

Veris Law Group PLLC

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **'MISSING LINK' SOLUTION UNBALANCED, UNEQUITABLE, UNACCEPTABLE FOR SAFETY AND FOR WORKERS**

*Burke Gilman Trail's \$31 million price tag represents misplaced spending priorities*

**SEATTLE, WA** – A coalition of labor, business, and community leaders long involved in the effort to complete a safe bicycle and pedestrian pathway as part of the Burke Gilman Trail are strongly opposed to Seattle Mayor Ed Murray's recent announcement that a final compromise on the Burke Gilman had been reached. The coalition is united in voicing the concerns and interests of working people and underserved communities affected by the ongoing trail debate.

"Once again, the inequitable priorities of the Mayor are reflected in how he spends public money. The City's adopted CIP budget estimates the Mayor's and Councilmember O'Brien's proposed Burke Gilman solution will cost \$31 million for 1.5 miles of recreational trail that will pass within shouting distance of large homeless encampments. Everyone wants safe passage for pedestrians and bikers throughout the city. But this multi-million-dollar project north of the ship canal is another example of the city's deliberate inattention to Seattle's real world socioeconomic imbalances," said Josh Brower, a spokesperson for the coalition and attorney with Veris Law Group. "The Mayor and Councilmember O'Brien continue to be tone deaf to Seattle's real issues and problems," continued Brower.

Consisting of business owners, labor, and community leaders, the coalition has not wavered from its position that safety, family wage jobs, and equitable distribution of SDOT funds throughout the city should be reflected in the Burke Gilman solution. Despite his announcement, the Mayor's proposal falls short in every respect. Along Shilshole Avenue, many business owners agreed that the realities of daily operations are a potentially dangerous mismatch for pedestrians and bicyclists.

"Bicycle riders should rejoice that so much care is taken to ensure safe passage through an industrial area," said Brian McGarvey, a longtime Seattle cyclist. "But at a cost of \$31 million for 1.5 miles, the missing link is still lacking meaningful resolution to some serious issues including 55 driveways along this route that are crossed by large trucks and bikes."

Several businesses headquartered in the area are opposed to the proposed route along Shilshole Avenue and agree that the touted Murray solution looks like a win for a handful of bicyclists in north Seattle on the backs of blue-collar workers and their families.

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"We really have to look at who we are as a city when a recreational trail could displace union and family-wage jobs," said Scott Anderson, owner of CSR Marine, which is located on Shilshole Avenue. "If you believe that the future of this city is the tech industry alone, then I ask you to remember that famous billboard erected during an aerospace downturn that read, '*will the last person in Seattle turn the lights out?*' The truth is, companies like mine and other maritime-based industry here in Seattle have a tradition that makes us among the best in the world. Our local economy is stronger because of the variety of good-paying jobs we offer people with all skill levels."

For labor leaders representing the King County Labor Council and the Teamsters Union Local 174, the Mayor's unresponsiveness to people who aren't benefiting equally from the real estate and high tech boom in Seattle was amplified once again by his Burke Gilman announcement.

Nicole Grant, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the King County Labor Council, which includes over 150 organizations and more than 100,000 affiliated workers, stated that, "Ballard is one of Seattle's most precious neighborhoods and one of the things that makes it special is that it has its own economy. So many union members live and work in Ballard in the heavy industrial economy as concrete mixers, machinists, warehouse workers and, of course, in Ballard's world-renowned fisheries. I'm a cyclist myself but I could not see putting a trail where it would jeopardize the livelihood of so many families. It makes the most sense to put the trail on Leary and Market and keep Shilshole a productive industrial zone."

"This plan in its current form is absolute lunacy," said Rick Hicks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Teamsters Union Local 174, which has over 7,500 members in the Seattle area. "We have Teamster drivers out there crossing the proposed trail route hundreds of times a day - in fuel tanker trucks, in concrete mixers, in package cars, and in tractor-trailers. I don't need to describe to you what will happen if a bicyclist winds up in front of one of those trucks. I have not heard one single compelling reason for building the trail on Shilshole Avenue instead of just two blocks up on Leary, where bicyclists will not be placed directly under the wheels of our members' trucks."

For community leaders previously heartened by the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, intended to address race-based gaps in City programs and spending, the Mayor has taken another step backward. The millions of dollars estimated to bridge this relatively small "missing link" is disproportionate to other areas of the city where Seattleites need infrastructure to bike safely. Four of the five major projects in the City's Bicycle Master Plan are outside of communities of color.

"For several years, many people have been focused on finishing a section of the Burke Gilman Trail through Ballard where plenty of facilities already exist," said Pamela Banks, President & CEO of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. "Meanwhile, in south and southeast Seattle, there is very little that is comparable in terms of spending on infrastructure, promoting bicycling and pedestrian safety. Seattle prides itself on an identity of addressing equity but continues to fail to address some of the most mundane issues of race, class and social justice. We can do better."

The coalition will focus its attention on Seattle's City Council to help equitably resolve the challenge of the Burke Gilman Trail. The "Leary/Market Street" option continues to be the coalition's favored approach for the safety and protection of pedestrians, bicyclists, and the truckers who utilize Shilshole

Avenue in the daily course of business. In addition, the coalition emphasizes that the cost of the Leary/Market Street solution, which they estimate could be completed for about \$2 million, is appropriate for spending on a recreational trail that is beloved by many but that should not occur at the expense of working families and middle class jobs. Coalition leaders emphasize that communities throughout Seattle should benefit from the City's limited dollars on bicycle facilities and education and the Leary/Market Street option is a more balanced solution to benefit more Seattleites, not a geographically-fortunate few.

More information can be found at [www.ballardcycletrack.com](http://www.ballardcycletrack.com)

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