

Councilmember O'Brien
SDOT Transportation Equity Agenda SDOT-3-A-1
November 1, 2019

Dear Members of the Seattle City Council:

Transportation is one of the most complex challenges facing our growing city, both in terms of providing safe and reliable transit options while also ensuring access to those options is equitably prioritized and funded across a diversity of neighborhoods and individuals with differing needs. Too often, seniors, communities of color, and disabled transit users are underserved, fearful of being displaced, or must overcome significant barriers which are not thoroughly understood by those responsible for designing, implementing or financially sustaining transit solutions.

The Transportation Equity Workgroup (TEW) consists of 10 individuals representing various marginalized communities in north, central and south Seattle which include: The Council for the Duwamish Tribe, The Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority, Rainier Valley Greenways, Muslim Housing Services and more. We began the process of forming our recommendations by first identifying 10 broad areas of significant concern. Among these areas were community engagement, transit access, safety, transparent decision-making, infrastructure, and others. We then formed subcommittees to address each topic and discussed the recommendations of each subcommittee as a large group to build consensus around which recommendations should be formally part of the equity agenda.

We write today to ask you to support Councilmember Mike O'Brien's proposal for \$750,000 to fund two components, without which, we cannot complete our charge. This funding will:

- 1) Fund the recommendations we have developed;
- 2) Maintain and add staff: Maintain the coordinator position and add a strategic advisor to assist in implementing the work.

Funding Recommendations:

The recommendations we present reflect both short-term and long-term solutions. In addition, our recommendations include initiatives that are grounded not only in greater equity but more adequately address the cultural needs of populations, needs that are not captured in quantitative data analysis. For example, the City has concrete data on the frequency of auto accidents and transit-related fatalities and uses this data to prioritize safety improvements but has far less reliable data on the perception of safety felt by marginalized populations when they are attempting to access various modes of transit.

Incorporating these types of metrics into how funds are prioritized is something the TEW is actively examining. Other recommendations being put forward include:

- a less punitive approach to fare evasion that does not involve the criminal justice system
- more outreach and education about the Seattle Transportation Benefit District as a ballot measure
- creating stronger city partnerships to increase access to parking where private parking spaces are underutilized
- development of app technology that can translate transit information into multiple languages for non-English speakers
- investing in better lighting around bus shelters and along sidewalks especially in transit zones where wait times exceed 20 minutes

- modifying the ORCA program so that individuals with disabilities can obtain their ORCA cards by mail.

The TEW will provide a report which includes initial recommendations in 2020, but this work is ongoing as the issues in our communities and the transportation landscape continues to change.

Maintain and Add Staff: maintain the Coordinator position and adding a Strategic Advisor position

Each of us joined the Workgroup because we recognize the importance of transportation in our respective communities. However, we are not experts in navigating the multitude of agencies that touch public transit. Our recommendations require the support of a Strategic Advisor whose skills and expertise can be complemented by the SDOT Coordinator who has been working closely with us from the beginning of this process. They, better than anyone, understand our goals in making these recommendations and are best positioned to ensure that their implementation reflects our voices and intentions.

We urge the City Council to advocate for our work by approving the \$750,000 in funding that Councilmember Mike O'Brien is proposing. This financial support would ensure that the recommendations we make have the necessary resources to bring them into being.

Sincerely,

The Transportation Equity Workgroup