

powered by feet first



# feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

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Feet First policies

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## Seattle Waterfront

### Policy

#### where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



### background

Seattle's Downtown Waterfront is the City of Seattle's "front porch." It is a regional asset of great importance for locals and tourists alike. The demolition of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and rebuilding of the Alaskan Way surface street and the Waterfront Seawall will dramatically change the face of the Waterfront for decades to come.

### Mission

#### who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.

### why it matters to walking

The Waterfront has the potential to be one of the most interesting places to walk in Seattle – so long as the right pieces are put in place. Providing good pedestrian connections, both east-west and north-south, is critical. Transit integration will also be important, particularly due to the fairly steep east-west slope along much of the Waterfront's connection with the Downtown core and Belltown. The Waterfront has great potential to connect Seattle neighborhoods with a level, walkable route – one that could be so much better than it is today.



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# Seattle Waterfront

Of particular interest are the plans for Alaskan Way between Yesler Way and S Jackson Street. This stretch of roadway poses some very difficult challenges for planners and engineers who have been tasked with accommodating the many travel modes that must use it. Metro transit buses will use this stretch of road to travel between West Seattle and Downtown, and most vehicles accessing the Colman Dock ferry terminal must make a left turn at the intersection with Yesler. In addition, the crosswalks in this road section provide the main pedestrian connection between Pioneer Square and the Waterfront. This connection is vital and must not be compromised.

## feet first position

Feet First is troubled by the long crossing distances planned for portions of Alaskan Way and signal timing at these crossings that may be inadequate to allow elderly and disabled members of our community to cross the street in a single light cycle. We are also concerned that excessive travel lane widths may lead to speeding that would threaten pedestrian safety. We recognize Alaskan Way is a key corridor for freight and transit, but urge that every effort be made to keep lane widths as narrow as possible.

Feet First supports Universal Design. This design framework ensures that all users of the roadway, including sight-impaired and handicapped and disabled users, must be considered when looking at design options. This goes beyond existing ADA requirements to ensure that we are designing roads for everyone.

We believe that the current design for Alaskan Way south of Yesler Way places too much emphasis on motorized

vehicle travel at the expense of pedestrians needing to cross the street. The intersection of Alaskan Way at Yesler Way lacks a crosswalk on the south leg, forcing many walkers to travel out of their way to get to their destination. In addition, the left turn lanes approaching Yesler Way from the south and feeding into the Colman Dock ferry terminal will be lengthened to extend back several blocks. This would require crossing pedestrians to traverse eight lanes of traffic. Even with the planned pedestrian refuge median, the eight-lane profile presents a harsh pedestrian environment that will discourage many people from walking to and from the Waterfront. Such pedestrian-unfriendly design should only be done in exceptional circumstances as demonstrated by a full traffic engineering analysis conducted at the environmental review phase. Right now, we are at the visioning phase, and to settle on a roadway design so bad for pedestrians is premature and unjustified.

Feet First is also concerned about interactions between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles during crossing movements across Alaskan Way. Cyclists leaving or entering the cycle track will need to cross up to eight lanes of traffic and avoid conflicts with pedestrians crossing at the intersection. Traffic engineering plans need to consider cycle-only phases, leading pedestrian phases, and other advanced techniques to cope with the different groups needing to share the same space.

Feet First has serious concerns about the high cost of the current Waterfront proposals. While we are very excited about the emphasis on walkability, we are also well aware of the enormous citywide needs for pedestrian infrastructure, per Seattle's adopted Pedestrian Master

Cover photo courtesy of flickr user RVwithTito.



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Plan (Tier 1 projects alone require \$840 million). We urge elected officials and staff to look to impact fees and a local improvement district to fund the Waterfront work as much as possible, to preserve more transportation and general fund revenue for critically-needed neighborhood-based pedestrian projects.

Feet First believes that some provision for transit on the Waterfront – be that electric trolley bus or streetcar – is critical to the success of the vision for the Waterfront’s future. As pedestrian advocates we value the role of transit as extending the range of pedestrians and allowing them to get to the Waterfront without a car. In addition, transit evokes Seattle’s history as exemplified by past transit service along this corridor.

## what feet first is doing

Feet First has been heavily involved in civic conversations about the Waterfront, including hosting two Waterfront walks, and we are current members of the Waterfront stakeholders group. Possible additional actions include blog posts and op ed pieces about Waterfront options and continuing to coordinate with other groups who are advocating for a more walkable Waterfront. Feet First has also been involved with other efforts tangentially related to the Waterfront, including state ferry system conversations about Colman Dock, the National Park Service’s Trail to Treasure effort in Pioneer Square, and the proposed Lake to Bay Loop, which would include a segment of the northern Waterfront.



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