Washington State
Department of Transportation

Management of Mobility Division
2901 3rd Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98121-3014
206-464-1211 / FAX: 206-464-1189
TTY: 1-800-833-6388
www.wsdot.wa.gov

May 2, 2024

Michael Hubner & Jim Holmes, Project Managers
City of Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development
600 4th Ave, 5th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Subject: WSDOT Comments on the Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mr. Hubner and Mr. Holmes,

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the City of Seattle's draft Comprehensive Plan Update (*One Seattle Plan*) and the accompanying draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Please find our comments on these planning efforts below.

Draft Comprehensive Plan Goals

The draft *One Seattle Plan* includes an important, well-articulated framework to guide the city's growth and investments through 2044. It lays out four key focus areas that guide the city's planning efforts in response to issues and concerns identified by community members and stakeholders. These include:

- Housing Affordability*:* Expand housing opportunities across the city.
- Equity & Opportunity*:* Promote a more equitable Seattle.
- Community & Neighborhoods*:* Focus on growth and investment in complete, walkable communities.
- Climate & Sustainability*:* Meet the challenge of climate change for a resilient future.

WSDOT is pleased to see that these focus areas align closely with the vision, mission, values, and goals included in WSDOT's Strategic Plan and address issues and concerns many communities in the Central Puget Sound are facing. Alignment between our plans help advance the shared goal of providing the public with a safe, sustainable, and integrated multimodal transportation system that meet the travel challenges of today and the growing demands of tomorrow. We look forward to continuing our partnership as the city works to implement the *One Seattle Plan*.

Draft EIS Alternatives

WSDOT recognizes the importance of integrated land use and transportation decisions to achieve the goals in the city's draft *One Seattle Plan*. We are pleased to see that the city is evaluating a variety of growth alternatives that will identify the necessary strategies to increase the supply and diversity of housing choices, reduce displacement, while creating more communities that allow people to walk, bike or roll to meet their everyday needs. We are particularly supportive of the strategies outlined in Alternative 5 that build on the city's past planning efforts and investments in its existing urban centers but would also designate new compact centers and villages throughout the city. As noted in the draft EIS, Alternative 5 "anticipates the largest increase in supply and diversity of housing across Seattle." This alternative appears to most closely support the city's role as a Metropolitan City as identified in the Puget Sound Regional Council's Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2050 and with Sound Transit's investments. As noted in the draft plan, expansion of light rail during the timeframe of the *One Seattle Plan* will include a new line from Ballard to West Seattle and roughly a dozen new or expanded

stations within the city. Local consistency with regionally adopted plans will help the central Puget Sound meet the long-range goals laid in VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan and Sound Transit's ST3.

WSDOT is also pleased to see the draft plan acknowledges the implementation efforts that will need to accompany the new growth strategy in Alternative 5. As noted in the EIS, changes to zoning and development standards will need to be made on properties located on streets with current or planning frequent transit routes – another critical component to support local and regional transit investments and increase the use of these travel options.

Finally, WSDOT appreciates the city's consideration of potential impacts to state facilities, active transportation, transit and freight in section 3.10 of the EIS and looks forward to further coordination with the City of Seattle, King County, transit operators and other involved stakeholders as we work together to make smart transportation and land use connections.

Other Comments

In 2022, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5974, the Move Ahead Washington package. The bill directs WSDOT to incorporate the principles of Complete Streets in most state transportation projects. More information, including staff contacts, can be found on WSDOT's Complete Streets webpage.

WSDOT supports the city's approach to prioritizing safety, comfort, and accessibility of all active transportation modes and encourages it to use the comprehensive plans as an opportunity to conduct inclusive community outreach and identify locations where state facilities present a barrier to nonmotorized connectivity. This includes the intersections of highway interchange ramps and local streets, such as those along Interstate 5, Interstate 90, and other limited access highways, as well as existing multimodal sections of state highways such as SR 99, SR 522, SR 513, and others. WSDOT encourages the City of Seattle to consider how these facilities and intersections could fit into its broader active transportation network and will collaborate with the city to support its multimodal safety and accessibility goals.

WSDOT also recommends the city reflect the ongoing I-5 and High-Speed Rail planning in the *One Seattle Plan*. WSDOT's Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program was recently created to look holistically at highway, rail, and other travel options to foster a comprehensive understanding of area communities, their needs, and opportunities in the region. This work will influence travel between Canada, Washington and Oregon. As part of this work, WSDOT is conducting a Ramp Reconfiguration Study in coordination with the city for sections of I-5 through downtown Seattle. This study will help provide information for the city's ongoing I-5 lid feasibility planning being completed by the city's Office of Planning and Community Development. We recommended the *Seattle One Plan* include reference to these planning efforts.

WSDOT Planning Resources

WSDOT's comprehensive planning resources for local agencies can be found on our Land Use and Transportation Guidance page. This includes a wealth of information on how WSDOT reviews local agency plans, our land use and transportation goals, best practices in building transportation efficient communities, and pertinent concurrency and SEPA guidance.

WSDOT's Community Planning Portal may be particularly helpful for local jurisdictions. The portal includes data on the state transportation system often needed to complete the transportation element inventory required by the Growth Management Act. In addition to the data included in the portal, local planners can add their own data to ArcGIS Online and create custom reports.

Further Engagement & Coordination

WSDOT appreciates being included in the City of Seattle's planning process. Please reach out if you would like to discuss opportunities for ongoing engagement and coordination, as well as technical assistance available during your work updating your plans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the *One Seattle Plan*. We look forward to our continuing

productive partnership.

Sincerely,

Travis Phelps, Director
WSDOT's Management of Mobility Division

CC: Julie Meredith, Assistant Secretary Urban Mobility and Access and Megaprograms
Brian Nielsen, WSDOT Regional Administrator Northwest Region
Robin Mayhew, WSDOT Deputy Administrator Northwest Region
Mike Swires, WSDOT Assistant Regional Administrator – Traffic
Jeff Storrar, WSDOT Policy Manager
Cecile Malik, WSDOT I-5 Program Manager