



King County

Reagan Dunn

Councilmember, District 9

Metropolitan King County Council

October 4, 2012

Honorable Mike McGinn
Office of the Mayor
PO Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124

Honorable Dow Constantine
King County Executive
401 5th Avenue Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

Honorable Mayor McGinn and Executive Constantine:

As you are aware, the 39-year old Downtown Seattle Ride Free Area has come to an end. This valuable service has over the years greatly supported the mobility of residents, workers and businesses, as well as its role in acting as a safety net of health and human services in our region.

Time and time again, we at the County Council have heard public comment about the importance of the Ride Free Area and many have suggested that cutting this service would do more harm than good. In 2010, there were over 8 million boarding's within the Ride Free Area. Low-income and homeless people depend on this service for their basic survival. It is also true that through our collective public investment, many of our region's health and human service providers have made major business decisions to locate proximate to this mobility zone.

But the value of the Ride Free Area may well go beyond its aid to health and human services. I believe we must fully understand how the economic impacts of cutting this service will impact businesses and workers in the Ride Free Area. Those businesses, their employees, and customers are likely to face financial loss due to the cancellation of this service at a time when neither the City nor our business owners can afford it. Economic activity during these challenging times is of vital importance, and cutting a service that brings consumers and employees to and from local businesses maybe the wrong course of action over the long term.

In part, the Ride Free Area began to boost tourism and encourage lunchtime trips by downtown workers. With the exceptional growth in tourism and thousands of new tourists from the burgeoning Cruise Ship industry roaming our streets we should do everything we can to provide an easy means for them to spend their money freely. What impacts will this have on workers shopping on their lunch

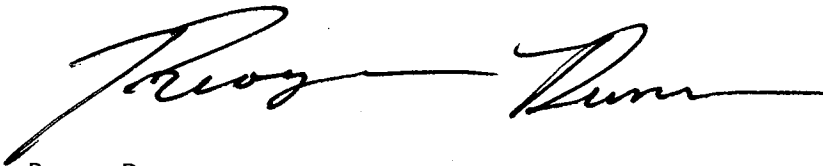
hour? Will businesses see a decline in sales as tourists think twice about their sightseeing and shopping trips around the downtown area? What will the impacts of delayed service in the downtown area have on thousands of workers who use and depend on this service daily not to mention the impacts to businesses themselves as workers mobility within the area will be altered?

While this program was a city of Seattle initiative for much of the last four decades, it has become a program of regional value. Businesses in the Ride Free Areas count on the economic benefit this service has helped to provide and bolster. Simply ending this service with no alternative could conceivably lead to adverse effects on the downtown economy and the city of Seattle as a whole. I fear the overall economic costs to those that benefit now from the Ride Free Area may greatly outweigh the savings.

As such, I call on both of you in your capacity as Mayor and the County Executive, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce to conduct an economic analysis of the elimination of the Ride Free Area so we can fully understand what effects it will have on the local economy. If the findings suggest the elimination of the Ride Free Area grossly outweighs the increased revenue Metro expects to collect then I believe the City and County should convene a joint committee to re-examine its elimination

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and thank you for all you do for our city and our region.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reagan Dunn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reagan Dunn
King County Councilmember – District Nine

cc: Julie McCoy
Joe Woods
Maud Daudon