

Dear Councilmember Rasmussen:

Thank you for reviewing the proposed Nickerson road diet. The MIC asks the Transportation Committee and the City Council to work with the Mayor to return the Nickerson proposal to the planning process for the Alaskan Way Viaduct to assess how Nickerson will function as a designated Major Truck Street in relationship to the deep bore tunnel and other changes restricting truck access to northwest Seattle and the regional Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Center (BINMIC).

The Nickerson rechanneling proposal was indefinitely suspended by the city in April 2009. (Letters attached).

At that time the city made a commitment to communities in northwest Seattle, the Washington State Department of Transportation, members of the State Legislature and the MIC that Nickerson would be reviewed as part of a comprehensive effort to identify and address access issues created by the deep bore tunnel proposal to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

This planning effort is not complete and freight challenges for northwest Seattle and BINMIC continue to grow.

Since the Nickerson proposal was suspended, new plans have come forward that will further restrict truck access to northwest Seattle and BINMIC. These include the plan to close Broad Street, which will terminate the Broad-to-Denny truck route through the north end of downtown; the introduction of large volumes of cruise ship passenger traffic along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue destined for Interbay, and new uncertainty about the city's commitment to freight aspects of the two-way Mercer project.

These new developments amplify our original concerns about a "road diet" for Nickerson. These concerns include Nickerson's role as a regional connector linking Interstate 5 and BINMIC, increased congestion and travel times in the Westlake-Nickerson truck route, new delays for bus operations on Nickerson, impacts of drawbridge openings near either end of the subject section of Nickerson, and less safe access for large trucks serving the heavy industrial companies between Nickerson and the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

We also continue to hold the policy concerns we addressed in our letter to the Mayor and the City Council on May 19.

BINMIC was designated a regional industrial job center through the Washington State Growth Management Act, the Countywide Planning Policies of King County and the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

The city acts in a regional stewardship role when it makes local government decisions that impact the continued viability of BINMIC and the value of regional industrial infrastructure such as the Lake Washington Ship Canal, Fishermen's Terminal and the deep water port facilities at the south end of Interbay.

City decisions regarding street use on Nickerson must also be made under the policy requirements of the City of Seattle Complete Streets ordinance. In our view, Nickerson issues should also be decided in consultation with the Seattle Freight Mobility Advisory Committee and the Alaskan Way Viaduct Stakeholders. Complete Streets requirements were not followed in the Walk Bike Ride (WBR) initiative that was the basis for bringing the Nickerson road diet forward at this time. The decision was also not discussed with the Seattle Freight Mobility Advisory Committee or the Alaskan Way Viaduct Stakeholders.

The WBR report makes clear the Nickerson decision was made in the belief it would be "Good for Bicycles," "Good for Pedestrians" and "Good for Safety" with no analysis regarding Nickerson's role as a key truck route that connects BINMIC with Interstate 5.

We share concerns about safety on Nickerson and believe they should be addressed through police enforcement of the posted speed limit, improved signage to remind pedestrians to look both ways before crossing a busy road, completion of the Ship Canal bike path one block north of Nickerson and an education effort aimed at students from Seattle Pacific University who appear to dominate foot traffic along Nickerson.

The concept of "trying" the road diet as an experiment is not sound. Once this type of gentrification takes place, it is often impossible to reverse. It is also not clear what standards would be used to judge the success or failure of the experiment. How would accidents be gauged? Would property damage accidents be graded differently than those involving injuries? Would fatal accidents count for more than non fatal injury accidents? How would job or business impacts be taken into account? What kind of liability would the city acquire for accidents that lawyers might attempt to link to the experiment?

MIC staff recently attended a community engagement event for the Walk Bike Ride initiative. The event demonstrated the high value of the initiative and produced thought provoking discussions about rising obesity rates, the declining health of young people, the shrinking role of Physical Education classes in our schools, the growing numbers of children who do not walk to or home from school, and the roles that walking and bicycling can play in addressing all those issues. Not one panelist or audience member mentioned freight mobility, economics or Nickerson.

Including Nickerson in WBR creates controversy where there should be none. Nickerson belongs in the viaduct planning process, not Walk Bike Ride.

Sincerely,

John Odland, Chair  
Manufacturing Industrial Council