

**Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program  
Stakeholder Advisory Committee – December 8, 2008  
Briefing Summary**

**Agenda Item #1: Welcome, Introductions, and Overview of Meeting**

Grace Crunican, Seattle Department of Transportation Director, welcomed the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and Interagency Working Group (IWG) members and thanked them for attending. The purpose of the briefing was to answer more in-depth questions that resulted from the Dec. 4 SAC meeting. That meeting focused on central waterfront evaluation results related to Guiding Principles 3 and 4 (Economics and the waterfront).

Seattle Channel was in attendance to record the briefing. Videos of previous Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings can be found at [www.seattlechannel.org/issues/viaduct.asp](http://www.seattlechannel.org/issues/viaduct.asp)

Grace asked the members of the SAC and the IWG to introduce themselves and the group or agency they represent.

**Stakeholder Advisory Committee attendees:**

- Warren Aakervik, Interbay/BINMIC
- Carol Binder, Pike Place Market
- Mahlon Clements, Ballard/Fremont
- John Coney, Queen Anne
- Bob Donegan, Seattle Historic Waterfront Coalition
- Dave Freiboth, King County Labor Council
- Gene Hoglund, Working Families for an Elevated Solution
- Mary Hurley, Ballard/Fremont
- Rob Johnson, Transportation Choices Coalition
- Mary McCumber, Furturewise
- Mike O'Brien, Sierra Club
- Vlad Outstimovich, West Seattle
- John Pehrson, Belltown
- Peter Philips, Seattle Marine Business Coalition
- Susan Ranf, Sports Stadiums
- Rob Sexton, Downtown Seattle Association
- Pete Spalding, West Seattle
- Todd Vogel, Allied Arts
- Tayloe Washburn, Seattle Chamber of Commerce

**Interagency Working Group attendees:**

- Geri Poor, Port of Seattle
- Barbara Wright, King County Public Health

**Agencies and Staff announced in attendance:**

- Grace Crunican, SDOT Director
- David Dye, WSDOT Deputy Secretary
- Harold Taniguchi, KCDOT Director
- Ron Paananen, WSDOT Urban Corridors Deputy Administrator
- Ron Posthuma, KCDOT Assistant Director
- Robert Powers, SDOT Deputy Director
- Jim Parsons, Parametrix, Independent Project Manager
- Ralph Iboshi, KPFF, Independent Project Management Team
- Randy McCourt, DKS, Independent Project Management Team

**Agenda Item #2: Feedback from committee.**

After introductions, Grace began with a request for feedback from SAC members. She asked them to state what they would like or not like to see in the hybrid scenarios, which will package together the best elements from the previous eight scenarios. The following is a summary of each SAC member's comments.

**Taylor Washburn, Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce:**

- Introduced a surface/subsurface hybrid scenario for evaluation. The surface road would be two or three lanes. The subsurface road would be a bored tunnel or a longer lidded trench.
- Excess surface street capacity should be used at an appropriate level.
- Make changes to I-5 as soon as possible.

**David Freiboth, King County Labor Council:**

- Labor Council has not endorsed Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface proposal.
- Need options that honor diverse groups' needs.

**Rob Johnson, Transportation Choices Coalition:**

- Believes we are moving in the right direction.
- Has outstanding concerns about cost, transit service, construction timelines.

**Rob Sexton, Downtown Seattle Association:**

- Completing the I-5 building blocks is paramount.
- Believes in all of the transit investments that we can do.
- Need to replace at least one-third of the parking removed along the waterfront.
- Mercer Street must be modified between Elliott and I-5. Have to provide adequate access to the north end of the bay.
- Strongly urges that a surface solution be included in the hybrid scenarios. Leans toward the Alaskan Way/Western Avenue couplet option.
- A subsurface option should move forward as well. The traffic model analysis says a surface option can work, but what if we're wrong?
- Would need adequate construction mitigation if a lidded trench or a cut-and-cover tunnel move forward.

- Despite the vision for the integrated elevated option, there are concerns about its economic vitality.

**Bob Donegan, Seattle Historic Waterfront Coalition:**

- Frustrated by a lack of complete data on the eight scenarios. Hopes committee members get to see the details on the hybrid scenarios. Data for the hybrid scenarios should be independently confirmed.
- Most important factor is whether waterfront businesses survive construction.
- Maintaining capacity is important for growth. We need ways to get around.
- Mitigation and parking matter a lot.
- Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface alternative looks attractive. A bored tunnel subsurface option would be less disruptive.

**Vlad Oustimovitch, West Seattle:**

- Supports the lowest cost alternative. However, the way cost is evaluated is important.
- A bored tunnel is at the higher end in terms of cost, but he believes the estimated cost is grossly inflated.
- West Seattle people work in different areas around city. Where they work is not in their control. We must respond to those concerns.
- West Seattle also needs access to emergency services, such as Harborview Hospital.
- Supports further evaluation of Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface hybrid.
- A throughput option needs to be an essential piece of any hybrid scenario. A surface option will not provide adequate service for people in West Seattle.

**Susan Ranf, Sports Stadiums:**

- Agrees that a hybrid option similar to Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface is needed.
- Need to better understand how event traffic impacts commuter traffic.
- Concerned about a lack of Pioneer Square representation on the SAC.

**John Pehrson, Belltown:**

- The current viaduct bifurcates and blights the Belltown neighborhood. Opposed to a new elevated structure.
- If a bored tunnel is affordable, it would provide the best environment in the Belltown neighborhood.
- The surface street scenarios have great potential with some challenges. Need to mitigate heavier surface traffic.
- The lidded trench and cut-and-cover tunnel options have generally positive characteristics.

**Gene Hogle, Working Families for an Elevated Solution:**

- Concerned about the cost of a bored tunnel. Also concerned about the grades, ventilation, and escape routes required for such a structure.
- Does not believe waterfront tunnels are valid options due to their construction impacts.
- Supports both elevated options because they would connect Ballard and Magnolia to West Seattle and points south. Their cost is low compared to the tunnels.

- Thinks we have not adequately incorporated traffic volumes from peak event and cruise ship passenger traffic into our evaluation of the scenarios.

**Mary McCumber, Futurewise:**

- Interested in Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface proposal.
- Surface and transit building blocks have merit.
- I-5 improvements are critical.
- Supports tolling to reduce demand and raise revenue for transportation improvements.
- Open to considering additional highway capacity. Some interest in a bored tunnel, but is not supportive of elevated options.

**Mike O'Brien, Sierra Club:**

- The bored tunnel option needs to be reworked to allow the viaduct to come down in 2012.
- The integrated elevated option is a creative idea with fatal flaws. Should not be carried forward.
- The high levels of transportation demand management used in Scenario A should be carried forward. Such policies can be tweaked over time.
- Must invest in transit.
- Wants some version of surface and transit to move forward. Shares concerns about the Alaskan Way/Western Avenue couplet, but defers to experts about what works best.
- Opposes building a bored tunnel along with a surface option. We should not assume that a surface option will not work by itself. Instead, we should set checkpoints or milestones for deciding whether a bored tunnel is necessary.

**Peter Philips, Seattle Marine Business Coalition:**

- Disappointed that a retrofit of the existing viaduct was not considered. Still believes it is the best option.
- WSDOT needs to ensure that the viaduct has the maintenance it requires, so we can take the time to decide properly how it should be replaced.
- The maritime industrial sector is dependent on throughput capacity and minimizing construction impacts.
- Wants the integrated elevated option to move forward. It has been as vetted as any other scenario.
- A surface option is not viable, unless it is shown that capacity would be maintained and construction impacts would be minimal.

**Carol Binder, Pike Place Market:**

- The market supports looking at a surface/subsurface option. Supports subsurface because throughput is important.
- Does not support the Alaskan Way/Western Avenue couplet. It would fundamentally change the market.
- The market has never supported an elevated option.

**Todd Vogel, Allied Arts:**

- A sustainable city must be denser – make walking and biking preferred modes.
- Need to reconnect the waterfront.
- Need to protect surface streets from large traffic volumes – need to invest in transit and transportation demand management.
- Elevated options exact too high a price for mobility.
- Any surface option should have a plan to reduce the level of traffic itself.
- One option should be subsurface – quick way to remove cars and improve urban fabric.

**John Coney, Uptown/Queen Anne:**

- Surface plus transit gives us the most opportunity to reknit the street grid between Uptown and South Lake Union.
- It is important that Mercer Street and Denny Way work well in any solution.
- Cost is a paramount element.
- Fears that we are moving to reconcentrate traffic along Alaskan Way. Spread the traffic out – use the grid.
- Start planning for more substantial transit in West Seattle.
- It is important to maintain the Elliott and Western Avenue connections to SR 99.
- Favors a surface plus transit plus I-5 option. Also favors a tunnel solution.

**Mahlon Clements, Ballard/Fremont:**

- A surface plus transit option is a prudent way to go. People will adapt. The struggle is freight mobility.
- In the surface street options, consider ways to better support industry.
- Open to a lidded trench option, but it is critical that it serves manufacturing. Impacts from a lidded trench could hurt the historical waterfront.
- A bored tunnel seems more like throughput for vehicles than for freight.

**Pete Spalding, West Seattle:**

- West Seattle needs access to the downtown business district. Remember, however, that not everyone goes downtown.
- Increasing transit options from West Seattle is a must. This means not making everybody go downtown to make a transit connection.
- Need to limit construction disruptions.
- Suggests including a bored tunnel, an integrated elevated structure and Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface proposal among the hybrid scenarios.

**Warren Aakervik, Interbay/BINMIC:**

- Need to remember that the majority of viaduct traffic is through traffic.
- Still has not heard how he will get his business's diesel oil through the viaduct corridor. The ability to move hazardous materials is also missing from Mr. Washburn's surface/subsurface hybrid.
- An economic analysis of the maritime industry needs to be added to the scenario evaluation process.

- Absent the viaduct, the most logical corridor for freight would be using I-5 to Mercer Street, but the city's streetcar plans would compromise that route.

### **Agenda Item #3: Discussion of measures presented and prepared for Dec. 4.**

Grace Crunican continued the discussion with questions related to the economic evaluation presented at the Dec. 4 SAC meeting. She introduced Terry Moore of ECONorthwest, who was responsible for the economic evaluation study presented to the SAC. Jim Hebert (Hebert Research), though not a member of the project team, was present at the request of several SAC members to discuss his 2006 economic evaluation of the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement project. Grace opened the floor to questions.

Terry and Jim began the discussion with a comparison of their economic evaluation approaches. While the two studies had some similarities, Terry's report used the estimated change in travel times to estimate how businesses would react, while Jim's earlier report looked at comparable projects and used a probability sample of 400 businesses.

**Question** – If you can not use the viaduct to reach a business, and go someplace closer instead, is that a net economic loss?

*Answer (Jim – Hebert Research) – Some areas would gain, and some areas would lose. Economic activity would be pushed out further north, south or across Lake Washington. Some will go away.*

*Answer (Terry - ECONorthwest) – Our model uses a larger area. It does not estimate distributional impacts.*

**Comment** – The two-way Mercer Street project would worsen traffic. The city also plans to take a lane away on Nickerson Street. These effects are not accounted for in the economic model. You also left out the effects of cruise passenger traffic.

*Response (Terry - ECONorthwest) – We did not leave out the effect of cruise passenger traffic. We used a regional model, and that traffic is included within the numbers generated by the model.*

**Question** – I understand that travel time differences have an economic cost, but different vehicles have different costs per hour. How do we understand those differentials in the model?

*Answer (Terry - ECONorthwest) – Our model is driven off of travel time changes. Those changes are entered into an economic model that includes different industries, such as freight.*

**Question** – In Terry's model, the baseline is that the viaduct is gone and we have created a minimal alternative route. You then add the other building blocks included in each scenario, and the travel demand model assumes how they work. Jim's evaluation used three cities with similar construction and then took those case studies to businesses to ask how they would be impacted. Is this a fair characterization of the differences between the two analyses?

*Answer (Terry - ECONorthwest) – Our model also assumed that trips still get made. They may just get made in a different way.*

*Answer (Jim – Hebert Research) – I did throw out one of my comparative samples – Boston's Big Dig – because mitigation included in that project meant there wasn't an economic impact.*

**Question** – In your sample of 400 businesses, what input did you take to the businesses?

*Answer (Jim – Hebert Research) – We took to the 400 businesses the two scenarios presented by WSDOT – a partial closure of the viaduct during construction and a complete closure of the viaduct during construction. For each business, we asked how those scenarios would affect their ability to retain employees and affect their retail business.*

**Question** – Is it your conclusion that a lack of throughput in a viaduct replacement would increase urban sprawl?

*Answer (Jim – Hebert Research) – Yes. Many of the outlying areas would look at such a situation as an economic upside for them.*

**Agenda Item #4: Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda**

Grace thanked everyone for being at the briefing. The next SAC meeting is set for Dec. 11.