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To: Patricia Decker

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#### COMMENTS- WATERFRONT FUTURES PROJECT

I enjoyed the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting and look forward to more.

##### Streetcar Line

Linking the Waterfront near downtown to Fairhaven by a heritage electric trolley line is a project that can tie together all the major features of Bellingham's revival. The route should be linked up with a downtown - Old Town circulator and should follow the old streetcar line to Fairhaven by way of State Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Harris Avenue. The downtown portion can utilize existing one-way streets on Holly and Magnolia but would require a two-way State Street west of Magnolia, which would spur a revival of the Morse Hardware area as a shopping and residential district. (The current one-way route there is neither business, pedestrian nor neighborhood friendly). The line would then follow the old State Street route up the hill past the armory, with its spectacular water and mountain vistas. Most of this route has existing tracks buried under pavement that could likely be re-used, as was done on the McKinney Ave. line in Dallas, Texas.

There is also potential for a waterfront extension using industrial track along Squalicum creek to the new park planned at Pacific Concrete and on to Cornwall Park. The small amount of freight switching on this track could be done off-hours at night.

##### The Railroad

BNSF Railway and its predecessor companies have a long history in Bellingham, were crucial in its development, and should be treated as an asset, not a nuisance. Mega-projects to reroute freight trains or to lid over the tracks are unrealistic. However, the railroad was interested two years ago in rerouting its tracks around the GP site but the city objected. This was very

shortsighted. Talks regarding this plan should be renewed. The company may also listen to proposals to move the freight yard from below Eldridge Ave. to an area adjacent to the spur north of the Lehigh (Tilbury, Columbia) Cement Plant. The area is flat, open and away from residential development. BNSF would of course have to see operational and financial advantages.

The heritage of the railroad, as exemplified in its mission style yellow brick depot at the foot of “D” Street, should be celebrated. This superb structure should be acquired for restoration and adaptive re-use. Some adjacent area could be acquired and improved with landscaping and historical displays.

### History

Old Town should be redeveloped into a unique retail-residential area honoring its status as Bellingham’s birthplace.

The oldest buildings at the GP plant could be preserved for adaptive re-use. (For an example, consider Lowell, Massachusetts, with its complex of old industrial buildings served by a heritage streetcar line).

### Things to Avoid

- Trendy “modern” outdoor sculpture (ex: Maritime Heritage Park, Downtown, W.W.U. campus).
- Overdone public squares, with bulky pergolas (ex: Fairhaven).
- Massive modern buildings of questionable architecture bordered by parking lots (ex: Bellwether).
- Full size “cut-outs” of steam locomotives –and people (see *Railroad Avenue Action Plan!*).

### Final Note- something fun and not too costly

The resonant wail of steam whistles has been absent now from our railways and waterways for several decades. But we’ve got Big Ole back, Bellingham’s own gigantic factory whistle. It now rests and rusts silently behind the museum. Let’s mount it high near the water, such as on top of a tall old GP structure, and pipe steam to it from the cogeneration plant, and blow it on special occasions. Let’s celebrate, rather than apologize for, our industrial and transportation history.