May 17, 2024

To whom it may concern,

The American Heart Association supports initiatives that make it safer to share the road with vehicles, so that people can lead a healthy, active life. The One Seattle Plan embodies a vision for our city that resonates with core values such as equity, livability, sustainability, and resilience. Among its key priorities is the creation of walkable, accessible communities - a goal shared by the American Heart Association.

Complete streets that are safe and convenient for diverse users and all modes of transportation make communities and neighborhoods more livable by ensuring people can get safely to where they need to go - work, school, the library, grocery stores, or parks. However, the One Seattle Plan's primary focus on expanding North Seattle fails to equitably serve the city's residents and has the potential to exacerbate health and safety disparities between the northern and southern parts of Seattle.

People - including people with disabilities, children, and older adults - need sidewalks and crosswalks to feel safe. However, not all Seattle communities have enjoyed equal access to these safety measures. In some low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, the lack of well-maintained routes to parks, schools, roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks has persisted for decades. These same neighborhoods often bear the burden of higher rates of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

South Seattle, where approximately 69% of people of color reside, face unique challenges. According to the City of Seattle’s Community Indicator Report from 2020, this area is marked by higher levels of disadvantage and should be a priority for targeted interventions.

We must prioritize investment in complete streets throughout Seattle, ensuring that every neighborhood benefits from safe sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes. By doing so, we bridge the gap between communities and promote healthier lifestyles. Sidewalks help create a community where the healthy choice to be active every day is made available for all residents. They strengthen communities, support small businesses, and keep everyone safer. Let's work together to create a more vibrant and just Seattle for everyone.

Sincerely,

Alex Hamasaki
Government Relations Director
American Heart Association