



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 6
COUNCILMEMBER DAN STRAUSS

EMBARGOED UNTIL 3/10/23 @ 2:00 pm

March 10, 2023

Councilmember Dan Strauss
600 4th Avenue S
Seattle, WA 98124

Mayor Bruce Harrell
Director Greg Spotts
600 4th Avenue S
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Mayor Bruce Harrell and Director Greg Spotts,

I write you today with my formal request for SDOT to conduct meaningful outreach, and plan and design a route to complete the Missing Link of the Burke-Gilman Trail through Ballard along NW Market Street, NW Leary Avenue, and 17th Avenue NW. I want to see the Missing Link completed as soon as possible, and I believe we can accomplish this fastest by routing the trail NW Market Street, NW Leary Avenue, and 17th Avenue NW.

My request is specifically to have the same level of design completed along this route as is currently completed on the Shilshole Avenue NW Alternative. It is important for the community to have a direct apples-to-apples comparison between the two alternatives to provide educated feedback and input regarding the trail placement through the densest community the Burke-Gilman Trail serves. For the first step in this process, I am asking SDOT to complete a feasibility study of the NW Market Street, NW Leary Avenue, and 17th Avenue NW route. This feasibility study should reach 30% design at a minimum. I include base-guidelines regarding width, placement, intersection design, and place-based considerations that I believe need to be included for this proposal to be successful in connecting the 'Missing Link'. I'm asking for this feasibility study to be completed as quickly as possible, and within 6 months.

Over the last 29 years there has been incremental success in completing the Missing Link. In 1996 the trail ended at 8th Avenue NW, in 2001 the trail ended at 11th Avenue, in 2002 the trail extended from the Ballard Locks to 60th Street NW, in 2008 the trail extended to Golden Gardens, and in 2020 the trail extended from the Ballard Locks to 24th Avenue NW. During these 29 years, the City has been engaged in litigation regarding the 1.2 miles of trail that is left unbuilt, and there are no further opportunities to piecemeal closing this gap. By developing this route, we have an opportunity to officially complete the trail and conclude the ongoing litigation.

Over the last 29 years Ballard has changed incredibly, from a quiet maritime community to one of the densest neighborhoods in Seattle with the characteristics to be designated a Regional Urban Growth Center. Currently in Seattle only Northgate, South Lake Union, Capitol Hill, Uptown, and Downtown are Regional Urban Centers. In the 1990s industrial businesses were active throughout Ballard along Leary Avenue, Ballard Avenue, and Shilshole Avenue, with some commercial businesses as well. Today, commercial businesses make up the majority of both Leary Avenue and Ballard Avenue, with Shilshole Avenue remaining almost entirely industrial.

By building the trail along Market Street in 2020 between the Ballard Locks and 24th Avenue NW, we have seen the positive contribution the trail provides commercial businesses. Prior to building this improvement, the street was hard to access for everyone walking, biking, or driving which meant businesses experienced mixed success. Now with the trail, it is a bustling commercial corridor used by families, people learning to ride and long-distance riders, people running and walking, and more people than ever using this stretch of roadway.

As Ballard becomes denser we cannot afford to miss the opportunity to connect this multi-use path with the commercial and residential core of Ballard. The connection for downtown Ballard residents to the beach, or points eastward cannot be overlooked, along with the economic benefit that comes with it. When New York City studied the impact of multi-modal trails similar to the Burke-Gilman Trail, the positive contributions of the trail facility to commercial businesses was high. The evaluation found, *“These results provide convincing evidence that improved accessibility and a more welcoming street environment created by these projects generate increases in retail sales in the project areas.”*¹

Shilshole Avenue NW is a dynamic street that needs improvements because it supports a wide variety of different uses at different times of day. During the daytime the street has heavy industrial uses and at nighttime supports the night-life industry on Ballard Avenue. We need to make improvements on Shilshole Avenue NW to create a safe environment for industrial uses, freight, night-life activity, and people walking, running, biking, and driving.

To ensure we have a safe connected route for people to ride, run, and roll I share these baseline standards as guidance for the design. I know there are pinch points within this route, meaning we must be creative and flexible in how we design the trail to meet these standards. With that understanding, I am asking that SDOT meet these specific considerations to the best of their ability. These are base-guidelines I believe need to be included in the Market Street, Leary Avenue, and 17th Avenue Missing Link connection:

Route

- East/West on Market Street between 24th Avenue NW and NW Leary Avenue
- Northwest/Southeast along Leary Avenue between NW Market Street and 17th Avenue NW
- North/South on 17th Avenue NW between NW Leary Avenue and Shilshole Avenue NW
- Reconnecting with currently planned route along NW 46th Street east of 17th Avenue NW
- Refer to Appendix 1 for map of this route

Width

The trail should mirror the currently built section of trail along NW Market Street between 24th Avenue NW and the Ballard Locks using base considerations of:

- 5-foot buffer
- 12-foot multi-use path
- 10–11-foot sidewalk and intermittent buffer
- Refer to Appendix 2 for visual representation

¹ Department of Transportation, & Bennett Midland, LLC, The Economic Benefits of Sustainable Streets (2013). NYCDOT. Retrieved 2023, from <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/dot-economic-benefits-of-sustainable-streets.pdf>.

Intersections

The crossing of all intersections in this corridor *should* use raised crosswalks, meaning the trail level remains consistent across the intersection while allowing for cars and trucks to cross the trail. It is critical to ensure intersections are safely crossable for both people and traffic. Three intersections *should not* have raised crosswalks are:

- 24th Avenue NW and Market Street NW (crossing NW Market Street)
- NW Dock Place and Leary Avenue NW (crossing NW Dock Place)
- 17th Avenue NW and Shilshole Avenue NW (crossing Shilshole Avenue NW)

Specific Considerations

Designing and constructing requires specific considerations:

Corridor-Wide

- Retaining space for outdoor dining where it exists and adding space for outdoor dining for businesses who do not have the space with the streets as currently designed
- Creating a clear delineation between trail and sidewalk by using different material or buffers; assessing where mingling in front of businesses may occur
- Connecting the bicycle network between bridges, greenways, bikes lanes, and the trail

NW Market Street

- Ensuring there is streamlined throughput for vehicular traffic traveling from 15th Avenue NW to The Nordic Museum and Ballard Locks
- Moving the bus stop on NW Market Street west by 200 ft to the open space at the end of Ballard Avenue NW

NW Leary Way

- Retaining the load/unload zone along Leary Avenue NW in front of Ballard Consignment
- Creating a built buffer between trail and sidewalk on Leary Avenue NW in front of the Ballard Landmark (like in front of the Nordic Museum) separating the trail from sidewalk
- Ensuring residents of the Ballard Landmark have an easy transfer from vehicles to the front door of the building, as well as ensuring freight access to the building
- Creating parking choices Ballard-wide for employees working 8-hour shifts, and customer parking for Carter Subaru and Mox Boarding House
- Creating a safe crossing of Leary Avenue NW at Ione Place NW
- Adding traffic control to 17th Avenue NW and Leary Avenue NW intersection, understanding special accommodations for traffic control on a curve

17th Avenue NW

- Re-routing 17th Ave Neighborhood Greenway from NW Dock Place back to 17th Avenue NW, crossing at Leary Avenue
- Adding traffic signal to 17th Avenue NW and Shilshole Avenue NW intersection

NW Shilshole Avenue & NW 45th Street

- Re-connecting to the proposed trail at 17th Avenue NW, traveling along Shilshole Avenue NW and NW 45th Street, to 11th Avenue NW where the trail currently ends
- Refining currently proposed trail to address loading dock issues at 4501 Shilshole Avenue NW and 4420 14th Avenue NW (loading dock is on NW 45th Street East of 14th Avenue NW)

To design this route to the same level the Shilshole Avenue NW route is currently designed, and the first step being 30% design, outreach needs to be conducted. Outreach and design work should be completed as fast as possible within a 6-month time frame, and, to the best of SDOT's ability, meet the specifics above. This outreach should be meaningful, engaging, and collaborative. I am more than willing to use my time, relationships, and resources to assist in this stakeholder outreach and design work. The specifics

contained above are a product of my initial outreach and I stand ready to assist you in any way I may be of assistance.

The request contained within this letter is much more than an 8-foot-wide trail as planned for Shilshole Avenue. This means there will likely be a funding delta between the current budget to complete the Missing Link and the total cost for the NW Market Street, NW Leary Way, 17th Ave NW connection, of the Missing Link. Should this be true, I will use every resource at my disposal to close this funding delta, and if needed, will collaborate with County, State, and Federal representatives of our district to secure the funding needed. In order to do so, I need to know the true full cost of this connection of the Missing Link. This conversation has been occurring for 29 years, and I know there is support from our legislators to see this project completed correctly.

There is no way to piecemeal or complete this final section of trail without prevailing in the lawsuits. Considering the track record over the past 29 years of litigation for this project, I am pessimistic the City will prevail any time soon. Litigation aside, we are at a turning point in Ballard with increased density, increased use of electric bikes and scooters, and a bustling community. We cannot afford to miss the opportunity to connect the Burke-Gilman Trail to our commercial and residential core which is why I ask you to study and design a route to complete the Missing Link along NW Market Street, NW Leary Avenue, and 17th Avenue NW.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and your dedication to completing this vital connection of our regional gem that is the Burke-Gilman Trail.

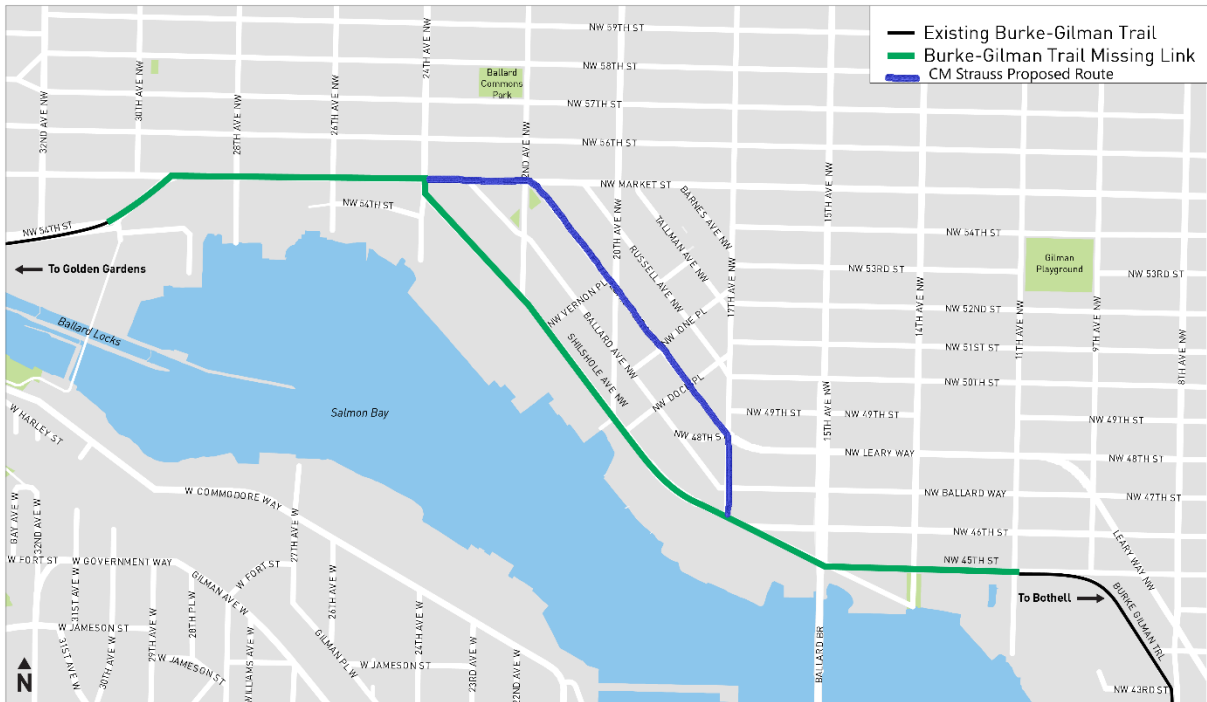
Sincerely,
Dan

Dan Strauss
City Councilmember
District 6, Seattle, WA

CC:
Executive General Manager, Adiam Emery
Adonis Ducksworth, Office of Mayor Bruce Harrell
Council President, Debora Juarez
Councilmember Alex Pedersen, Chair of Transportation Committee
Councilmember Lisa Herbold, Transportation Committee
Councilmember Tammy Morales, Transportation Committee
Councilmember Khama Sawant, Transportation Committee
Councilmember Andrew Lewis
Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
Councilmember Sara Nelson

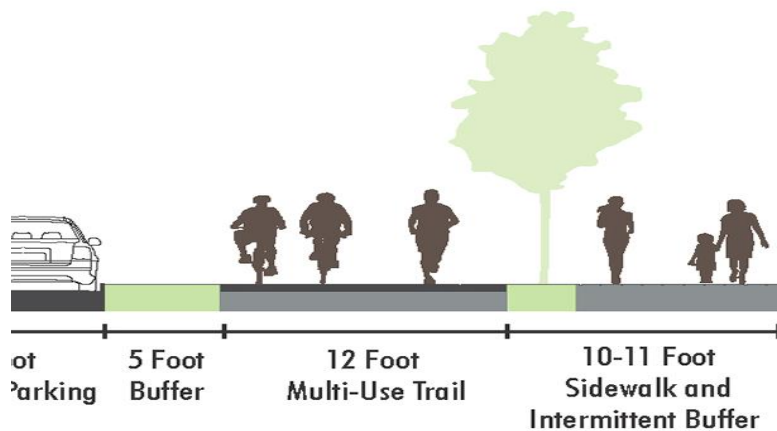
Appendix 1:

Map of proposed route along NW Market Street, Leary Avenue NW, and 17th Avenue NW



Appendix 2:

CM Strauss proposed baseline considerations for building the trail along NW Market Street, Leary Avenue NW, and 17th Avenue NW



Source: SDOT Missing Link Website; cross section of proposed infrastructure between 24th Avenue and Ballard Locks along Market Street (which has been built); <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/bike-program/bgtmissinglink>