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City of Seattle  
PO Box 34025  
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Dear Seattle City Councilmembers:

Feet First endorses the Mayor's proposed reconfiguration of West Nickerson Street to three lanes of traffic, with improved pedestrian crossings at three locations.

We have examined the existing conditions along this corridor, and have identified several safety concerns. The western end of the roadway around 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue West and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue West is particularly troublesome. The broad sweeping curve approaching 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West has poor sight distance, creating a serious safety hazard for people trying to cross. This hazard is compounded by the fact that there is no sidewalk along the south side of West Nickerson Street between 1000 and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. As a result, people living in the apartments and condos along this side of Nickerson east of 1000 wanting to walk westward must cross Nickerson twice, including once at the dangerous western end of the roadway. There are also a pair of transit stops at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue West and 8th Avenue West that lack adequate crossings for people trying to access the bus.

Reconfiguration of West Nickerson Street to three lanes will make it much easier and safer for people to cross this street. On four-lane arterials a driver stopping to allow a pedestrian to cross blocks visibility for the driver in the adjacent lane, who might not see the pedestrian. This is a very dangerous situation that is significantly improved by conversion to a three-lane arterial. In addition, at unsignalized crossings pedestrians must find a gap in the traffic through which to cross, which can be difficult on four-lane arterials as pedestrians must wait for gaps in both directions. On a three-lane arterial pedestrians can cross each half of the road separately, using the center turn lane as refuge.

The addition of full refuge islands would improve safety even further. Therefore, we recommend the addition of temporary refuge islands at applicable locations built with extruded curbing; to be replaced by more durable concrete islands should Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) elect to make the lane reconfiguration permanent at some later date. We also encourage SDOT and King County Metro to work together in order to optimize bus stop spacing and location, and to monitor transit flow

after the reconfiguration.

The record of four-to-three lane configurations elsewhere confirms that pedestrian safety is improved. Pedestrian accidents along Stone Way North declined from five in the two years prior to conversion to only one during the two-year period afterwards. These pedestrian safety benefits have been found at other locations as well. For example, pedestrian collisions along Fourth Plain Boulevard in Vancouver, Washington declined from six in the three years prior to conversion to none in the two years following.

Beyond these safety benefits for pedestrians, four-to-three lane conversions also improve safety for motorized vehicles due to the reduction of conflict points, and improved visibility for crossing and turning vehicles. For example, at nine conversion locations around Seattle aggregate crash rates declined by 34 percent.

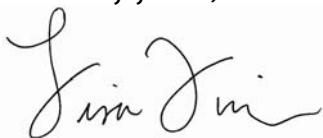
Feet First understands transportation decisions must balance the needs of all users. There are many locations where traffic volumes on four-lane arterials are simply too high to sustain a conversion to three lanes. However, according to SDOT engineers this is not the case on West Nickerson Street. They have studied this corridor and have made a professional determination that no significant traffic delays will result from a conversion to three lanes.

It is understandable that many critics of four-to-three lane conversions are concerned that the removal of one through lane in each direction may cause major traffic delays. However, we have never seen any technical analysis by qualified transportation professionals verifying this concern – neither for such lane conversions in general or for the West Nickerson Street proposal in particular. If such analysis exists, it is incumbent upon critics of the West Nickerson Street proposal to produce this evidence so that the city council can weigh it against SDOT's analysis supporting it. However, if such evidence is not forthcoming, we see no valid reason for the City Council to prevent implementation of the West Nickerson Street proposal. Even in the unlikely event that SDOT engineers are mistaken and that this proposal causes major transportation problems along the West Nickerson Street corridor, it would be a fairly simple matter to return the corridor to four lanes.

The recently enacted Pedestrian Master Plan enunciates the goal of making Seattle the most walkable city in the nation. This is a very laudable ambition, but as the saying goes actions speak louder than words. Feet First looks upon the City Council's decision regarding the Nickerson Street lane conversion as a test of how serious they truly are about improving the pedestrian environment in Seattle. This is a decision that should be based on sound technical analysis prepared by qualified professionals. All the evidence we have seen to date demonstrates that the proposed conversion of West Nickerson Street to three lanes will provide a safer facility with no significant deterioration of traffic conditions. Therefore, we call upon the City Council to support this proposal.

Should you have any questions, please contact me by calling 206-652-2310 or emailing [lisa@feetfirst.info](mailto:lisa@feetfirst.info)

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Quinn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Quinn" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Quinn  
Executive Director