Dear Mayor Durkan:

Thank you for your prompt response to our letter. We appreciate your willingness to engage with the MASS Coalition and delve into the details of the proposed budget. The significant increases in funding for new sidewalks, curb ramps, pedestrian lighting, and sidewalk repair are welcome changes that we hope to see continued in future budgets. We applaud your commitment to continuing Seattle’s transportation equity work, and we also appreciate the city's efforts to accelerate Sound Transit 3.

At the same time, we remain laser-focused on what can be done to improve our transportation system in the next three years, and we remain concerned about the course we are on. We note that much of the “additional” funding in this budget comprises unspent Move Seattle levy funds needed to catch up on previously delayed projects. We urge implementation and follow-through on the projects we’ve identified in our initial letter, coupled with design for the next two to three years of walking, biking, and transit networks. Our city is in urgent need of leadership to create a truly multimodal and sustainable transportation system.

We agree that people need more and better options to get around downtown. As our region grows and the need to reduce carbon emissions becomes even more acute, we must prioritize high-efficiency modes of transportation through downtown, namely public transit, biking, and walking. We support your work to study congestion pricing, and to move forward with implementation of an equitable pricing mechanism. However, as you have also stated, congestion pricing is unlikely to begin quickly enough to address the “period of maximum constraint.”

In the meantime, transportation-related emissions continue to rise in the Puget Sound region, increasing their lead as our number one source of carbon emissions. Dramatic steps are needed to reduce Seattle’s reliance on fossil fuel transportation now. This is all the more important because the success of any congestion pricing plan will depend on making public transit, biking, and walking highly convenient so that people have realistic alternatives to driving.

We appreciate the pledge to use Seattle Transportation Benefit District funds for spot improvement work on Routes 7, 40, 44, and 48 ahead of RapidRide treatment. However, we think the urgency of the “period of maximum constraint” demands that we paint bus lanes in the next two years rather than waiting for RapidRide. Spot improvements are unlikely to be enough for these crucial high-volume bus routes.

Some of our asks were not clearly addressed in your letter, and we’d welcome clarification:

1. We appreciated the swift action following a serious injury collision at the Rainier Avenue and Henderson Street intersection, but Rainier Avenue South is still Seattle’s most dangerous street — by far. Rainier Avenue South cuts through the heart of the Rainier
Valley endangering residents, dividing communities, and leading to a disproportionate impact of traffic collisions and fatalities for people of color. Will your administration prioritize completing the Rainier Avenue South Safety Corridor in 2019 or will it be delayed by a year for the fourth year in a row due to lack of staff time for design?

2. Why are we waiting to extend 3rd Avenue bus only lanes to Denny Way? What can a performance report tell us to make us think this is a bad idea?

3. Given that voters approved meaningful bicycle connectivity as part of the Move Seattle levy, will you commit to completing the Basic Bike Network on the timeline passed unanimously by the City Council?

4. What is the timeframe for the Eastlake protected bike lanes? How will you ensure that the project stays on track for completion by 2021 at the latest?

5. Will you pledge to restart the streetcar project? When can we expect the release of the engineering report on which you are waiting?

6. Is it your office’s position that North Downtown/Seattle Center bicycling connections are funded and expected to be ready before the new arena opens in 2020?

7. Given the 100% design and secured funding for the Burke-Gilman Trail, the intensive Missing Link stakeholder process in the Design Advisory Committee, and court rulings in favor of the preferred alignment on Shilshole, what is the basis for not building it to completion in 2019?

8. Will we provide funding to formalize or create transition plans for any of the Pavement to Parks projects?

While we do not support and have very serious concerns regarding the City’s investment in adaptive signals, we would welcome a response to some of our specific questions and concerns:

- Why prioritize investment in adaptive signals when in practice they have not prioritized people walking, biking, and in transit?
- Will we turn on new adaptive signals without the ability to measure delays to people walking, biking, and riding transit?
- How do we measure the people who give up on walking and biking because intersections are unsafe and require lengthy delays in the name of single occupancy vehicle throughput?
- The public needs more information about what the adaptive signal “pedestrian surge” test project entails. Innovation is important but so is transparency.
- We cannot require people biking to download an app onto a phone (that they may not have) just to get a green light. Any solution must be both equitable and accessible.
- Continuing to require the use of “beg buttons” and trying to slice pedestrian times to a bare minimum only increases the risk that people will ignore signals and cross unsafely.

We see the modest incremental shifts in this budget as inadequate to the city’s mandate to equitably and efficiently provide residents options to get where we are going with minimal reliance on cars. The looming “period of maximum constraint,” the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions, and the city’s commitment to safety as embodied in Vision Zero, all point to the need for bold investments in pedestrian safety, reliable and frequent transit, and a full network of protected bike
lanes. We need strong leadership to guide Seattle though this transition. We look forward to continued productive dialogue.

Sincerely,

Move All Seattle Sustainably:

350 Seattle
500 Women Scientists Seattle
Cascade Bicycle Club
Seattle Neighborhood Greenways
Seattle Subway
Seattle Transit Blog
Sierra Club Seattle Group
The Urbanist
Transit Riders Union