



feet first

promoting walkable communities

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Greetings:

Feet First is a statewide nonprofit organization representing people of all ages looking for safe, accessible, and inviting ways to go by foot. Walking is a vital transportation mode that strengthens communities, reduces pollution, and promotes good health. Through our Sound Access for All program, we have been monitoring pedestrian accessibility at future Sound Transit Link light rail stations throughout the region.

This includes the future Rainier Station, which will be built within the I-90 right of way between 23rd Avenue South and Rainier Avenue South. The Rainier station will be a major transfer point for Seattle residents transferring to and from Metro routes #7, #9, and #48. Metro #4 and #8 also run close to the station. All five of these routes serve many low-income riders, who often walk to transfer. In addition, many residents of the Beacon Hill and Mount Baker communities will access the station by bike and on foot.

The current pedestrian environment in the area has significant problems. The Rainier Avenue station entrance is directly beneath I-90, making it dark and forbidding for people accessing the station on foot. In addition, station users going to and from the southbound Rainier Avenue bus stop must navigate two crosswalks across the Rainier Avenue and the eastbound freeway off ramp. Foot access to the 23rd Avenue station entrance is hindered by the lack of lighting and clear wayfinding. Finally, there is no direct access to the Mountains to Sound (MTS) Greenway running parallel to I-90.

Fortunately, in consultation with local residents, we have identified a number of low- to medium-cost improvements that would significantly improve pedestrian access to the Rainier station:

Rainier Avenue Mid-Block Crossing:

A mid-block crossing of Rainier Avenue under the I-90 overpass, directly connecting the station entrance to the southbound bus stops, should be provided. The current crossing of Rainier, just to the south of the eastbound off-ramp, is long and exposed to turning movements at the ramp. A mid-block

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crossing would provide a safer and more direct access for passengers transferring to and from the #7 and #9 southbound service.

Ramps Connecting the MTS Greenway to Rainier Avenue:

We propose two ramps to either side of Rainier Avenue, running from the MTS Greenway to the Rainier Avenue sidewalk.

On the west side of Rainier, we suggest a stairway with bicycle runnel from the greenway just before it crosses Rainier Avenue South, continuing down the south side of I-90, and connecting with the existing ADA ramps leading to the sidewalks along the west side of Rainier. This would give pedestrians and dismounted cyclists a shortcut to avoid the existing Rainier Avenue crossings.

On the east side of Rainier, we propose an ADA-compliant ramp from the MTS Greenway, running down the south side of I-90, and ending at the Rainier Avenue South sidewalks. This ramp would provide another alternative to cyclists and pedestrians to avoid having to climb up and circle back to reach the 23rd Avenue station entrance. There is significant available land between the existing greenway and the eastbound onramp. This ramp would circle down to the east side of Rainier Avenue South, providing access to the northbound bus station, avoiding the need to cross Rainier at grade, and providing easy access to the elevator entrance to the light rail station on Rainier.

Permanent Crossing of 23rd Avenue S:

We further encourage a new permanent crossing of 23rd at the future station entrance. The new signal could potentially be synchronized with the light at Massachusetts or Dearborn. We would further encourage SDOT to make this signal automatic, and not require pedestrian push-button access. Finally, please closely examine the existing signal timings at both of the current lights as well as the new light; it is our suspicion that the signal timings have waits that are too long, and cycles that are too short, for current demand and future increased usage.

23rd Avenue S Sidewalk Maintenance:

Existing sidewalks on 23rd Avenue are broken in several places, largely due to tree roots. Even with the temporary asphalt patches, these sidewalks are not easily accessible by wheelchair users. The sidewalks need to receive permanent repairs as part of the station construction process. The existing street trees along the arterial should also be assessed to determine if they are appropriate species for use along roadways and possibly replaced.

Judkins Park Pathway Connections:

The current paved walking paths traversing Judkins Park do not always follow walkers' desire lines, as evidenced by the informal foot paths worn into grass in a few places. Specifically, a paved walkway should be provided through the park directly connecting the intersection of S Judkins Street @ 21st Avenue S and Rainier Avenue. This westernmost portion of the this walkway should follow the course of muddy "goat trail" shortcut connecting the main east-west trail through the park and the paved path crossing beneath the westbound I-90 off ramp.

Lighting and Wayfinding:

Pedestrian-scale lighting should be provided throughout the station area and access routes. This includes the MTS greenway, the ramps and stairways proposed above, and the park land to the east and north of the station. This last area is particularly important, as there is currently no lighting from Rainier all the way to 23rd Avenue.

Access to the future station is not obvious from certain directions, so wayfinding signage should also be included throughout the station area. This signage should be included along Rainier Avenue and 23rd Avenue, along the MTS Greenway, and throughout the nearby parks.



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Construction Access:

Safe and convenient access must be maintained throughout the station area during construction. Access must be preserved along 23rd Avenue S for pedestrians and cyclists using the MTS trail. Available detour routes such as S Massachusetts Street are too far out of the way.

Feet First urges all involved parties to carefully examine the many problems, and work to fix them before the station reaches 100% design. Our experience has been that fixing infrastructure after it is built is far more difficult than seeing it designed the right way from the beginning. There are opportunities here for significant improvements at reasonable cost.

We propose a field survey of the station area with Sound Transit and SDOT staff where we can further discuss these proposals.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Quinn
Executive Director