



May 13, 2019

Re: Downtown Demonstration Bikeway

Bellevue City Council
Bellevue City Hall
450 110th Ave NE
Bellevue, WA 98004

Mayor Chelminiak and Councilmembers,

The Bellevue Transportation Commission voted on March 28, 2019 to recommend making permanent the 108th Avenue NE Demonstration Bikeway Pilot Program and in favor of recommending “rapid build bicycle facility refinements” to the 108th Avenue NE corridor.

Tonight, Council will also consider a request for further evaluation and implementation of bicycle facilities on Main Street, as the “next logical element of a downtown bicycle network.” The proposal would take the additional step of eliminating a lane of road capacity to convert it into a bicycle-only lane, despite traffic modeling data that shows it may cause an increase in the average congestion for all turning movements at Main and 108th. Before doing so, the Chamber urges the Council to take the following steps.

Retain Your Authority. Council should make the final decision as to whether to retain the 108th Avenue NE bikeway and implement further refinements to the corridor, and whether to convert a road lane on Main Street to a bicycle-only lane. Since adoption of the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, dramatic changes in population, employment and development patterns have occurred in Downtown Bellevue. It is essential for specific infrastructure decisions that have significant impacts on the functionality of the Downtown transportation system be made our elected representatives.

Improve the Transportation Modeling. With recent announcements regarding proposed redevelopment in the downtown core, we believe the PSRC VISION 2050 Draft SEIS and the new activity based BKRCast model will both confirm an acceleration of new person trips in and out of Downtown Bellevue that far exceeds the 531,000 assumed for 2030 in Bellevue’s Downtown Implementation Plan. These factors should be considered in the transportation modeling to provide a clearer picture of the potential impacts of these projects.

Consistent with the data-driven approach already in use for CIP project selection, we recommend a modeling exercise that will estimate the “total person trips” to be captured by bicycle-only lanes on 108th NE and Main street in 2030, the same baseline year already in use for the Downtown Implementation Plan and 2019-30 Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP).

Mitigate or Avoid Impacts to Transit and Vehicular Congestion. Our understanding is the intersection of Main Street and Bellevue Way is already at a failing level of congestion. We are concerned that retention of existing bicycle-only lanes on Main Street, the extension to 108th, and eventually expanding bicycle lanes to the Main Street overpass may cause additional degradation to this important east-west corridor. If updated modeling shows the project will create additional congestion we encourage you to find an alternate that reduces, or ideally avoids, such impacts.

Engage in Appropriate Public Process. We request that Council initiate a robust public process that provides all segments of the community an opportunity to provide feedback on further refinements to both 108th NE and Main Street. The notion of converting existing right-of-way on Main Street to bicycle-only use has had limited public process or specific Council action. Such decisions should be made after thorough public scrutiny.

Further Refine the 108th Bikeway Analysis. The 108th NE demonstration bikeway was conducted as a six-month pilot program, rather than for a calendar year as originally proposed. Data was only reported for four months. It is important that decisions of this magnitude be based upon data which represents use of the facility over a sustained and representative time period. I have attached a letter which the Chamber sent to the Commission last year containing several requests for data collection and refinement of the 108th project. We believe these issues and questions remain valid and should inform a final decision by Council on this matter.

The Chamber supports development of truly multimodal transportation solutions for Bellevue, as well as a new comprehensive Transportation Master Plan which will guide investments for all modes of transportation and all facilities. We believe this will be the best way to mitigate the impacts of increasing trip demand and preserve mobility for all modes over the long term.

We respectfully ask Council to defer action on additional downtown rapid build bicycle facility refinements, retain control over further bicycle-only facility implementation, base decisions on the best available data, and explore alternatives that will have the least impact upon transit operations, general mobility, and congestion relief.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Fain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "F".

Joe Fain
President & CEO