



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 4
COUNCILMEMBER ALEX PEDERSEN

April 4, 2022

Ralph J. Rizzo
Division Administrator, Washington State
Federal Highway Administration
711 Capitol Way S, Suite 501
Olympia, WA 98501
Ralph.J.Rizzo@dot.gov

Joey Hartmann
Director, Office of Bridges and Structures
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
joey.hartmann@dot.gov

Re: *request for Federal Highway Administration to expedite 2022 compliance assessment of Seattle's bridges*

Dear Administrator Rizzo and Director Hartmann:

Thank you for the work you and your engineers do in trying to make sure our bridges are as safe as possible.

As Chair of the City Council's Transportation Committee since January 2020, I am writing to ask the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to expedite the completion of its already planned 2022 compliance assessment of Seattle's bridges.

After the sudden cracks and closure of the [West Seattle Bridge](#) in March 2020 nearly stranded 100,000 of our region's residents, my office engaged our City Auditor to complete in September 2020 a [performance audit](#) assessing all bridges owned by the City of Seattle. The results were disturbing and confirmed the ongoing neglect of our aging bridge infrastructure in Seattle.

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/2020_03_SeattleBridges_FinalReport.pdf)

As the largest city in the northwestern United States, Seattle includes the economic engines of the Port of Seattle, a growing international airport, and a valuable center of our nation's tech industry. To protect and maximize those strengths, we must address the vulnerabilities of being a city carved by waterways and ravines in high-risk seismic zones that rely on the safety of our bridges for all modes of transportation. As the federal and Washington State governments focus on relatively large bridge projects in Washington State such as the Columbia River Bridge, the I-5 ship canal bridge, and the western portion of State Highway 520, I believe the City must step up to address its own aging bridges that connect our region as well as our communities.

The first recommendation of our 2020 City audit was, *"The Seattle Department of Transportation should take immediate steps to resolve all the issues identified in the 2019 Federal Highway Administration review."* Our City audit concluded that, *"In 2019 the FHWA found that SDOT's bridge program had several items that needed to be corrected before the 2022 review"* (see pages 12-13).

The bottom line is that residents, businesses, and workers expect and deserve to have their bridges open and safe. Moreover, construction labor unions in the region are ready and eager to work on upgrading our bridges. Federal oversight can be helpful to spur action and results for bridge safety in Seattle, especially for bridges ranked Fair or Poor and for bridges City leaders promised to fix as early as 2015.

Please contact my office at 206-684-8804 or email Alex.Pedersen@seattle.gov with any questions about this request.

Thank you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex Pedersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alex Pedersen

City Councilmember and Chair of the Transportation & Seattle Public Utilities Committee
<https://www.seattle.gov/council/pedersen>

cc:

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair of Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Patty Murray, Chair of Committee of Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Monisha Harrell, Adiam Emery, Elliot Helmbrecht, Dan Nolte, Office of Mayor Bruce Harrell
Kristen Simpson, Interim Director, Seattle Department of Transportation
Calvin Goings, Director, Financial & Administrative Services Department
Gael Tarleton, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Relations
David G. Jones and Melissa Alderson, City Auditor's Office
Loren A. Wilson, P.E., Division Bridge Engineer, FHWA, Washington Division
Sonia Lowry, Local Agency Bridge Engineer, WSDOT Local Programs Office
Sean DeBlicke, Director, U.S. Government Accountability Office, Seattle WA