



King County

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March 1, 2010

Erica Karlovits, Co-Chair
Chas Redmond, Co-Chair
Southwest District Council
4205 SW Alaska Street
Seattle, WA 98116

Dear Ms. Karlovits and Mr. Redmond:

Thank you for your letter in which you requested King County Metro to reconsider the planned RapidRide C Line routing through the Triangle area of West Seattle, bounded by Fauntleroy Way SW, SW Alaska Street, and 35th Avenue SW.

I share your objective of creating public transit investments that ensure the Triangle area reaches its fullest potential. During the first phase of planning for the C Line in 2007-2008, Metro staff recognized that the Triangle area was going to become an important new development node in the West Seattle Community. As a result, the alignment of the C Line through the Triangle area was the subject of specific analysis and scrutiny by both staff and the West Seattle RapidRide Advisory Panel.

Staff analyzed two routing options in the Triangle area, one via Fauntleroy Way SW and the other via SW Alaska Street and 35th Avenue SW. The final recommendation of both the staff and the advisory panel was the Alaska/35th alignment for the following reasons:

1. Better operating conditions and sites for RapidRide stops on SW Alaska Street and 35th Avenue SW

Locating a pair of stops close to Fauntleroy Way SW and SW Avalon Way was found to be difficult due to street configuration, existing land uses, driveway locations and traffic volume. Fauntleroy operation would commit RapidRide to operating via the congested Fauntleroy corridor to and from the West Seattle Bridge.

The Fauntleroy option would bypass the second most significant transfer point in West Seattle other than Alaska Junction, that being 35th Avenue SW and SW Avalon Way. The closest possible substitute location under the Fauntleroy option would be the northbound far side of SW Avalon Way (adjacent to Starbucks) and southbound at

the far side of SW Genesee Street (adjacent to the landscaped triangular island between Genesee and 36th Avenue SW). Both stops would have significant impacts on traffic flow on Fauntleroy and require approval by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). A northbound bus zone would regularly block one of two travel lanes leading to the West Seattle Bridge when a C Line bus stopped there. A southbound bus zone could leave two through lanes on Fauntleroy, but C Line buses might have difficulty reentering the traffic flow. Because the location of both zones is north of SW Avalon Way, the C Line would have to operate on the congested Fauntleroy corridor to and from the West Seattle Bridge and would not be able to serve SW Avalon Way. The C Line would be subject to delays due to traffic congestion on the Fauntleroy viaduct, particularly during peak periods.

2. Long walking distances for riders making connections between a Fauntleroy Way RapidRide alignment and other routes

Even the most optimistic siting of RapidRide bus stops on Fauntleroy would introduce long walking distances for riders desiring to make connections between the C Line and other routes. Connecting riders would have to walk 800 feet for connections between the C Line and other routes serving the stops at 35th and Avalon. This is an inconvenient distance for making transfers. If the Fauntleroy stops proved to be infeasible, the only other potential location would be at Fauntleroy and SW Oregon Street, even farther from 35th and Avalon, along a pedestrian path that would require significant improvements. In contrast, the Alaska/35th option offers the potential for transfers to other West Seattle routes and convenient walking distances for other transfers by crossing 35th.

In addition, the ability for pedestrians to reach developments in the Triangle area would be hindered by the lack of safe crossing points across busy Fauntleroy Avenue for southbound riders.

3. Insufficient width on Fauntleroy Way for bus-only lanes

The width of Fauntleroy Way SW is insufficient for bus-only lanes, whereas bus-only lanes are feasible on portions of SW Alaska Street, 35th Avenue SW, and SW Avalon Way. Routing the C Line by way of SW Alaska Street and 35th Avenue SW is thought to be a more reliable path due to the potential to establish bus-only lanes on portions of these streets.

4. Better RapidRide stop spacing via SW Alaska Street and 35th Avenue SW

The potential RapidRide station and stop spacing under the Alaska/35th alternative would be more consistent with the RapidRide design objective of one-quarter to one-

half mile spacing. An additional RapidRide stop has been included on SW Alaska Street at Fauntleroy, which should provide excellent access to the Triangle redevelopment and the surrounding area.

Metro staff met with the West Seattle RapidRide Advisory Panel members between October 2007 and March 2008 to discuss the Triangle routing options along with other routing and station/stop issues. Public outreach activities occurred between January and March 2008, and included:

- A brochure and questionnaire distributed by mail to 12,000 households within one-quarter mile of the RapidRide corridor, which was also posted on Metro Online.
- Two public open houses and one information table in January-February 2008; a February public meeting was added for the Westwood Village area to obtain public comments on the option for extension of RapidRide to Westwood Village.
- A very good return rate on questionnaires, with over 8% returned; approximately 50 people attend the open houses and stopped by the information table.
- Nine presentations by staff between January and March 2008 to business and community organizations.

The considerations I have summarized above, along with the results of the public outreach process, were the drivers for C Line routing in the Triangle area, not the past assumptions of the former Monorail project. The C Line will enhance and improve an existing major transit corridor along a path with the greatest potential for transit priority measures, while preserving opportunities for making connections with the rest of the West Seattle transit network.

A significant investment has already been made in the adopted alignment. Upgrades to the fiber communications infrastructure and existing traffic signal cabinets will be complete this spring. In addition, preliminary design and outreach with adjacent property owners for roadway modifications benefitting transit has been completed by SDOT, and Metro has completed federal environmental requirements associated with the receipt of grant funding for the adopted alignment.

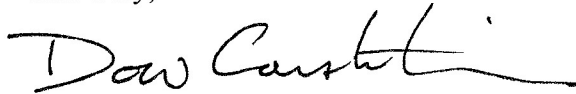
Although interest has been expressed in a West Seattle light rail line, no planning, environmental analysis or engineering work has been done, and no public decision has been made to proceed with such a project. The C Line was part of the Transit Now program approved by voters in November 2006. King County Metro, along with SDOT, is moving forward with a final facility and system design to implement the full package of RapidRide improvements by fall 2012. Development plans in the Triangle area, along with the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement project, argue strongly in favor of Metro proceeding with the C Line alignment as approved by the Council.

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In summary, the planned C line route reaches more people and creates better connections than the Fauntleroy alternative. While under optimal conditions the proposed Fauntleroy route could potentially be faster by a minute or so, actual traffic conditions during rush hours could make the Rapid Ride line less reliable.

Thank you for sharing your concerns about the RapidRide routing in the Triangle area. I do appreciate the thoughtful participation of Mr. Redmond on the West Seattle RapidRide Advisory Panel. The C Line represents an exciting opportunity to improve the quality of public transit in West Seattle, and I look forward to working with the Southwest District Council to make RapidRide a reality in the near future. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact my Transportation Policy Advisor, Chris Arkills, at 263-9648.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dow Constantine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn, City of Seattle
Seattle City Councilmembers
Diane Sugimura, Seattle Department of Planning and Development
Harold S. Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development, Transit Division, DOT