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Letter of Support for CORE

February 22, 2025

RE: Re-design of Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project for State Route (SR) 522 through Lake Forest Park (LFP).

For the past several years, the Stewardship Foundation has joined with the City of LFP and others to strongly urge redesign of the section of the ST3 project within our community. We concur with the concerns and suggestions raised by Citizens to Re-think Expansion (LFP CORE) in today's press briefing. The cumulative impacts of the ST3 BRT have not been adequately addressed. The timing and overly aggressive design, combined with other area road projects, will result in severe impacts not just for LFP, but regionally.

Our city is the smallest and most heavily impacted community of the entire 4-city project. It is also the most costly segment of the project, in dollars, time to build and permanent environmental impact. The benefit of adding a continuous BAT lane are negligible when weighed against the potential impacts.

Lake Forest Park has the greatest density of native trees and vegetation to be removed within the ST3 project area: nearly 400 significant trees (approx. 5 acres of trees to be lost). The extreme tree loss will increase greenhouse and noise impacts, affect the wildlife that use this area, and significantly reduce the natural beauty of the area. As designed, there will be no room within the project corridor to re-plant those lost trees, costing valuable ecological benefits region-wide. The LFP segment creates the biggest impact on stormwater runoff with increased impervious surfaces affecting three fish streams and Lake Washington.

LFP is the only segment with a fully new bus lane, bringing traffic and noise much closer to residents, literally right into their front- and back-yards. The LFP segment has the greatest residential density, requiring partial or full seizure of over 100 private properties. The LFP segment is the only section that will require carving away a hillside and building a large retaining wall, up to 17' tall and the length of 11 football fields, transforming our city's tree-lined gateway into a wall of concrete.

LFP is a small city of involved and well-informed citizens who highly value our natural environment. LFP should be held up as an example of responsible and well-conceived stewardship; we have worked hard for decades to restore salmon streams and preserve our forest canopy. LFP is the only city in Puget Sound that has increased our urban forest canopy in the last decades.

Perhaps the most significant impacts of this project are within a 10-block section between 153rd and NE 165th St. So, doing nothing there, as LFP CORE advocates, would substantially reduce construction time, expense, and environmental impact. It would also eliminate the need for an expensive and challenging engineered crossing of the steep and potentially unstable Bscche'tla Creek ravine.

It's not too late to scale back the ST3 BRT plan for LFP. It's not too late to do the right thing, for LFP citizens, tax payers, and the environment.

Sincerely,

Kim Josund

President, Lake Forest Park Stewardship Foundation