

# David M. Sucher

August 27, 2014

Hon. Anthony Foxx,  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, West Building  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Seattle Northgate Pedestrian/Bike Bridge TIGER Grant

Dear Secretary Foxx:

My name is David Sucher. I live in the Maple Leaf neighborhood, about ten minute walk from the proposed Bridge, and I am the author of the book *City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village*. <http://www.citycomforts.com/>

I am chagrined to admit it but I only became personally aware of the Bridge just a month or so ago, which is the reason for my late comment.

And I have to admit that my first reaction was "Huh? Why a ped/bike bridge?"

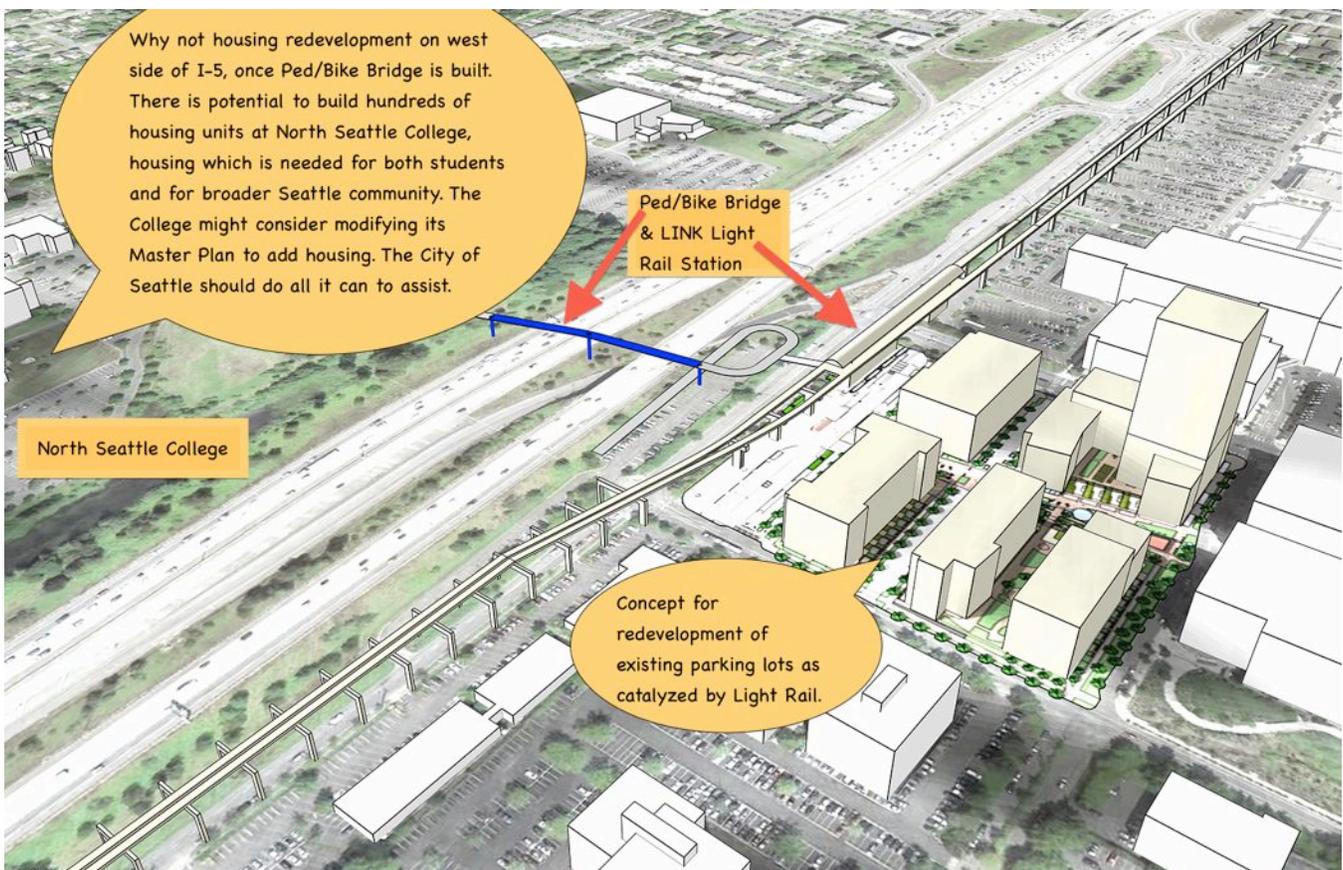
But as I have learned about the proposal, and thought about it with other neighbors, I see it as a terrific catalyst for sustainable improvement. We are not building the bridge only for use in the next few years but for decades, even a century ahead. The Bridge has the potential, and I think likelihood, to stimulate the right kind of pedestrian-oriented urban repair and also to protect the transportation investment which the US DOT has already supported through Sound Transit.

So I urge that the US Department of Transportation grant the City of Seattle's application.

Some of my thinking:

You've seen illustrations which show commercial & residential redevelopment of parking lots on the east side of I-5 adjacent to the Bridge/Rail Station and I laud the City for acknowledging it. (below)

But I don't think that there is sufficient attention paid to the possibility of residential redevelopment on the west side of I-5 i.e. North Seattle College and other properties including the soon-to-be-surplussed Seattle Police North Precinct.



With regard to North Seattle College, it seems to me that there is huge potential for building above the existing surface parking lots on campus to create a vibrant mixed-use community with a wide range of housing for students, seniors, affordable, subsidized, and market rate etc My very rough estimate — based on similar multi-family housing in the immediate area to the north of the campus — and still while maintaining required parking because existing topography allows

construction above parking lot without eliminating parking spaces — the campus could accommodate hundreds of dwelling units. (see illustration)



More housing could also transform a dated campus design which the College's own Master Plan characterizes as follows:

The original campus is a megastructure, constructed almost entirely of exposed concrete. It is inwardly focused and does not connect to the surrounding urban environment. The main entry, off College Way North, is blocked by a monumental stair, which is a barrier to disabled access. Access from the parking facilities is poorly defined and does not facilitate safe pedestrian movement.

Within the campus, lack of differentiation in the character of outdoor spaces and buildings makes it difficult for people to orient themselves. Buildings are linked to each other by exterior walkways that discourage people from occupying the campus' open spaces. Buildings do not have the typical common spaces, such as lobbies and hallways, where people engage one another and the life of a community is experienced. The campus has many dark corners, which create

orientation and safety issues for users. Improving pedestrian access, orientation and circulation on campus is a major priority for the college.

*NorthSeattleCommunityCollege Long Range Campus Plan — Page 3*

To be clear, I have no official or unofficial role whatsoever. I am just a neighbor interested in the future of my neighborhood. My perspective is purely my own, though I do take classes at North Seattle College (senior audit) so I know the campus reasonably well. But this suggestion is only the germ of an idea. There are so many possible ways that such redevelopment might proceed. There would have to be much consideration and consultation since building housing for general population on a college campus would be a novel approach. In fact, North Seattle College would have to go through a City of Seattle required process to amend the current Master Plan for the College so there will be no rush to impetuous action. But I believe that the purpose of the Bridge is to connect neighborhoods and to Light Rail, and thus to stimulate the next Seattle. So I believe that redevelopment of the campus in some respect has a certain and beneficial logic.

I urge you to approve the City of Seattle application.

Sincerely,



cc:

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Governor Jay Inslee

Congressman Jim McDermott

Mayor Edward B. Murray Seattle

Dr. Orestes Monterey, North Seattle College