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Kim Nguyen, MSW

July 27, 2011

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Dear Council President Conlin and Seattle City Councilmembers:

OCA-Greater Seattle, an advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans, is deeply concerned about and rejects the proposed street car rail lines on 8th Avenue South.

These street car rail lines CANNOT and should NOT run along 8th Avenue South between So Jackson Street and Dearborn Ave. Safe and usable access to this neighborhood is vital for our residents, businesses, service providers, and visitors. Your decision puts hundreds of children, elderly, and people with disabilities - who are the most vulnerable members of our community - at risk every day by creating a barrier to an already busy neighborhood.

Although you say that such a system has worked in other cities, this is not to say it will work in this neighborhood. 8th Avenue South is one of the critical pathways in the International District where residents and visitors - many who are not fully-able bodied and who need additional assistance (young or old) more so than the typical person to move about - seek necessary social and health services. How will those in wheelchairs - whom we see daily - go about their business with these lines in the way? It is already difficult for them - as is - to navigate their way around; why pose this barrier?

8th Avenue South is also home to many family-owned businesses who rely on the smooth flow of pedestrian and vehicle traffic to simply maintain their livelihood, given the economy we are in.

And parking is already a prime commodity in this neighborhood; the rail lines wouldn't make parking any easier, and especially for those who must park as close as possible to their place of business.

We urge you to identify a new route to the Charles Street maintenance facility that does not unnecessarily compromise the public safety of our community. Whatever this new route is, you owe it to us to engage with us proactively in the conversation and in the impact of this decision. Unless you yourself spend some quality time in this neighborhood, you won't fully understand the hardships you are imposing on those who live, work, and do business here. On top of that, imagine if you are older or have a disability that prevents you from getting around and seeking services along 8th Avenue South, only to be limited by these rail lines that do not add any positive or safe value.

Thank you,

Kim Nguyen  
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President, Board of Directors  
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