

December 17, 2025

Dear Transportation Commission,

We are property owners, business tenants, residents and users that own and operate businesses, venues and produce events along Spokane Falls Blvd, from Division to Lincoln. During the November 24 City Council meeting, Council Member Kitty Klitzke suggested we reach out to you directly about the infrastructure and paving plans for Spokane Falls Blvd. At her urging, we write to share feedback and concerns that have been communicated as we've interacted with staff and consultants.

As a group, we've been invited to two open houses to discuss the project titled, "reimagine Spokane Falls Blvd." to discuss the possibility of redesigning traffic lanes along Spokane Falls Blvd. as part of a public works construction project intended to replace outdated sewer infrastructure. Several of us have also met with staff in one-on-one meetings. We've been up front about our concerns about maintaining access to this section of Spokane Falls Blvd.

As a group that represents owners, businesses, venues and events along the impacted section of Spokane Falls Blvd, we've made our collective assessment very clear: it is essential that three travel lanes remain from Division to Monroe and that two-way conversion is a non-starter. This is not about opposing change but rather acknowledging the clear realities of how critical it is to not create access issues around venues that generate huge tax and economic benefit to the city. For example, Hoopfest explained that reducing lanes would effectively end their ability to utilize Spokane Falls Blvd. during what has annually become the most visited event in downtown Spokane. Do we really want to drive Hoopfest from downtown Spokane? The resounding answer should be no. In fact, we should be embracing things like Hoopfest, big events and shows at the First Interstate Bank Theatre and activity at River Park Square. The operators of those facilities and events must be taken seriously. These are economic engines for our region and should not be cast aside as secondary considerations. They, like no one else, know exactly what it takes to make things work for fans, for safety, for customers, for logistics and for community attendees.

For business along the Bennett Block, Old City Hall, Wheatland Bank, O'Doherty's, and residents in the Coeur d'Alene Apartments, improvements to the current sidewalk and streetscape is most welcome. But that can happen while maintaining three lanes of traffic on Spokane Falls. We urge those doing the planning to focus on replacing aging sewer and water pipes and updating sidewalk surfaces. The existing width of the sidewalks already creates wonderful strolling space. Parking on the south side of the street provides easy access to businesses and provides a bit of a barrier between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Rebuilding sidewalks where necessary as is will greatly enhance that experience.

But, we are confused and concerned about the dedicated bike lane along the park. Nearby, the city recently added both east and west bike infrastructure along Riverside Avenue, the corridor where safe bike access delivers the greatest benefit.

Spokane Falls Boulevard functions primarily as a gateway and regional connector, where access needs make protected bike lanes less effective and more disruptive. It's more appropriate to concentrate heavy bike traffic to Riverside, where it was supposed to go, and leave the Centennial Trail for more casual bikers. Additionally, the reduction of lanes to accommodate a new bike lane between Division and Browne not only creates confusing bottle neck for vehicles at the east end of Spokane Falls Blvd., but it also dumps bikes directly into one of the busiest vehicle intersections in town. Connecting to the U District by bike or on foot should be in a safer place either on the Centennial Trail or south on Riverside with dedicated bike lanes. Simply put, focusing bike infrastructure on Riverside strengthens downtown's core, improving safety for bicyclists while preserving Spokane Falls Boulevard for its critical role moving people efficiently.

We've been consistent in sharing feedback in the initial open house in 2024 and in our one-on-one meetings with staff, so we were surprised that at the most recent open house on November 19, our feedback had not been considered seriously and in some cases had been mischaracterized as support for two-way conversion or lane reductions. Additionally, there's been no discussion about mitigation plans to reduce the impact of construction during this project. Any project along Spokane Falls Blvd. should thoughtfully consider measures that will mitigate construction impacts, particularly where street closures and reduced access will affect daily operations for adjacent businesses and events. For example, strategic project phasing to maintain access wherever possible, clear and consistent signage identifying businesses that remain open, and proactive coordination with event producers to avoid peak downtown activity periods. We encourage you to partner closely with the Downtown Spokane Partnership to communicate timelines, access points, and detours will help reduce disruption, support local businesses, and ensure the project's success benefits the entire downtown community.

We appreciate the opportunity to enhance Spokane Falls Blvd. As the marquee gateway to Riverfront Park, downtown and our businesses, the access it creates and fosters is unique. We are owners and operators with vast collective expertise, and we want to be at the table to help craft the solution that embraces the best elements of Spokane Falls Blvd. that also protects the venues and events that drive essential economic and community value. We are happy to meet with you in person or provide more information any time.

We look forward to working with you.

Most sincerely,

Betsy Cowles, Cowles Company
Bryn West, River Park Square
Stephanie Curran, Spokane Public Facilities District
Nicholas Knapton, Knapton Development
Susan Horton, Wheatland Bank
Shannon Ahern, Liberty Building
Melissa Green, Davenport Hotels
August Richardson, Double Tree Hotel City Center

Meredith Rainville, Best Western Plus City Center
Riley Stockton, Hoopfest
Monika Hawkinson, Spokane Lilac Festival
Tim O'Doherty, O'Doherty's Irish Grille
Anthony Campagna, Mizuna
Kevin Cox, Purgatory Whiskey Bar & Purgatory Agave
Wendy Goshey, Nordstrom
Andrew Leeper, ALSC

CC: Spokane City Council
 Mayor Lisa Brown
 Alex Scott, City Administrator
 Jon Snyder, Director of Transportation & Sustainability
 Marlene Fiest, Director of Public Works
 County Commissioner Chris Jordan