



Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma  
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Tacoma City Council  
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December 16, 2024

Dear Mayor Woodards, Deputy Mayor Hines, and Members of Tacoma's City Council,

We, the Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma, ask you to support Resolution 41588, placing Streets Initiative II on the April 22, 2025, Special Election ballot for consideration by the voters. As the City's only body formally charged with advising Council on policies on behalf of Tacoma's youth, we are exercising our responsibility to the City's young people – of today and the future – so our voices and opinions are heard before Council votes on Resolution 41588 on December 17, 2024. While the failure or success of Streets Initiative II in April will affect the lives of all Tacomans, its outcome will have a unique and disproportionate impact on youth.

Streets Initiatives I and II aren't just about roads and sidewalks. The criteria Streets Initiative uses to select projects specifically include equity and accessibility. Streets Initiative embodies and puts Tacoma's commitment to equity and opportunity into action because our values are embedded in its very foundation. Members of the Youth Commission benefit from and bear witness to the ways Streets Initiative I improves each of our lives in a tangible way and on a day-to-day basis. We have seen roadwork and new crosswalk safety beacons outside our schools – including Lincoln and Silas High Schools. These beacons are just a portion of the 48 installed through Streets Initiative I by the end of 2023.

Youth Commission meetings are held at the Graduate Tacoma office at South 9<sup>th</sup> Street and South J Street. Roadwork was being done just outside on J Street as we held our first meeting of the year in mid-October. Not only is the intersection now in far better condition than before, but the project also installed multiple curb ramps where none previously existed. Streets Initiative I has installed nearly 4,000 curb ramps as of this month, improving accessibility for people with disabilities, stroller users, cyclists, and older Tacomans.

Adopting Resolution 41588 is in the best interest of all Tacomans because it will make for a stronger City government overall. On April 23, 2025 – after April's Special Election has come and gone -- the number of streets needing repair, sidewalks requiring maintenance, and lack of multimodal connectivity will be identical whether voters authorized the Proposition or not. In the event Streets Initiative II fails, the City will not only need to address the same aging transportation infrastructure but also accelerate the pace at which it (does not, currently) meets the demands of an expanding population at the same time. Put another way, the City will need to accomplish more than it currently does, and with fewer resources.

We are high school students, but exhaustive education or subject area expertise isn't necessary to understand that authorization of Streets Initiative II is the fiscally responsible and efficient policy decision. Without renewed, sustainable funding, the City will need to look



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elsewhere to find the resources required to maintain ground on the progress made by Streets Initiative I. "Elsewhere," means taking funds that would have gone to different Departments to carry out other City functions. All City Departments and services would be adversely affected without Streets Initiative II, not just Public Works and maintenance of Tacoma's transportation infrastructure. Similar to how transportation affects all areas of our lives, the repercussions of unstable and insufficient funding for roadways will be broad and far-reaching.

When Council votes on Resolution 41588, we ask our elected officials to consider the ways youth are especially vulnerable to the consequences of a Public Works Department with inadequate resources. The vast majority of youth attend school in-person, which means we are more exposed to Tacoma's transportation infrastructure than our older neighbors who might have the opportunity for virtual or hybrid work. Young people who aren't old enough to drive must often become pedestrians, without the protection and relative safety of being in a car if involved in a vehicle collision. Smaller bodies are harder for drivers to see, and face a higher risk of serious injury and death when struck by a car. At the same time, young people with less driving experience higher rates of vehicular collisions. Young people are safer when Vision Zero has Streets Initiative support, because Vision Zero decreases the severity of collisions but also reduces the likelihood collisions occur in the first place.

Our peers – young people in 2024, specifically – would continue to bear the burden of Streets Initiative failing in 2025 for the rest of our lives. The cost to reconstruct streets and roads degraded from deferred maintenance is more expensive than ongoing preservation. According to the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, "for every dollar spent on preventative maintenance at the correct time in a pavement's life cycle, \$3-4 in future rehabilitation costs could be saved."<sup>1</sup> Should present-day voters and elected officials underinvest in Tacoma's transportation infrastructure, today's young people will literally pay the price for their actions in the future. Young people will shoulder the cost of every year Tacoma operates without consistent and sufficient funding. However, the opposite is also true: we stand to benefit from every year Tacoma can rely on Streets Initiative II funds. Further, we potentially have the opportunity to benefit from its authorization *for decades to come*.

Unlike older Tacomans, many youth have fewer options to influence local government decisions because they are ineligible to vote. This is yet another reason we depend on you to listen to what we have to say and advocate for us. We urge you to vote to adopt Resolution 41588 and, hopefully, go on to serve as champions for Streets Initiative II's authorization.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma  
2024 – 2025

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<sup>1</sup>Broughton, Ben, et al. "30 Years of Microsurfacing: A Review." ISRN Civil Engineering, vol. 2012, 26 Apr. 2012, pp. 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/279643>.