

May 31, 2024

MEMORANDUM

To: Select Committee on 2024 Transportation Levy
From: Calvin Chow, Analyst
Subject: Chair’s Amendment and Companion Resolution to the 2024 Transportation Levy

This memorandum (1) describes the Select Committee on 2024 Transportation Levy schedule and timeline for amendments; (2) summarizes a draft Chair’s Amendment to the Transportation Levy legislation, [Council Bill \(CB\) 120788](#); and (3) summarizes a draft Companion Resolution to the Transportation Levy. The content of this memorandum will be discussed at the June 4 Select Committee meeting.

1. Committee Schedule and Amendment Process

The schedule for the Select Committee and City Council consideration of levy legislation and a potential companion resolution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Select Committee Meetings and Anticipated Agenda

Meeting	Anticipated Agenda
Select Committee <i>May 7, 2024, 10:30 AM - completed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move Seattle Oversight Committee recommendations • Executive presentation of Mayor’s Levy Proposal
Select Committee <i>May 21, 2024, 10:30 AM - completed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Staff issue identification
Select Committee <i>May 21, 2024, 4:30 PM - completed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearing
Select Committee <i>June 4, 2024, 9:30 AM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of property tax history and context • Executive presentation of Financial Task Force proposal • Presentation and discussion of Chair’s Amendment • Presentation and discussion of Companion Resolution
Select Committee <i>June 4, 2024, 4:30 PM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearing
Select Committee <i>June 18, 2024, 9:30 AM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued discussion of Chair’s Amendment • Continued discussion of Companion Resolution • Presentation and discussion of Councilmember amendments
Select Committee <i>July 2, 2024, 9:30 AM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote on amendments and legislation
City Council <i>July 9, 2024, 2:00 PM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote on legislation

The Chair's Proposal, which includes a Chair's Amendment and a Companion Resolution to the levy legislation, will be presented at the June 4 Select Committee meeting. Chair Saka has requested that all Councilmember amendments be ready for discussion at the June 18 Select Committee meeting. Central Staff is available to work with Councilmembers on potential amendments. Councilmembers considering amendments are requested to submit their proposals to Central Staff no later than end of day on June 11.

Voting on all amendments and legislation would occur at the July 2 Select Committee meeting, and the final legislation would be voted on at the July 9 City Council meeting.

2. Chair's Amendment to Transportation Levy

Chair Saka is offering a Chair's Amendment to CB 120788 for the Select Committee's consideration as a baseline proposal. Central Staff is in the process of drafting specific amendment language for formal committee action. Note that requirements established in CB 120788 cannot be modified by future Council action without going back to voters.

The individual elements of the Chair's Amendment are enumerated and discussed below. Councilmembers may wish to propose revisions to the Chair's Amendment and/or standalone amendments to the legislation.

Item 2.a – Size of Levy

The Chair's Amendment would increase the size of the property tax levy by \$100 million to a new total of \$1.55 billion over an eight-year term. At this size, the anticipated annual property tax bill for the Seattle median assessed value (AV) home would be \$499. For comparison, the Mayor's \$1.45 billion levy proposal would result in a median AV property tax bill of \$469 and the expiring Move Seattle Levy median AV property tax bill in 2024 is \$300.

Item 2.b – Revised Spending Breakdown

With the increased levy size, the Chair's Amendment proposes the following changes to spending levels and categories of levy programs:

- Add \$7 million for Safe Routes to Schools
- Add \$7 million for District Project Fund
- Reduce \$15.5 million for Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program
- Add \$6 million for Transit Passenger Safety
- Add \$63 million for New Sidewalks
- Add \$10 million for Climate and Electrification Program for additional investments in electric vehicle charging stations
- Add \$20 million in Freight and Goods Movement

- Add \$1 million for Oversight Committee auditing and professional services as a new allowed use of levy funds under a new Good Governance & Equitable Implementation Initiative Category
- Add \$1.5 million for Property Tax Relief Outreach and Education as a new allowed use of levy funds under the new Good Governance & Equitable Implementation Initiative Category
- Rename the Sidewalk and Infrastructure Solutions program as the Durable Infrastructure Solutions and move to the new Good Governance & Equitable Implementation Initiative Category

A direct comparison of the planned levy spending in the Mayor’s Proposal and the Chair’s Amendment is provided in Attachment 1 to this memorandum. These changes would be made through revisions to [Attachment A – Spending Breakdown](#) in CB 120788.

Item 2.c – Legal Spending Requirements

The Chair’s Amendment would establish minimum eight-year total appropriations for four specific levy programs at the levels identified in the Chair’s proposal:

- No less than \$126 million for New Sidewalks
- No less than \$221 million for Bridges and Structures
- No less than \$350 million for Arterial Roadway Maintenance
- No less than \$27 million for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

This proposal would include a provision for the minimum eight-year total appropriation requirements to be waived by a separate ordinance, after the Levy Oversight Committee has been given an opportunity to comment.

Item 2.d – Levy Oversight Committee Membership and Scope

The Chair’s Amendment would re-establish the Chair of the Transportation Committee as a member of the Levy Oversight Committee, raising the total committee membership to 19. The Chair’s Amendment would also establish an aspirational goal to strive for at least two members of the Levy Oversight Committee to have auditing experience.

The Chair’s Amendment would add language to the scope of the Levy Oversight Committee responsibilities to include performance evaluation of levy programs.

Item 2.e – Reporting Requirements

The Chair’s Amendment would include a commitment to dashboard reporting as is now standard practice for the Move Seattle Levy (Move Seattle dashboard [link](#)).

Item 2.f – Revise Recitals

The Chair’s Amendment would revise the legislation’s recitals to provide additional context for requesting voter approval of property tax to fund transportation improvements. These revisions include:

- Reference to the Federal Safe Systems approach to road safety
- Reference to electric vehicle charging needs
- Reference to the impact of Initiative 747, which limited property tax growth to one percent, and other cost factors
- Reference to current pavement conditions and basic transportation infrastructure needs
- Reference to Council priorities for the levy proposal as identified in [Resolution 32131](#) (Seattle Transportation Plan)

Draft language for the recitals is included as Attachment 2 to this memorandum.

3. Companion Resolution to Transportation Levy

Chair Saka intends to sponsor a companion resolution to the Transportation Levy that would provide Council guidance on levy implementation. A companion resolution may be modified by future Council action without going back to voters. Central Staff is in the process of drafting the resolution for the Chair. The intent is for the resolution to be referred to the Select Committee for action at its July 2 meeting to accompany the levy legislation.

Individual elements of the Chair’s proposed resolution are described below. Councilmembers may wish to propose amendments to revise and/or to include additional priority areas.

Item 3.a – Establish Council direction for levy program implementation

Implementation of levy programs is subject to Council’s future approval of the annual budget. The proposed resolution would provide Council’s guidance and expectations for specific levy programs, listed below.

- i. District Project Fund. Request that the Mayor’s 2025-2026 Proposed Budget include a proposal for how this program will be administered for Council’s consideration. The proposal should describe how projects will be identified, vetted, and ultimately selected by Council. The proposal should consider ways to establish guardrails that ensure accountability and transparency of program decisions.
- ii. Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program. Request that the Mayor’s 2025-2026 Proposed Budget include a proposal for how this program will be administered for Council’s consideration. The proposal should describe how projects will be identified, vetted, and selected.
- iii. Transit Passenger Safety. Establish Council’s direction that funding for this program be used for transit and public safety personnel services, and not solely for infrastructure improvements that improve physical security.

- iv. Electric Vehicle Charging. Request that the Mayor's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget include a proposal for deploying charging stations over the course of the levy for Council's consideration. The proposal should seek to deploy an equal number of new level 2 and new level 3 charging stations with levy resources, and it should track deployment against the City's anticipated need for level 2 and level 3 charging stations.
- v. Access During Construction. Establish Council's direction that projects be reviewed for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance and pedestrian access during construction.
- vi. Financial Task Force. The Executive proposal for a Financial Task Force will be discussed at the June 4 Select Committee meeting. The Council may choose to consider separate legislation to form the Financial Task Force in Select Committee in conjunction with the levy legislation, or to consider such legislation under a separate timeline. If the Council opts to consider the proposal separately, the proposed resolution could provide direction on a timeline and scope for future legislation to form the Financial Task Force.

Item 3.b – Establish Council direction for levy oversight and reporting

The proposed resolution would provide Council's guidance and expectations for oversight and reporting on the issues, listed below.

- i. Asset Condition. Request that the Levy Oversight Committee conduct its oversight with consideration of the state of the Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT's) assets, including paving conditions (asset sustainability ratio, paving condition index), sidewalks (missing sidewalks, sidewalk inventory), and bridges (bridge rating).
- ii. Performance Evaluation. Request that the Levy Oversight Committee's consideration of SDOT's performance include particular attention to the bridge, sidewalk, paving, and pothole maintenance programs.
- iii. Readiness Assessment, Preparation, and Planning. Request that SDOT prepare an initial readiness assessment and high-level implementation plan to demonstrate SDOT's ability to hit the ground running and deliver levy projects to voters on-time and on-budget. The assessment should include a financial plan for spending over the term of the levy based on SDOT staffing and capacity constraints. A realistic financial plan would minimize the impact of inflation due to delays and the risk of underspending.
- iv. Annual Levy Delivery Plan. Request that SDOT prepare an annual plan for levy spending and deliverables. The plan should articulate how the annual spending fits within the overall levy spending assumptions.

Item 3.c – Identify issues for future Council consideration

The proposed resolution would identify the Council's interest in specific issues as part of levy implementation, listed below.

- i. Vision Zero. State the Council's intent to review Vision Zero implementation and how SDOT's approach integrates the Federal Safe Systems Approach.
- ii. Paving/Corridor Project Scoping. State the Council's intent to review how SDOT scopes and develops major paving and corridor projects. This review would: 1) evaluate the City's current policies governing the planning, design, and implementation of paving projects, including Complete Streets, along with the City's ability to efficiently and effectively fund transportation improvements, 2) review how SDOT incorporates community feedback and outreach into project decisions, and 3) explore how the Council approves funding for individual projects.
- iii. General Fund Support. State the Council's intent to review appropriate levels of General Fund support for transportation purposes as financial conditions allow.

Attachments:

1. Comparison of Spending in Mayor's Levy Proposal and Draft Chair's Amendment
2. Chair's Amendment Revisions to Recitals

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Aly Pennucci, Deputy Director
Yolanda Ho, Supervising Analyst

Attachment 1: Comparison of Spending in Mayor’s Proposal and Chair’s Amendment (\$’s in millions)

Category	Mayor’s Proposal		Chair’s Amendment		Change
	Spending	% share	Spending	% share	
a. Vision Zero, School & Neighborhood Safety	\$162	11.2%	\$160.5	10.4%	(\$1.5)
a.1 Vision Zero	\$70		\$70		--
a.2 Safe Routes to School	\$7		\$14		\$7
a.3 Aurora Avenue N Safety	\$30		\$30		--
a.4 Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program	\$41		\$25.5		(\$15.5)
a.5 District Project Fund	\$14		\$21		\$7
b. Street Maintenance and Modernization	\$423	29.2%	\$423	27.3%	--
b.1 Arterial Roadway Maintenance	\$350		\$350		--
b.2 Paving Spot Improvements	\$67		\$67		--
b.3 Markings	\$6		\$6		--
c. Bridges and Structures	\$221	15.2%	\$221	14.3%	--
c.1 Bridge Structural Repairs and Upgrades	\$71		\$71		--
c.2 Bridge Preventative Maintenance	\$127		\$127		--
c.3 Project Readiness	\$20		\$20		--
c.4 Areaways	\$3		\$3		--
d. Transit Corridors and Connections	\$145	10.0%	\$151	9.7%	\$6
d.1 Transit Spot Improvements	\$27		\$27		--
d.2 Transit Passenger Safety	\$3		\$9		\$6
d.3 Transit Improvements and Access to Light Rail	\$115		\$115		--
e. Pedestrian Safety	\$135	9.3%	\$193	12.5%	\$58
e.1 New Sidewalks	\$63		\$126		\$63
e.2 Sidewalk Safety Repair	\$19		\$19		--
e.3 Sidewalk and Infrastructure Solutions <i>(moved and renamed)</i>	\$5		\$0		(\$5)
e.4 ADA Program	\$30		\$30		--
e.5 Stairways	\$4		\$4		--
e.6 Crossing Improvements	\$14		\$14		--

Category	Mayor's Proposal		Chair's Amendment		Change
	Spending	% share	Spending	% share	
f. Signals and Operations	\$100	6.9%	\$100	6.5%	--
f.1 Traffic Signal Timing	\$32		\$32		--
f.2 Traffic Signals and Maintenance	\$45		\$45		--
f.3 Sign Maintenance	\$5		\$5		--
f.4 Transportation Operations	\$18		\$18		--
g. Bicycle Safety	\$114	7.9%	\$114	7.4%	--
g.1 Neighborhood Greenways	\$20		\$20		--
g.2 Bike Lane Maintenance	\$8		\$8		--
g.3 Protected Bike Lanes	\$68		\$68		--
g.4 Upgrade Bike Lanes	\$8		\$8		--
g.5 Bike Spot Improvements	\$10		\$10		--
h. People Streets and Public Safety	\$66	4.6%	\$66	4.3%	--
h.1 People Streets Capital Projects	\$39		\$39		--
h.2 Downtown Activation	\$15		\$15		--
h.3 People Streets and Wayfinding Maintenance	\$2		\$2		--
h.4 Pedestrian Lighting	\$10		\$10		--
i. Climate and Resiliency	\$59	4.1%	\$69	4.5%	\$10
i.1 Climate and Electrification Program	\$22		\$32		\$10
i.2 Low Pollution Neighborhoods	\$8		\$8		--
i.3 Urban Forestry	\$29		\$29		--
j. Freight and Goods Movement	\$25	1.7%	\$45	2.9%	\$20
j.1 Freight Spot Improvements	\$17		\$17		--
j.2 Heavy Haul Network	\$8		\$8		--
j.3 Freight Program (<i>new</i>)	--		\$20		\$20
k. Good Governance & Equitable Implementation Initiative (<i>new</i>)	--	--	\$7.5	0.5%	\$7.5
k.1 Oversight Committee Auditing and Professional Services (<i>new</i>)	--		\$1		\$1
k.2 Property Tax Relief Outreach and Education (<i>new</i>)	--		\$1.5		\$1.5
k.3 Durable Infrastructure Solutions (<i>moved and renamed</i>)	--		\$5		\$5
Total	\$1,450		\$1,550		\$100

Attachment 2: Chair's Amendment Revisions to Recitals

WHEREAS, Seattle is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan to accommodate a population expected to approach nearly a million people by 2044 served by an abundant supply of housing concentrated in walkable, mixed-use, transit-rich Regional Centers, Urban Centers and Neighborhood Centers that will need to be served by a more robust and modern transportation system that is well-maintained, safe, sustainable, and multi-modal; and

WHEREAS, the draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update foresees 158,000 added jobs in Seattle over the next 20 years that will require a more efficient transportation system to ensure access to those jobs for people who reside within the City, as well as those who commute to jobs in Seattle from around the rest of the Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, Seattle is a built-out city where the only way to create additional capacity is through efficient use of our existing network of streets that needs to support the above-cited growth in residents and jobs without creating added noise and emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, while preserving capacity for moving goods; and

WHEREAS, Seattle's transportation system must accommodate the City's goals of promoting more economic vibrancy within neighborhood business districts, manufacturing and industrial centers, and across the city and greater Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, the City has a Vision Zero goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030 through implementation of the federal Safe System approach to road safety; and

WHEREAS, electric vehicles are a key element of Seattle's climate strategy and the Electric Power Research Institute, working with the City, has identified the need for at least 6,050 level 2 and 1,900 level 3 public charging stations in Seattle by 2030 to meet anticipated demand; and

WHEREAS, transportation policies and decisions over the last century have had a profound impact on public health, especially within lower income and communities of color, whether through disproportionate impacts from diesel particulate and other harmful air emissions, to higher levels of noise pollution, as well as higher proportions of traffic deaths and serious injuries; and

WHEREAS, as a city, state, and nation we have concentrated transportation investments in ways that have only reinforced patterns of redlining and other government policies that limited housing options to communities of color by directing investments away from those communities into the wealthier and whiter communities that have historically had more power to advocate for their needs and desires with elected officials; and

WHEREAS, these disproportionate impacts have resulted in measurably less access to educational and work opportunities for communities of color as well; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the City convened a Transportation Equity Workgroup consisting of community members most impacted by transportation inequities that, in 2021, issued a Transportation Equity Framework to build on the City's 2004 Race and Social Justice Initiative with a guide for Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) decision-makers, employees, stakeholders, partners, and the greater community to collaboratively create an equitable transportation system; and

WHEREAS, the City aims to invest in transportation improvements equitably, consistent with Ordinance 126799, Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, and SDOT's Transportation Equity Framework while also advancing race and gender equity in contracting as outlined in Executive Order 2023-07, Equity and Opportunity in City Contracting, and Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 20.42, Equality in Contracting; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, voters statewide approved Initiative 747, later affirmed by the Washington State Legislature in 2007, which capped the growth in property tax without special approval of the voters at one percent plus the value of new construction; and

WHEREAS, voter-approved transportation funding has become a necessity due to state policies that prevent the City's General Fund revenues from keeping up with inflation or population growth while more traditional sources of funding for maintenance and capital improvements such as local share gas tax, federal earmarks, federal block grants programs, and more localized local-improvement districts have diminished or disappeared altogether, resulting in reduced available resources to adequately and sustainably fund transportation improvements and maintenance citywide; and

WHEREAS, macroeconomic factors, including rapid inflation and the increasing cost of labor and materials, paired with the declining condition and wear of Seattle's transportation infrastructure, directly results in greater funding need; and

WHEREAS, the first Seattle transportation levy, Bridging the Gap, funded significant transportation system maintenance and upgrades, and met or exceeded nearly all of the commitments made as part of the voter-approved measure, including the paving of 225 lane-miles of streets, rehabilitation or seismic retrofit of 12 bridges, replacement of 90,000 street signs, enhancement of three transit corridors, construction of 120 blocks of new sidewalk, restriping of 5,000 crosswalks, implementation of 48 Safe Routes to School projects and 30 Neighborhood Street Fund projects and development of a robust asset management program that has identified and catalogued the condition of transportation assets and their maintenance needs; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Levy to Move Seattle built on the successes of Bridging the Gap by increasing funding for system maintenance and upgrades, and is on target to meet or exceed nearly all of the commitments made as part of the voter-approved measure, including the paving of an estimated 180 lane-miles of streets, rehabilitation or seismic retrofit of 16 bridges, replacement of 30,000 street signs, enhancement of seven transit corridors, construction of 250 blocks of new sidewalk, restriping of 13,075 crosswalks, implementation of 207 Safe Routes to School projects and 35 Neighborhood Street Fund projects and significant enhancement of the asset management system first developed and deployed through the previous Bridging the Gap Levy; and

WHEREAS, the Levy to Move Seattle expires at the end of 2024 and the funding it provides needs to be replaced to continue critical maintenance and modernization of Seattle's transportation system; and

WHEREAS, the \$930 million in Levy to Move Seattle revenues leveraged another \$400 million in grants and partnership funds and, thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other opportunities that have emerged in recent years, a new levy is expected to leverage significant outside funding for City transportation improvements; and

WHEREAS, these critical maintenance and modernization needs include safety improvements that will make bridges and streets safer, better maintain streets and sidewalks, and accommodate safer travel across all modes; and

WHEREAS, careful maintenance of transportation infrastructure today can lessen the expense of increased maintenance tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, SDOT estimates that the average Pavement Condition Index score in 2024 for arterial streets is 61 (on a 100-point scale); and

WHEREAS, SDOT's 2020 Asset Status & Condition Report identified an Asset Sustainability Ratio of 0.4 for arterial streets, which is below the target ratio of 1.0 to maintain existing pavement quality; and

WHEREAS, pothole repair and prevention are key programs to extend the useful life of Seattle's aging roads; and

WHEREAS, the need to facilitate safe and reliable movement of freight and goods is essential to an economically vibrant city, and approximately 95,000 people - or 15 percent of all jobs in Seattle - are employed within the city's two manufacturing and industrial centers; and

WHEREAS, Seattle strives to create and maintain a safe, efficient and reliable transportation system; and

WHEREAS, the West Seattle Bridge closure and repair from 2020 to 2022 demonstrates the need to focus on basic transportation infrastructure, while also highlighting the essential role that bridges play every day in 1) safely and efficiently connecting people and communities, 2) enabling vital commercial and industrial activity, locally, regionally, statewide, and internationally, and 3) serving as a critical backbone of our economy; and

WHEREAS, through Resolution 32131 the City Council has adopted the Seattle Transportation Plan, a multi-modal transportation vision and strategy for the next 20 years that, combined with SDOT's Asset Management Strategy and Vision Zero Program, will help the department prioritize investments to meet the goals of the new One Seattle Comprehensive Plan along with maintaining funding for the maintenance, safety, and equity needs cited above; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Transportation Plan is rooted in a vision of Seattle in 2044, conceptualizing an equitable, vibrant, and diverse city where moving around is safe, fair

and sustainable, built around the goals of safety, equity, sustainability, mobility and economic vitality, livability and maintenance, and modernization; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Transportation Plan was co-created through robust and extensive involvement with community and stakeholders, including three inclusive phases of engagement that resulted in over 78,000 individual data points from: over 9,000 people; more than 130 community events attended; nearly 100 meetings and briefings; over 60,000 visits to an online engagement hub; and over 170 social media posts; and

WHEREAS, the adopted Seattle Transportation Plan sets forth several goals to guide future investments in transportation, including prioritizing safety for all travelers, restorative practices to address transportation related inequities, responding to climate change through innovation and a lens of climate justice, providing reliable and affordable travel options that help people and goods get where they need to go, reimagine city streets with places for people to safely linger and play, and improving city infrastructure for the future; and

WHEREAS, as part of Resolution 32131, the City Council called for a draft transportation levy proposal that prioritized maintenance of bridges and roads, a once-in-a-generation investment in new sidewalks, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improvements to the transit rider experience, Vision Zero programs and projects, improving the on-time performance of transit in the Denny Way corridor, and improving the safety of Lake Washington Boulevard; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Harrell released a draft transportation levy proposal on April 4, 2024, and since then the City has received over 1,000 additional comments; and

WHEREAS, those comments have been incorporated into this proposal through additional investments in sidewalks, transit reliability, bike network expansion, neighborhood safety improvements, preventative bridge maintenance and Transportation Funding Task Force to address longer term needs for sidewalks, bridges and other transportation infrastructure needs; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle intends to place a levy proposal on the November 5, 2024, general election ballot to replace the expiring Levy to Move Seattle in order to continue to meet the City's transportation needs over the next eight years; NOW, THEREFORE,