



Climate and Mobility Advocates Oppose Pedersen VLF Amendment Erasing \$80 Million in Safe Streets Funding.

The [Move All Seattle Sustainably](#) (MASS) Coalition urges the Seattle City Council to follow the outreach process it mandated when passing a \$20 vehicle license fee (VLF) in November 2020. The Seattle Department of Transportation engaged stakeholders and struck a careful balance in its [spending proposal](#) that incorporated the City's stated priorities of safety, climate action, mobility justice, and equity. SDOT's proposal would invest 73% of the VLF on walking, rolling, and biking, while spending 24% on bridge maintenance.

Pedersen's [amendment](#) to CB 120042 does the opposite, flipping the spending priorities. Instead of valuing input from the City's modal boards and equity stakeholders, it bends the investments to his own preconceived vision — the same one he pushed for five months ago — erasing weeks of work with those groups and devaluing their time. The transportation chair overwriting and inverting that vetted plan does not honor that process, it subverts it.

Bonding is a big decision that would lock up these VLF proceeds for 20 years and add \$40 million in financing costs, but instead of including the idea in the outreach phase, Pedersen waited until afterward to reveal the scheme. If the City of Seattle is going to ask people to donate their time to a stakeholder process, they should intend to follow through with that feedback rather than discard it almost immediately. If the City means to do right by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and the equity stakeholders it engaged, the days of checking a box during outreach and proceeding with whatever the councilmembers wanted to do beforehand has to be over.

"I am an enrolled Tribal member of Tlingit Nation/Raven Clan and active member of the Transportation Equity Workgroup (TEW) with SDOT. The City Council asked SDOT to engage with the community regarding the VLF. We voted on multiple aspects of the transportation spending plan while centering 'equity' on all the financial decisions because of historical racism, displacement of BIPOC folx. For City Council members to agree with their amendment to utilize 75% for bridges, prior to the public hearing, undercuts all of our 'equity' work, time, and effort," said Ellany Kayce (not an official member of MASS).

"As [the Seattle Times reported](#) in January 'The latest numbers show once again Seattle is not making significant progress toward reaching Vision Zero, its stated goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030.' This is not acceptable. We must make it safe to walk, bike, and roll to bus stops, business districts, schools, parks, homes, work, and other community destinations. The best way to make meaningful progress towards keeping people safe is to



increase funding for the data driven and evidence based Vision Zero program” Gordon Padelford from [Seattle Neighborhood Greenways](#) said.

“We have such a tremendous backlog of streets without curb ramps, with cracked and inaccessible sidewalks, or without sidewalks at all, especially in historically redlined parts of Seattle. This leaves old people who can no longer drive, youth, disabled people and people who can't afford cars/rely on transit without the critical connections we need to get around our neighborhoods or to the nearest bus stop. Just last week we were in Delridge filming Tanisha Sepulevda, who cannot get to the nearest bus stop on 16th and Holden without rolling down Holden street, in traffic, because of missing curb ramps and inaccessible sidewalks. She used to live downtown, but needed to move somewhere more affordable. And unfortunately, the more affordable areas of our city often lack accessible pedestrian infrastructure,” said Anna Zivarts, executive director of the [Disability Mobility Initiative](#) at Disability Rights Washington.

“We find it deeply troubling that on the eve of Earth Day, Council is proposing cutting \$80 million in multimodal funding. These are the transportation dollars that we need to reduce climate-destroying transportation emissions. Transportation accounts for 45% of our climate pollution in Washington State; infrastructure for low or no-carbon mobility like biking and walking is crucial to a healthy climate future, and makes our city a better place to live now. This is particularly true for the 1 in 4 residents who don't drive. We support the original SDOT proposal that invests 75% in walking, biking, and transit projects and 25% in bridge repair. Councilmember Pedersen's proposal to invert these investments is the opposite of what we need,” said Ingrid Elliott, from [350 Seattle](#), a climate justice organization.

“As we work to create a better Seattle, we must invest in transportation projects that improve equity and safety, and advance our climate goals. Our city's underserved communities are asking for and deserve better bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure. We are failing on our Vision Zero goals, and we saw this real life impact with three tragic recent deaths in Georgetown, Lake City, and Seward Park. It is not safe to bike and walk in many Seattle neighborhoods, and that's not right. We cannot afford to backtrack on investments that advance racial equity, Vision Zero goals, and help us solve the climate crisis. Investing in active transportation, community identified projects, and meaningful neighborhood improvements must be prioritized in our funding and development plans,” said Tamar Shuhendler of [Cascade Bicycle Club](#).

“Active transportation projects like bike lanes create more jobs per project dollar than roads and bridges. As we emerge from the pandemic, we can create good union jobs *and* reduce carbon emissions by investing in infrastructure that makes it easier for people to walk, roll, bike and ride transit,” said Katie Wilson, general secretary of the [Transit Riders Union](#).

“The West Seattle Bridge is a 37-year-old bridge. It's failure was a result of a bad design and a likely construction defect, not a lack of maintenance funding. If councilmembers want to address



the billion-dollar-plus bridge maintenance backlog, it's going to take a lot more than \$75 million. I encourage them to come forward with a real funding proposal not a bonding scheme swiping safe streets funding. The \$80 million cut from safe streets and sidewalk projects could make a huge difference, more equitably distribute benefits, and create more jobs in the process. Let's stick with SDOT's vetted plan," said Doug Trumm, executive director of [The Urbanist](#).

"It is critical that the City Council allocate \$3 million of VLF funds to complete updates of the transportation master plan. Without doing this work, we will lack a coherent and cohesive direction for future expansions. Without a Seattle light rail vision, there will be a downtown light rail tunnel that could help connect many Seattle neighborhoods but won't. Without a citywide light rail plan and local champions, the ST3 tunnel downtown will lack the futureproofing necessary to add access to key future light rail corridors including Aurora, Route 8, and Madison," said Jonathan Hopkins, executive director of [Seattle Subway](#).

"The SDOT plan reflects both the feedback that was given as part of their outreach process and aligns with the city's values as embodied in adopted policies such as the Climate Action Plan, Vision Zero, the Bicycle, Transit, and Pedestrian Master Plans and the Race and Social Justice Initiative. The Pedersen amendment will ignore public feedback and waste a whopping \$40 million dollars on interest payments. The council should not ignore the work of stakeholders and accept the spend plan as proposed by SDOT which will support the health and safety of Seattle residents, reflect our climate commitments, provide jobs in our community, and help fulfill unfunded Levy and Bicycle Master Plan commitments that council has made," said Patrick Taylor, co-chair of the [Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board](#) and their representative on the Levy Oversight Committee (speaking as an individual).