

VandenBerghe, Alissa (Consultant)

From: Fishkin, Emily (Consultant)
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Urban Corridors Office – 401 2nd Avenue So., Suite 560 – Seattle, WA 98104 – (206) 464-1220

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Contacts:

Emily Fishkin, Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program, 206-267-6821 (Seattle), 206-437-5061 (cell)

Amy Grotefendt, Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program, 206-295-9846 (cell)

Eight scenarios narrowed down to two for Alaskan Way Viaduct central waterfront

The two hybrid scenarios combine the best elements of the previous options

SEATTLE – WSDOT, King County, and the City of Seattle announced they are down to two options for replacing the central section of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall: an “I-5/surface/transit” hybrid alternative and an “SR 99 elevated bypass” hybrid alternative. These were developed from the previous eight scenarios. They are called “hybrids” because they package together the best elements from the previous eight, including improvements to I-5, surface streets, transit, and demand management.

The I-5/surface/transit hybrid alternative is primarily a combination of the three previous surface boulevard options based on what performed well in the evaluation:

- Includes two one-way boulevards on Alaskan Way and Western Avenue each with three lanes of traffic.
- Increases open space on the waterfront for pedestrians, and offers urban design benefits.
- Accommodates a similar number of trips as other options when additional improvements are made to the transportation system, such as adding transit service hours and improving I-5 through downtown.
- Moves the same amount of people and goods but with some of the trips made differently.

The other hybrid alternative chosen, known as the SR 99 elevated bypass, is the most similar to the existing viaduct:

- Includes two independent bridge structures with two lanes in each direction.
- Preserves mobility on the SR 99 corridor as a bypass of downtown, and maintains Elliott/Western connections.
- Maintains travel times for freight and vehicle trips within the city of Seattle.
- Offers the lowest cost of the bypass scenarios.

Cost is not a distinguishing factor between the hybrid scenarios. The surface and transit hybrid alternative and the independent elevated structure are estimated to cost up to \$3.5 billion. The cost estimates are higher than earlier estimates as they include improvements to I-5, transit, surface streets and demand management.

Robust transit service was added in both alternatives, although there are more service enhancements included in the surface alternative. Analysis showed the people will use transit when additional service is provided. Examples of transit improvements include more RapidRide service to Ballard and West Seattle, new RapidRide routes on Delridge and Lake City Way, an expanded electric bus network, new park-and-rides, and more express bus service.

A bored tunnel was not formally carried forward as a hybrid alternative at this time due to high cost, but the agencies acknowledged that it does have advantages associated with avoiding some of the construction on the central waterfront. It could be built in the future as a stand-alone project with the surface and transit alternative being advanced. More discussions about this option, including cost, will be discussed over the next week.

WSDOT, King County, and the City of Seattle will spend the next few weeks gathering input from the public and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee that has been meeting monthly since December of last year.

A public forum will be held on Monday, Dec. 15 at Seattle Town Hall to give the public an opportunity to learn more about the two hybrid alternatives and get questions answered by representatives from the three agencies. The meeting is from 5 to 7:30 p.m.

The last Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting of the year is on Dec. 18, where committee members will give feedback on the hybrid alternatives. Governor Gregoire, King County Executive Ron Sims, and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels are expected to make a recommendation on a preferred option by the end of the year.

More information and images of the hybrid alternatives can be found at www.alaskanwayviaduct.org.

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