



West End Seniors' Network

Barclay Manor, 1447 Barclay Street, Vancouver B.C. V6G 1J6

13 September 2012

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Members of Council
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Ave
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

RE: Closure of the 800 block Robson Street

Dear Mayor Robertson and members of council:

I am writing on behalf of the board and members of the West End Seniors' Network (WESN) to express our concern about the ongoing closure of the 800 block of Robson Street. Our particular concern centres on the disruption to public transit service caused by the closure.

Like so many other West Enders, seniors in our neighbourhood rely heavily on public transit. Robson Street is a major transit corridor, providing bus users with a clear and efficient route to the downtown with its shopping and services, including the main library, and connections to other buses as well as the Skytrain and Canada Line. The bus re-route around the Robson Street closure is confusing and circuitous. While some may suggest that transit users simply walk to Granville Street from Burrard and Robson, this can be very difficult for seniors and others with mobility issues, particularly as we head into the wet, cold Fall and Winter months.

As has been pointed out by others, there is an unhappy irony in the fact that a city committed to being as 'green' as possible has rather precipitously thrown a wrench into one of the major transit corridors serving the downtown/West End.

We understand and support the city's desire to support public art and foster the development of vibrant public spaces. However, in this instance, we believe the negative impact on another of the city's priorities, i.e., supporting and encouraging people to take transit, outweighs any benefits of closing the 800 block of Robson Street.

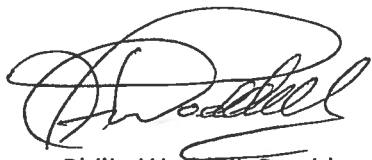
I would also like to point out that the closure of Robson Street is only one of a recurring series of disruptions to transit service faced by seniors in our neighbourhood.

Transportation to the West End is disrupted several times during the summer months with closures for Car-Free day, the Pride Parade and the West End Festival. The experience of many of our members at these times is that announcements are generally made at the last minute, posted at bus stops (although not always clearly), with no additional community buses and no awareness of the new routes by the bus drivers.

Again, I wish to stress that WESN's members appreciate the challenges the city faces in accommodating the multiplicity of needs and issues it must take into consideration in fostering a dynamic and inclusive community. However, we also know that it can be very difficult for younger, able-bodied people to appreciate just how challenging disruptions to services as key as public transit can be for many seniors. We ask that, in this case, you reconsider any thought of further closures of major transit routes like Robson Street.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Waddell', written in a cursive style.

Philip Waddell, President

cc: Board of Directors, Translink