

MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmember Mike O'Brien; Chair, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Councilmember Rob Johnson; Vice-chair
Councilmember Kshama Sawant; Member

From: Peter Lindsay, Council Central Staff

Date: September 9, 2016

Subject: Freight Master Plan Endorsement – Resolution 31706

Resolution 31706 approves the Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT's) Freight Master Plan (FMP)—the City's first transportation modal plan devoted to freight access and freight mobility policy. The FMP sets a policy vision for addressing freight mobility in Seattle by establishing:

- (a) planning goals related to freight;
- (b) a policy framework and action statements to guide freight investments;
- (c) a network of major, minor and limited access truck streets;
- (d) design considerations for freight improvements; and
- (e) a non-prioritized list of potential freight-related projects.

Unlike the City's other modal plans, the FMP does not provide a prioritized list of programmatic investments that would implement the plan's vision and goals.

This memo provides background on the Freight Master Plan, summarizes the proposed legislation and describes issues identified by Council Central Staff.

Plan Vision and Goals

The FMP is the fourth transportation modal plan developed by SDOT. The FMP addresses specific policies and activities to enhance and support freight mobility in Seattle. To guide the implementation of the FMP, SDOT established the FMP Advisory Committee including representation from railroads, trucking companies, distributors, the Port of Seattle, Seattle's Planning Commission and members of the City's Freight, Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Boards. The Committee met regularly with SDOT staff and consultants to refine the FMP through all phases of development. SDOT staff also conducted individual interviews with 25 stakeholders representing freight carriers, manufacturers, community organizations and other state and local jurisdictions.

The FMP includes a vision statement and the six following thematic goals:

Vision:

"A vibrant city and thriving economy connecting people and products within Seattle and to regional and international markets."

Thematic goal statements:

- **Economy** – providing a freight network that supports a thriving and diverse economy.
- **Safety** – Improve safety and predictable movement of goods and people.
- **Mobility** – Connecting industrial centers with local regional and international freight networks.
- **State of Good Repair** – Maintain and improve the freight transportation network.
- **Equity** – Benefit resident and businesses through equity in freight investments
- **Environment** – Improve freight operation efficiency and reduce freight’s overall environmental footprint.

In addition to the above goal statements, the FMP references specific elements and policies contained within the City’s Comprehensive Plan such as urban villages, land use and container port.

Establishing a freight network

The FMP establishes a new freight network of major and minor truck streets and limited access facilities to replace the existing Major Truck Streets (MTS) network referenced in the 2005 Transportation Strategic Plan and adopted by Council in [Resolution 30790](#).

In support of the FMP, SDOT analyzed goods movement within Seattle. Results indicated that the MTS network did not reflect current truck volumes or changes in truck volumes since 2005, nor recognized local freight moving between commercial centers and the use of alternate routes to access those centers. Consequently, the FMP’s new freight network not only considers current arterial truck volumes to designate streets, but other considerations such as the purpose of truck trips and land uses that may influence freight activity in a particular corridor.

The new freight network divides freight facilities into four categories:

- (1) Major Truck Streets;
- (2) Minor Truck Streets;
- (3) First/Last Mile Connector; and
- (4) Limited Access.

The following Table 1 provides a summary of the different truck street designations recommended in the new freight network and an example of each facility. If Council adopts the supporting resolution, the MTS will be replaced with the new freight network as described in the FMP.

Table 1: Summary of Proposed Freight Network Designations

Freight Network Designation	Description	Threshold Volumes	Lane Miles	Example
Major Truck Street	Minor or major arterials connecting Urban Centers and Manufacturing and Industrial Centers (MICs)	500+ truck trips per day	95	15 th Ave NW, Lake City Way NE, Aurora Ave N, Martin Luther King Jr. Way S
Minor Truck Street	Connections to commercial districts, alternate routes	500+ truck trips	72	N 45th Street, Sand Point Way NE, 24 th Ave NW
First/Last Mile Connector	Industrial trips connecting MICs	250+ truck trips per day	12	16 th Avenue SW, Commodore Way
Limited Access	Highway facilities	N/A	37	SR 99, I-5

Strategies, Action Statements and Recommended Project List

The FMP recommends specific strategies and supporting action statements organized around the six thematic goals described earlier —Safety, Economy, Mobility, State of Good Repair, Equity and Environment. The strategies are largely guiding statements to help the City achieve the FMP’s goals. Each strategy is supported by one or more action statements that provide specific initiatives that SDOT could pursue to realize progress in each strategy. However, the plan does not offer any specificity on the practicality or cost of implementing specific action statements, nor whether SDOT will pursue some or none of the initiatives in the near, medium or long-term.

A list of 55 discrete and programmatic conceptual freight projects is included in the FMP; 18 projects are new or not previously identified in other SDOT plans. The list of freight projects builds on past work including the Freight Access Project, Move Seattle and SDOT’s Large Capital Program prioritization process. New projects were added if they addressed bottlenecks and safety concerns identified during FMP development. Projects were organized either as (a) catalyst projects or by (b) geographic area. Catalyst projects are a sub-set of the list that pose significant challenges to goods mobility and typically require grade separation. The South Lander Street Grade Separation project in the SODO neighborhood is an example of one of five catalyst project included in the FMP. Smaller scale and localized investments that address wayfinding, poor geometry in the right-of-way, modal conflicts or major maintenance and preservation make up the balance of the FMP projects. An example of a non-catalyst project would be Intelligent Transportation System improvements on North 85th Street between Aurora and I-5. Some non-catalyst projects could be funded through the Freight Spot Improvement program—a capital program scoped to address freight mobility needs in Seattle¹.

The FMP makes a distinction between accommodating freight trucks in the right-of-way as opposed to designing specifically for truck movements. The FMP clearly states that SDOT will attempt to “accommodate” freight truck movements when improving intersections and streets; the FMP provides guidelines, not design standards, to assist in the development of project

¹ The Levy to Move Seattle includes \$14 million for the SDOT’s Freight Spot Improvements project.

concepts. SDOT indicates that specific design standards related to freight will be developed for the next iteration of the City's Right-of-Way Improvement Manual typically adopted by Director's Rule.

Resolution

If adopted by Council, the resolution approves the FMP as the controlling document for the City's freight mobility policy and investments. The Council has typically adopted the other modal plans by resolution.² By extension, the Council would agree to and adopt the following concrete elements of the plan:

- FMP's vision, policy goals, strategies and action plans.
- A new freight network organized under four categories: major truck street, minor truck street, first/last mile connector and limited access facilities.
- An un-prioritized list of five catalyst projects and 50 smaller scale freight projects.
- SDOT's explicit policy to accommodate rather than design for freight movements in the right-of-way.

The resolution mentions SDOT's commitment to developing an implementation plan for all modal plans, but it does not specify the form or timing of delivering on the commitment. It is unclear if SDOT plans for the Council to adopt the FMP Implementation Plan by resolution.

Analysis

Central Staff compared the FMP to the City's other modal plans and analyzed the plan from the perspective of a master plan—a controlling document to guide City investments and decision-making.

- Prioritized list of discrete projects. The Bike Master Plan and the Pedestrian Master Plan included a prioritized list of programmatic projects and an implementation timeline. The Transit Master Plan did not include a prioritized list of projects and programs, but it identified a category of high priority projects and costs to implement those projects. By contrast, the FMP does not include a prioritized list of discrete projects or programs. Instead, the FMP draws on past planning work and traffic analysis to recommend a standing list of potential freight improvements. Included in the list are five catalyst projects representing significant investments to address bottlenecks and safety concerns throughout the City.
- Programmatic cost estimates. Unlike other modal plans, programmatic cost estimates were not included with the FMP. The plan does not provide a sense of scale or magnitude of spending required to fulfill the freight mobility needs of Seattle. In addition to the capital investments, the FMP recommends a set of supporting actions to implement the strategic direction advocated by the plan. The FMP does not offer specific funding recommendations to complete or implement the supporting action statements. Other modal plans such as the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master

² [Resolution 31157](#): Pedestrian Master Plan; [Resolution 31367](#): Transit Master Plan; [Resolution 31515](#): Bicycle Master Plan.

Plan provided specific, time-based spending plans for projects identified during the master planning process.

- Timing of freight investments. The plan does not include project-specific or programmatic information for project delivery. It is unclear if the follow-on FMP Implementation Plan will include timing for project development or delivery.

Unlike the City's other transportation modal plans, the FMP lacks cost estimates for any of the existing or new projects at the individual project level, at the category level, and at the bottom line. It also lacks an implementation timeline. Without conceptual-level cost estimates and a timeframe for potential implementation, it is difficult to evaluate the feasibility of delivering the projects and programs included in the FMP. Council may want to consider whether the lack of an implementation plan and supporting documentation undermines the FMP's central functions as a controlling document to guide City investment decisions.

Options

- a) Adopt the resolution without amendment.
- b) Amend and adopt the resolution to reflect and endorse the policy framework, but re-frame the FMP as a policy document, not as a master plan.
- c) Amend and adopt the resolution to reflect Council scoping expectations for the FMP Implementation Plan including, but not limited to:
 - a. a deadline for delivery;
 - b. a prioritized list of operating and capital investments related to freight;
 - c. the scale of freight investments; and
 - d. a statement on Council's role providing oversight of the City's capital budget.
- d) Do not vote and table the plan – Provide SDOT a comment letter requesting the FMP Implementation Plan before consideration for final vote. Council could introduce an endorsing resolution upon transmittal of the final FMP Implementation Plan.

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Executive Director
Dan Eder, Central Staff Deputy Director