive media coverage](#) and energetic turnout at a May 2016 [design charrette](#).

We also recommend broadening the policy to include all freeways in Seattle. This would be consistent with plans for two new lids in the Montlake and Roanoke neighborhoods over State Route 520, and it would support continued operations and public benefits of Seattle’s existing lids over I-5 and I-90: Freeway Park, Sam Smith Park, and the Convention Center.

Secondly, we believe the policy should refer to “...opportunities for development and open space”, as freeway lids are not limited to one or the other. This is seen in many other mixed-use lid projects around the country, ranging from Klyde Warren Park in Dallas to Capitol Crossing in Washington, D.C. Indeed, the community feedback we’ve received has focused on the need for parks, affordable housing, a Downtown elementary school, and other civic uses.

Lastly, and most importantly, we believe this policy should not be limited to the Transportation Element. As the policy itself states, lidding freeways touches on issues of parks, land use, and possibly housing. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to repeat policy T3.11 (with modifications as necessary) to: the Land Use Element; the Housing Element; and the Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Element. The creation of new public land above freeways creates a wide range of possibilities which touch on many of the City’s goals for growth, public investment, and private development.

With these changes the Comprehensive Plan will provide a strong policy foundation for the ongoing community effort to lid Interstate 5 in Downtown and beyond over the next 20 years. We appreciate your attention to this long term vision and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you,



**Lid I-5 Steering Committee**

- John Feit
- Scott Bonjukian
- Jim Castanes
- Bruno Lambert
- Liz Dunn
- Dana Behar