



City of Tacoma
Transportation Commission

March 11, 2021

Tacoma City Council
747 Market Street, Rm. 1200
Tacoma, WA 98402

Subject: Puyallup Avenue Corridor Design Project Recommendation

Dear Chair McCarthy,

The Transportation Commission (Commission) is excited about the opportunity to improve the Puyallup Avenue Corridor. The Commission has received several presentations on the Puyallup Avenue Corridor Design Project and has actively participated in discussions with the Transit Oriented Development Group (TODAG) and Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group (BPTAG).

The Puyallup Avenue corridor is a gateway to our downtown core and hub for thousands of individuals utilizing the Tacoma Dome, Amtrak, and Sounder Stations. These comments serve to not just influence the City of Tacoma's efforts on transportation, but compliments the plans that the City has fostered over the years including the South Downtown Subarea Plan and the Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

The Commission, BPTAG, and TODAG agree that the City should accept the Puget Sound Regional grant award and proceed with the design project. Additionally, the three groups agree on the focus of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit ease and safety with emphasis on wide sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, and intersection safety.

The Commission and BPTAG supports the inclusion of transit or Business Access & Transit (BAT) lanes and protected bicycle facilities, which is consistent with Vision Zero. Conversely, TODAG generally supports bicycle connectivity along the corridor and outlines concerns regarding a designated transit lane. Concerning parking, the Commission and BPTAG do not feel parking should be prioritized on Puyallup Avenue and that staff recommendations to accommodate parking on side streets and employ parking management strategies provides a balanced approach to addressing TODAG's comments of no net loss of parking on Puyallup Avenue.

The Transportation Commission appreciates the thoughtful input from the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Group and the Transit Oriented Development Advisory Group, and recommends fulfilling the commitment outline in the PSRC grant application and September 17, 2017 Transportation Commission Recommendation Letter (attached). The City is presented with an opportunity to improve Puyallup Avenue in preparation of Bus Rapid Transit and the Tacoma Dome Link Extension. Returning the grant or altering the project could be detrimental to future opportunities.

Sincerely,

Gerrit Nyland
Transportation Commission Co-Chair

Dr. Jane Moore
Transportation Commission Co-Chair

cc: Mayor Victoria Woodards
Infrastructure, Planning & Sustainability Council Committee
Tacoma City Manager
Public Works Director
Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group
Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group

attachments: Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group, 2/22/21 Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project Letter
Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, 1/14/21 Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project Letter



February 22, 2021

Jane Moore and Gerrit Nyland, Co-Chairs
Tacoma Transportation Commission
747 Market Street, Room 644
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project

Dear Co-Chairs Moore and Nyland,

On behalf of the Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (“TODAG”), I am expressing our support for the City of Tacoma’s effort in accepting the \$2.1 million grant awarded to the City through the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (“PSRC”) competitive regional process to fund the design phase of the Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project (“Project”).

The successful completion of the Project is an integral part of making South Downtown Tacoma a truly multimodal, interconnected, transit-oriented development (TOD) district, and will help capitalize the future investments of Pierce Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Sound Transit’s Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) projects.

We understand that by accepting the grant, the City is committed to constructing the Project as originally scoped in the grant application. Through our review and discussion of the Project over the last few months, we believe it is imperative that the Project needs to factor in the community’s interests and concerns and the original scope of work may be subject to modifications accordingly. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the City, upon accepting of the grant, allow adequate flexibility through the design phase of the Project to ensure our concerns and recommendations are addressed to the fullest extent possible. In addition, we offer the following design principles and priorities for the City’s consideration and incorporation into the final design of the Project:

1. **TOD Design Principles** – The Project provides significant opportunities, if designed appropriately, to substantially create TOD Neighborhoods (not just TOD projects). To help realize this vision and expected outcome, we recommend that the design of the Project adhere to the following TOD design principles that we have developed and endorsed and are also using for evaluating the BRT and the TDLE projects:
 - (1) Multimodal Connectivity
 - (2) Economic Development Opportunities
 - (3) Placemaking/Urban Form
 - (4) Social + Cultural Impacts
 - (5) Community Benefit



Tacoma Transportation Commission

Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project

February 22, 2021

Page 2 of 3

- 2. Three Distinct Districts** – Recognize the three distinct character areas along the Puyallup Avenue corridor and apply distinctive, yet compatible design considerations for these areas. As illustrated in the diagram below, the corridor can be generally divided into the following segments:
 - Segment 1 – The Neighborhood District between Pacific Avenue and E. C Street
 - Segment 2 – The TOD District between E. C Street and E. G Street
 - Segment 3 – The Industrial District between E. G Street and Portland Avenue



- 3. Pedestrian Oriented Amenities** – Provide crosswalks and wider sidewalks (at a minimum width of 12 feet, where possible) with appropriate amenities and features, and add attractive street lighting, to ensure a safe, comfortable and friendly walking, shopping, and outdoor dining environment and experience for pedestrians. Implementation of these pedestrian oriented amenities should be prioritized for both Segments 1 and 2, with emphasis on Segment 2 – the TOD District. Further emphasis should also occur around the three intersections at G, D and C streets, as these nodes are at the heart of the Puyallup Avenue corridor, a regional transportation hub, and a gateway to Downtown Tacoma and the Tacoma Dome. Higher pedestrian counts and activity are anticipated in this area, particularly where Puyallup Avenue intersects E. D Street, a designated north-south pedestrian connector between the Tacoma Dome and the Foss Waterway.
- 4. Bicycle Connectivity** – Provide protected, connected bicycle lanes along the entire Puyallup Avenue corridor, to the extent possible.
- 5. Transit Lane** – Designate a Business Access and Transit (BAT) lane on one side of Puyallup Avenue (likely the south side) to accommodate buses, and as appropriate, higher-occupancy vehicles. Recognize that encouraging and growing transit ridership is key to promoting transit-oriented development, augmenting regional high capacity transit services, enhancing mobility benefits for underserved populations traversing the corridor, and reducing tailpipe emissions.
- 6. Traffic Calming** – Apply traffic calming methods and devices, such as narrower traffic lanes, reduced speeds, textured intersections and crosswalks, in the design and traffic operation on the Puyallup Avenue corridor and the adjacent side streets to improve safety for all users. Again, this is especially critical in Segments 1 and 2.

Tacoma Transportation Commission

Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Improvement Project

February 22, 2021

Page 3 of 3

7. **On-street Parking** – To the extent possible and without sacrificing Item #3 above, accommodate short-term on-street parking, load/unload zones, and on-demand and delivery parking along Puyallup Avenue in front of current businesses in Segments 1 and 2 to protect investments already made in this area. Inclusion of diagonal parking along adjacent side streets is also seen as desirable to ensure no net loss of on-street parking in the immediate area.
8. **Freight Mobility** – Ensure safe and efficient freight mobility and truck maneuverability balancing freight needs with Items #3 – #7 above. Recognize that Puyallup Avenue (between E. D St. and Portland Ave.) is identified in the Transportation Master Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan as a Primary Street within Tacoma’s Freight Priority Network.
9. **Adopted Planning Policies** – Maintain consistency with the South Downtown Subarea Plan and the Transportation Master Plan, to the extent feasible and consistent with the priorities in Items #2 – #8 above.

As the Project moves forward, we anticipate that we will be given an opportunity to further elaborate on the above-mentioned design principles and priorities, and continue to be an active sounding board for the Project. We acknowledge that there may be potential adjustments, tradeoffs, and compromises that will need to be considered and accommodated during the design phase and expect these to be made with the concurrence of the TODAG or any successor group representing the Dome District and the Project area.

The City Council’s Resolution No. 40303 that established the TODAG states that “proposals by the TODAG will be forwarded to and reviewed by the City’s Transportation Commission, for concurrence with adopted transportation and land use plans and policies.” We are hereby forwarding to the Transportation Commission our support for the Project’s grant acceptance and our recommendations on supplemental design considerations. We understand the Commission will forward our recommendations to the City Council.

If you have any questions about this recommendation, please contact TODAG’s staff liaison, Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, Planning and Development Services Department, at (253) 573-2389 or bboudet@cityoftacoma.org.

Respectfully,



Imad H. Bahbah, RA, SARA
Chair



Donald K. Erickson, AICP
Vice-Chair

- c. Councilmember Robert Thoms, Tacoma City Council, District No. 2
Kurtis Kingsolver, Director, Public Works Department
Mark D’Andrea, Project Manager, Public Works Department
Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, Planning and Development Services Department



City of Tacoma
Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group

January 14, 2021

Dear Tacoma Transportation Commissioners:

We, the City of Tacoma's Bicycle and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group (BPTAG), would like to provide our feedback on the Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Project. In a special meeting held on January 11th, 2021, the members of BPTAG unanimously endorsed moving forward with the \$2.1 million design grant from the Puget Sound Regional Council.

We look forward to being a part of the discussions that are sure to follow once the City accepts the grant funds, and we would like to communicate a few key takeaways from our conversation that can help the City understand our goals as design moves forward.

We understand that the design of this corridor will be a collaborative and iterative process, based on final survey work and balancing multiple modes. As design moves along, we look forward to moving beyond a single cross-section to assess what's appropriate and safe along each segment given the available right-of-way. For example, we may find that having no parking for a half-block results in a net loss of two stalls along the corridor but allows for inviting pedestrian spaces, trees, and safe bikeways. Once there is more information on the available right-of-way, we look forward to having these conversations in more depth.

We hope and expect that through this process, the City will keep the Transportation Master Plan's Green Transportation Hierarchy as a guiding principal, especially as it relates to how the design prioritizes safety and access for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit over the movement and storage of single occupancy vehicles. Specifically:



- While parking for personal vehicles should be a consideration, we do not feel that the goal of no net-loss of parking along Puyallup Avenue should be prioritized in such a way that results in narrower sidewalks or cycle track lanes, a substandard cycle track buffer width, or reduced facilities for pedestrian crossings (such as bulb outs).
 - Our recommendation is that the protected bike lanes be designed with 5' in each direction (10' total), and, when adjacent to parking, the buffer be no smaller than 3' along the whole corridor.
 - Parking management strategies, including time-limited and paid parking, should be implemented to better manage the existing on and off-street parking supplies in the Dome District. Parking should not be framed as the only way to support business access – improving safety and access for people arriving using transit and active transportation will help create thriving business districts.
 - Adding or preserving parking should not be used to justify sidewalk widths below minimum standards.

Tacoma Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group
Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Street Project
January 14, 2021

- As design moves forward, we would like to hear from Pierce Transit and Sound Transit on design strategies to improve transit safety and reliability – including the possibility of Transit/HOV lanes in both directions. We also hope our transit partners will be involved in conversations on who is eligible to use these lanes.
- Through the design process, we also look forward into delving into more specifics on the safety and movement of people walking and rolling, for example, intersection and signal design and driveway crossings (i.e. signal timing, leading pedestrian intervals, green paint, etc.).

In addition to the above, we anticipate more details on how stormwater will be addressed and support the integration of facilities like bioswales to enhance the health of the Thea Foss Waterway.

We believe it is possible to turn this multimodal corridor into a space that makes it not only easier, but preferable for users of all ages and abilities to access the Dome District and our regional transit center without a personal vehicle.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. We are so excited to see the City of Tacoma move this project into design and look forward to next steps.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Halverson Kuehn
Chair, City of Tacoma Bicycle and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group



City of Tacoma
Transportation Commission

September 26, 2017

Mark D'Andrea
City of Tacoma
747 Market Street
Tacoma, WA 98402

Subject: Puyallup Avenue Corridor Conceptual Design

Thank you for the opportunity for the Transportation Commission (TC), with consultation from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, and Sustainable Tacoma Commission (STC) to offer influential comments and staff guidance on the Puyallup Avenue Corridor Conceptual Design. This project is important because Puyallup Avenue serves as a gateway to our downtown core as well as the right of way for thousands of individuals coming and going from the Tacoma Dome Station (TDS) which is one of the largest multimodal hubs in the entire state of Washington. While this project on its face appears to be strictly a transportation project, it is truly a holistic planning effort which includes land use elements, open space and placemaking. These comments serve to not just influence the City of Tacoma's efforts on Transportation but compliments the plans that the City has fostered over the years including the South Downtown Subarea Plan (SDSP) and the Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

Overall Planning Approach

On Page 58 of the TMP the City identifies the modes of transportation in the following manner; Pedestrian, Bicycle, Transit, Freight and SOV. The TMP also identified the Puyallup Avenue Corridor as a "Conflicted Corridor" that needed further study. It is the opinion of the TC that this conceptual plan needs to be more holistic in its review and truly study and understand the needs of the various transportation modes not just today but in the future. Do note this also means taking into account the SDSP future vision for the corridor which includes density both in business and housing.

The plan lacks vision as it relates to the parallel street of East 25th, particularly between E. G Street and Portland Avenue. This is a severely underutilized street in this corridor and could serve to add capacity for all modes including emphasizing egress for freight to the industrial parts of the area between Puyallup Avenue and East 25th Street. In addition, as transit services increase as they will according to Pierce Transit and Sound Transit's long range plans, E 25th Street could serve as a future transit/freight only corridor.

Recommendation TC1: Let this plan be the first of many drafting phases, including funding, with the City prioritizing a holistic review and design of the corridor to include East 25th Street.

On and Off Street Parking

The Dome District has some of the highest concentrations of off street parking in the City including Pierce Transit's garage at TDS with over 2,000 parking stalls. With free parking and paid parking available, it is the opinion of the TC that this plan should de-emphasize on street parking between Pacific Avenue and Portland Avenue. By doing this, the plan then can allow for a greater use of Right of Way (ROW).

Recommendation TC2: Remove on-street parking between Pacific and Portland Avenues to allow for safer and more effective and efficient pedestrian, bicycle and transit LOS, and relocate, when applicable, to side streets.

Pedestrian & Bicycle

The TMP calls for a bicycle lane to be implemented on the entire corridor. All alternatives should include this facility and should be done so as to add elements for the safety of both the vehicular traffic and bicyclists when entering and using the corridor.

In the alternatives provided, the "Neighborhood" sections of the corridor lack proper trade off of modes. In order to continue to provide the Level of Service (LOS) needed for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit, parking and turn lanes need to give way for more right of way to emphasize these modes. While the TMP only calls for a bicycle lane, the opportunity of such a wide right of way could allow a cycle track or bike boulevard to be implemented between Pacific and Portland Avenues.

Recommendation TC3: A bidirectional protected bicycle facility along the entire length of Puyallup Avenue (Alternative 1)

Recommendation TC4: Sidewalks and street plantings along the entire length of Puyallup Avenue and safer pedestrian crossings (Included in all alternatives)

Transit

The importance of growing transit ridership as a greater share of mobility is key to reducing tailpipe emissions from transportation that are a majority of the City's adverse contribution to climate change. Further, high capacity feeder transit services and protected bicycle facilities will be necessary to provide access to regional light rail at Tacoma Dome Station in 2030. Additional single-use parking structures are not supported by the South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS. We support the vision of South Downtown as a transit-oriented area with non-motorized access.

The point of this exercise is to plan for the future through 2040. Staff indicated that transit currently accounts for 3-4% of the 10,000 vehicles that travel on Puyallup Avenue per day, but did not translate those figures into the overall proportion of people moving along the corridor. 3,300 passengers per day board Sound Transit express bus services from Tacoma Dome Station, 500 per day from Pierce Transit board at Tacoma Dome. However, more passengers are using transit service on Puyallup Avenue as a

thoroughfare between Tacoma Dome Station and Downtown Tacoma and are not counted. Clearly transit vehicles are serving disproportionately more people per day than their vehicle counts are showing.

Recommendation TC5: An east and westbound transit lane along the entire length of the Puyallup Avenue corridor between Pacific Avenue and Portland Avenue. (Alternative 1 + new element)

Freight

The 2015 Transportation Master Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan identified Puyallup Ave., between E. D St. and Portland Ave., as a Primary Street within Tacoma’s Freight Priority Network, affirming its importance to the freight system of the City. East of E. G St., land use along the corridor is predominantly industrial. Both E. D St. and Portland Ave. serve as major access and egress routes to a part of the Tide Flats. With the corridor needing to serve multiple modes the TC feels it is important to continue to provide critical access to freight.

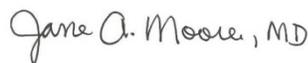
Recommendation TC6: Eastbound Transit/HOV lane contained in Alternative 1; E. D St as a “Bus and Freight” lane.

Overall this plan starts off on the right foot however the planning and design process is far from over. The Transportation Commission and Sustainable Tacoma Commission would like to see staff go back to the drawing table and develop an additional “Hybrid” alternative that incorporates the important and critical recommendations outlined in this letter. The Transportation Commission expects to be part of the conversation in developing the final design.

Sincerely,



Justin D. Leighton
Co-Chair
Transportation Commission



Dr. Jane Moore
Co-Chair
Transportation Commission



Alexandra Brewer
Chair
Sustainable Tacoma Commission

cc:

Mayor Marilyn Strickland
Tacoma City Councilmembers
Tacoma City Manager
Tacoma Public Works Director
Chelsea Levy, Sound Transit
Peter Stackpole, Pierce Transit
Bicycle & Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group