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Federal Transit
Administration

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May 28, 2004

Allison Ray
WSDOT Environmental Coordinator
AWV Project Office
9993rd Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Ray:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with comments from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on the SR 99: Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). As you are aware, FTA is a federal cooperating agency for this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. As such, FTA would typically review the EIS for transit-related impacts. However, given the dramatic style change for this document and understanding that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may wish to use a similar approach for future NEPA documents that may have FTA as a federal lead or co-lead agency, we have reviewed the DEIS in greater detail.

We commend WSDOT and FHWA on the new approach. We appreciate your consideration of the attached comments and look forward to continued collaboration on transportation projects in Washington. Please contact Jennifer Bowman at 206.220.7953 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Kim Farley, WSDOT
Carol Lee Rolkvam, WSDOT
Sharon Love, FHWA

Federal Transit Administration Comments
SR 99: Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

General

F-002-001

The document makes good use of graphics and has good style and tone. The new format seems to be more readable for the general public. While we are encouraged by the new approach and abbreviated length geared toward the general public audience, we are concerned that the document may not have suitably balanced the information needs of various federal, state and local agencies that use NEPA documents to determine compliance with applicable laws and as supporting material for permitting actions. With this new approach, it becomes necessary to review nearly 3500 pages of appendices to understand what is supporting the generalized statements in the DEIS. Because the document lacks some of the more traditional tables and impact summaries, reviewing this EIS required significantly more time than under the normal approach. We have included below, several ideas for your consideration to continue to improve the quality and format of environmental analyses.

In an introductory section, or perhaps in an executive summary, one suggestion would be to include an explanation of how this EIS differs from previous EIS reports, what things remain the same and how the reader can find information on specific topical interests. Similarly, more detail in the table of contents would help the reader find specific information and make comparisons between alternatives.

Because this new format lacks the standard numbering convention, FTA found it difficult to follow an impact category through each alternative, construction impacts and mitigation. FTA recommends that the questions be grouped into categories and listed in the table of contents for each alternative, construction impacts and mitigation. In addition, a summary of impact areas for all alternatives, presented in a tabular or matrix format, would be helpful.

For main impact categories with associated federal or state laws, it would be helpful to present the reader with a brief description of applicable regulatory standards and thresholds. Enough detail should be given to clearly demonstrate compliance or the methodology to gain compliance.

The DEIS indicates that the FEIS will include detailed mitigation plans for several impact categories for the preferred alternative. Since the FEIS will be the first time that the public and agencies will have an opportunity to review these mitigation plans, FTA recommends that the ROD respond to any comments received on these plans.

F-002-002

The DEIS does not clearly state the process for determining the preferred alternative. The FEIS for this project should describe how the decision was made. Future documents that take this approach should include a description of the decision-making structure and process.

F-002-001

Thank you for providing your agency's ideas and feedback about the format of our 2004 Draft EIS. We appreciate your helpful suggestions and have incorporated many of them into the 2006 and 2010 Supplemental Draft EISs and Final EIS.

As suggested, we added a more detailed Table of Contents to the Supplemental Draft EISs and the Final EIS. In the 2004 Draft EIS, we developed two tools to help guide regulatory reviewers through the document: a technical index (see page 161 of the Draft EIS) and an annotated outline with legal references (see Appendix Y of the Draft EIS). These tools are also contained in the 2006 and 2010 Supplemental Draft EISs. The technical index is organized by NEPA/SEPA required topics (such as logical termini, cumulative effects, and historic resources) and page numbers to help direct reviewers to NEPA/SEPA required information by topic. This index and the detailed Table of Contents are included in the Final EIS.

We considered your comments related to mitigation planning as we developed the Final EIS. The lead agencies have been working closely with the public and regulatory agencies to develop and discuss mitigation plans. This dialogue will continue through the environmental review process and, as needed, throughout construction.

F-002-002

The environmental scoping process, screening process, and overall decision-making structure was discussed in the 2004 Draft EIS in Chapter 4. Additional information on this topic was provided in Chapter 2 of the Supplemental Draft EIS published in 2006. The Summary chapter of the Final EIS contains information describing the decision-making process used to select the preferred alternative.

- F-002-003** **Air Quality--Construction**
FTA understands that the FEIS will present an analysis of construction pollutant emissions in the FEIS. Given that the highest rates of air pollution emissions are generated by diesel powered construction equipment and marine vessels that may be used to support maritime construction operations and the construction period will exceed eight years, we request that the FEIS also describe the emissions reduction strategies to which the project will commit. In addition, since this information was not included in the DEIS, FTA requests that any comments received on air quality impacts during the construction period as presented in the FEIS be addressed in the ROD.
- F-002-004** **Alternatives**
Page 55 states that screening tools were used in evaluating ideas for the alternatives. The FEIS should describe the screening process in greater detail.
- F-002-005** **Bike and Pedestrian Access and Safety**
The FEIS should present a map showing bike and pedestrian routes throughout the project area for the construction period and for the finished project. This should include the SR 519 area, the Waterfront Trail and access to Colman Dock.
- F-002-006** **Businesses**
FTA encourages the project sponsors to present in the FEIS a mitigation plan with detailed strategies for mitigating construction impacts to the local businesses especially with respect to access both from the land and water. FTA also recommends that the ROD respond to any comments received on these plans.
- F-002-007** **Environmental Justice**
Since a detailed EJ analysis will not be available until the preferred alternative is presented in the FEIS, FTA recommends that the ROD respond to any comment received on this topic.
- F-002-008** P. 68, question 13 states that Casa Latina will be relocated. Given the difficulty associated with the original siting of this facility, have any feasible relocation alternative been identified?
- F-002-009** **Ferries**
Since the proposed project will significantly change access to Colman Dock, the FEIS should provide detailed information, including a map that shows ingress and egress for the ferry terminal, including pedestrian access, and the auto holding areas.
- F-002-010** **Financial Analysis**
FTA considers it helpful for agencies and the public to have more information on the financial analysis of the project, including construction, maintenance and financing options for the project. FTA recommends that the FEIS present more financial information on the preferred alternative.
- F-002-011** **Fisheries, Wildlife and Habitat**
Page 49 states that the Department of Ecology has designated Elliott Bay as excellent in terms of goals for quality and aquatic life. Similar information is not presented for the other water bodies in this section. It would help the reader understand the context and significance of this if similar information were presented for all water bodies in the project area and if the significance of these designations were explained. A general overview of applicable standards would be helpful.

F-002-003

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been developed between WSDOT and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA). The MOA will help eliminate, confine, or reduce construction-related emissions for WSDOT projects. This MOA will apply to the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project. Chapter 6, Construction Effects, of the Final EIS for discussion of the effects during construction of the build alternatives and Chapter 8 presents the proposed mitigation measures.

F-002-004

The 2004 Draft EIS incorporated by reference the screening reports that discussed the screening process in detail. Specifically, the sidebar on page 56 in Chapter 4 of the Draft EIS referenced readers to the project screening reports if they are interested in learning more about the screening process. The screening process involved early analysis by the project team and discussions with community groups at more than 140 community meetings and community interviews, including businesses along the corridor. A total of 76 initial viaduct replacement concepts and seven seawall concepts were considered; and concepts that were not feasible, or were outside the purpose of the project were dropped from further consideration. The most workable ideas were shaped into the alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS. Further screening and analyses were conducted for the 2006 and 2010 Supplemental Draft EISs and Final EIS. The alternatives analyzed include a range of viaduct repair and replacement designs with some elements of earlier concepts combined with other design structures as the engineering team looked at feasibility, cost, and other criteria.

F-002-005

The Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix C of the Final EIS, provides maps showing alternate pedestrian and bicycle facility routing during project construction as well as final configuration of the facility.

- F-002-012** FTA does not understand the basis for the preliminary “not likely to adversely impact” determination for Chinook salmon and bull trout that is presented in Appendix R. As a cooperating agency, please keep us informed as you go through the section 7 consultations.
- F-002-013** **Haul Routes**
Haul routes are unclear. If either of the tunnel alternatives is chosen, haul routes will be very important. FTA recommends that the FEIS present a detailed analysis of the haul routes and impacts thereof if either tunnel option is chosen.
- An analysis of marine construction and supply provisioning options versus land-based techniques should also be presented.
- F-002-014** **Historic Resources**
FTA is required to analyze the impacts of public transportation projects on park resources as required by 49 U.S.C. 303 Section 4 (f) and 23 Code of Federal Regulations 771.135. In the FEIS, FTA would like to see how the new pier between pier 46 and Colman dock would impact the footprint of the Washington Street Boat Launch. The actual footprint of the park in its current location is unclear. Will the in-water portion of this park resource be extended to keep its original size or will the in-water portion simply be covered up? This may have an impact on passenger-only ferry routing and docking. FTA would like to see a delineation of the park resource with the new project in place.
- Maps and Graphics**
The EIS’s use of visual simulations and graphic is very helpful.
- F-002-015** More detailed maps would help the reader understand the project and its impacts better. A compromise between the DEIS general level and the Appendix W would be helpful for the FEIS.
- Travel times are given to and from “downtown” but FTA was unable to determine how this is defined. Please clarify this in the FEIS.
- P. 9 Average Traffic Speeds graphic. We have assumed that the year of analysis is 2030, but it is not clear. This comment applies to similar maps and graphics throughout.
- P. 23 describes the detour options. Please include a detailed map of the planned detour in the FEIS.
- P. 65 (and generally Question 5 for all alternatives) discusses freight access. Please include in the FEIS maps showing interchanges at S. Atlantic Street and S. Royal Brougham Way that are stated to improve access between SR 99 and SR 519.
- P. 88 describes new ramps, railroad access and ferry access. Please include a map that shows these movements in the FEIS.

F-002-006

Access to businesses will be maintained throughout construction. Temporary access limitations and any required changes to access during construction will be mitigated to the extent practicable. A primary goal of construction planning is to maintain adequate access to all businesses so they can continue to operate. Chapter 8 of the Final EIS discusses the project's proposed mitigation measures during construction.

Economic mitigation strategies for other types of impacts to businesses during construction are presented in the Final EIS. These start at the corridor level with a master list of potential mitigation measures (similar to that contained in the Draft EIS). Those measures will then be matched with specific impacts by business district (Stadium Area Interchange, Pioneer Square, central waterfront, etc.). Finally, as construction nears, the plan would be fine-tuned by phase and specific business/facility impacts and location.

Any substantive comments received on the Final EIS will be addressed in the ROD.

F-002-007

The preferred alternative was disclosed in the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS, which included an environmental justice analysis and determination. The Record of Decision will report on comments received on the Final EIS, and will respond appropriately.

F-002-008

In March 2009, Casa Latina moved to their new building east of I-5 in the International District neighborhood. The new location is outside of the Alaskan Way Viaduct project area.

WSDOT will comply with the federal requirements for disadvantaged

F-002-015	P. 92 discusses traffic impacts on other parallel city streets. The last paragraph on this page is confusing. A map would help.
F-002-016	<p>Noise What mitigation is proposed for residential properties during the construction period? What consideration has been given to nighttime construction noise traveling over water? How might residences in West Seattle be impacted? Does the project propose limiting the kind of construction activities that will be allowed through the night?</p>
F-002-017	<p>Parking To better understand the magnitude of parking impacts, it would be helpful to know how many spaces are currently available in each sub area for each kind of parking. The sentence immediately following Question 7 (p 66 and subsequent sections for each alternative) seems inconsistent with the last sentence in the second paragraph of this section (2,038 spaces versus 2,800 spaces).</p> <p>FTA encourages the project sponsors to coordinate with transit providers, vanpools, carpools and the flex car program in developing the parking mitigation plan that is to be presented in the FEIS.</p>
F-002-018	<p>Public Services All build alternatives propose relocating Fire Station #5. Will this station be relocated and operational during the construction period? FEIS should identify the new location or possible locations.</p>
F-002-019	<p>Relocations Question 14 in each alternative deals with property acquisition. The DEIS states that “No residences would be affected.” Certainly residences in the project area will be affected by noise, limited access and constant changes in traffic patterns. Perhaps clearer wording would be “No residences would be acquired.”</p>
F-002-020	<p>Staging Areas The DEIS states that the City-owned property west of the Battery Street Tunnel will be used for construction staging. What are the other staging areas? The FEIS should describe all potential staging areas.</p>
F-002-021	<p>Surface Alternative Surface Alternative is the least costly alternative. It moves the fewest vehicles at the slowest pace and has the potential to create significant congestion impacts in the downtown and on I-5. If this were to be selected as the preferred alternative, the FEIS should describe the transit components that would be necessary to maintain a functioning metropolitan transportation system with an agreed upon level of service needed to support commerce and a high quality of life for the public.</p> <p>If the Surface Alternative is chosen as the preferred alternative, FTA recommends that a quantitative assessment of general traffic, transit and air quality impacts to I-5 and mitigation</p>

business enterprise (DBE) participation. WSDOT cannot require contractors to hire workers from specific organizations. However, WSDOT can and does encourage contractors to work with local organizations and to develop programs that draw on the local labor pool.

F-002-009

The exact changes in access to Colman Dock as a result of this project are not yet determined and, therefore, are not shown in the Final EIS. If the preferred Bored Tunnel Alternative is selected, the final configuration of Alaskan Way will be determined as part of the City of Seattle's Central Waterfront Project. However, the project will continue its coordination work with Washington State Ferries for any developments affecting Colman Dock during the project's construction.

F-002-010

Overall project costs are included with the project description and are used for the analysis of economic impacts. Cost estimates for mitigation are included in the overall project costs. These estimates, along with other cost estimates, are refined as the planning and design process proceeds and details are developed. All cost estimates allow for escalation and inflation and include contingencies for unforeseen events. The project is included in the financially-constrained long range plan adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council (the area's Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO). Cost estimates for the alternatives evaluated in the Final EIS are:

- Bored Tunnel – \$1.96 billion
- Cut-and-Cover Tunnel – \$3.0 to \$3.6 billion
- Elevated Structure – \$1.9 to \$2.4 billion

These cost estimates do include different elements. The Bored Tunnel Alternative cost does not include replacing the seawall, improving the Alaskan Way surface street, or building a streetcar. Costs for the Cut-

F-002-021 | commitments be presented in the FEIS. In addition, since this information was not included in the DEIS, FTA requests that any comments received on this matter be addressed in the ROD.

F-002-022 | **Transit**
FTA is very interested in the Flexible Transportation Package. Since many of its elements may be eligible for FTA funding, we request that the project sponsors and transit providers coordinate with FTA as this is developed.

All alternatives remove the Waterfront Streetcar during the construction period. One possible way to mitigate this loss would be to use a rubber-tired transit vehicle as an alternative for the duration of the construction period. This option would not only provide safe and controlled passage over an ever changing right of way through a construction zone to pedestrians, customers of waterfront businesses and residents, but could provide mobility for project work crews given limited on site parking.

F-002-023 | Appendix J: Environmental Justice
Page 3 states, "the City of Seattle will take measures to ensure that transit service in Downtown Seattle does not degrade." The FEIS should describe these measures and the level of commitment to them. It should also describe the coordination process among the various transit agencies that provide service to the area. In addition, since this information was not included in the DEIS, FTA requests that any comments received on transit service during the construction period as presented in the FEIS be addressed in the ROD.

and Cover Tunnel and Elevated Structure Alternatives do not include replacing the seawall between Union and Broad Streets.

F-002-011

The Final EIS will include the Department of Ecology designation for each applicable water body. A general overview of applicable standards will also be included.

F-002-012

Subsequent to the Draft EIS, a Biological Assessment (BA) was prepared for the preferred Bored Tunnel Alternative. The effect determination for Chinook salmon is "may affect, likely to adversely affect"; the determination for bull trout is "may affect, not likely to adversely affect." The ESA consultation is now complete.

F-002-013

Construction haul routes and any associated impacts are identified in the Final EIS and Appendix C, Transportation Discipline Report.

Potential overwater construction staging areas are discussed in Appendix B, Alternatives Description and Construction Methods Discipline Report. The Final EIS Appendix N, Wildlife, Fish, and Vegetation Discipline Report, discusses the potential for some delivery and removal of construction materials by barge in the construction effects chapter.

F-002-014

The Final EIS and Appendix H, Social Discipline Report, address the temporary displacement of the Washington Street Boat Landing during construction as part of the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel and Elevated Structure Alternatives. The pergola facility would be restored and replaced in nearly the same footprint at the edge of the water after construction as it

is today. This effect is discussed in Chapter 6 in the Final EIS.

Seattle Parks and Recreation, which owns and maintains the in-water portion of the facility, removed the boat landing docks many years ago, and currently has no plans to change its use or function.

F-002-015

Additional maps have been provided in the Final EIS. Specifically, the following elements have been incorporated as suggested:

1. "Downtown" has been clarified as it relates to travel times.
2. We've clarified the year of analysis as 2030.
3. Maps showing planned detours have been provided as suggested.
4. Your comment to add a map showing traffic effects to other parallel streets is acknowledged; instead of adding a map, we revised the text to make it more clear.

Please note that the intersection improvements at S. Atlantic Street and S. Royal Brougham Way meant to improve access between SR 99 and SR 519 and the new ramps, railroad and ferry access mentioned on page 88 of the Draft EIS were covered under the SR 99 - S. Holgate Street to S. King Street Viaduct Replacement Project, which began construction in 2010.

F-002-016

The construction plans evaluated for noise and vibration are described in Appendix B, Alternatives Description and Construction Methods Discipline Report of the Final EIS. While actual construction plans and activity sequencing could differ from this evaluation, the locations and types of activities would be similar under the final sequence. The City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development typically grants temporary noise variances to construction projects with nighttime

work activities if there is no practical means to work within the City noise ordinance. The long duration and unique nature of the Alaskan Way Viaduct Project requires an extended temporary technical variance from the City in order to complete the project on time. Obtaining this type of technical variance involves a public hearing process that influences the final decisions and stipulations made by the City, which sets forth contextually sensitive noise mitigation measures to which the applicant is required to abide.

F-002-017

The Final EIS contains the information requested. The number of existing public parking spaces in the study area is presented in Chapter 4. The number of parking spaces permanently affected by the project is presented in Chapter 5 and the number of parking spaces temporarily affected during construction is presented in Chapter 6.

The lead agencies recognize that businesses along the central waterfront, Western Avenue, and Pioneer Square rely on the short-term parking in the area. The City of Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), in coordination with the project, has conducted parking studies as part of the process to develop mitigation strategies and better manage the city's parking resources. SDOT's studies identified a number of strategies to offset the loss of short-term parking in this area, including new or leased parking and the increased utilization of existing parking. Although the mitigation measures would be most needed during construction, many of them could be retained and provide benefits over the longer term. Specific parking mitigation strategies have not yet been determined, but the project has allocated \$30 million for parking mitigation. The parking mitigation strategies will continue to evolve in coordination with the project and community partners. Parking measures under consideration and refinement include:

- Encourage shift from long-term parking to short-term parking

- Provide short-term parking (off-street), especially serving waterfront piers, downtown retail, and other heavy retail/commercial corridors
- Implement electronic parking guidance system
- Provide alternate opportunities to facilitate commercial loading activities
- Develop a Center City parking marketing program
- Use existing and new social media and blog outlets to provide frequent parking updates
- Establish a construction worker parking policy that is implemented by the Contractor

Refer to the Parking Mitigation during Construction section in Chapter 6 of the Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix C of the Final EIS) for additional information.

F-002-018

Based on current project planning, Fire Station #5 would remain in place and would no longer be temporarily relocated during construction, as discussed in the 2004 Draft EIS.

F-002-019

The wording suggestion is appreciated. In the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS, we used this suggested wording for a similar sentence in Question 10 of Chapter 5, which stated "no residential units would be acquired."

F-002-020

Staging areas have been identified and discussed in the Final EIS in Chapter 6.

F-002-021

The Surface Alternative was eliminated from further study, as described in the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS.

F-002-022

The Waterfront Streetcar is not currently operating along Alaskan Way S. but could operate again in the future. The lead agencies will continue to coordinate with King County Metro, the operator of the Waterfront Streetcar, regarding future plans for the streetcar. Note that under the Bored Tunnel Alternative, the City of Seattle will lead planning of improvements along the central waterfront, including the Waterfront Streetcar.

The construction plans for the project have evolved since the publication of the 2004 Draft EIS. Please see Chapter 6 in the Final EIS for a summary of the construction plans for each alternative. Appendix B, Alternatives Description and Construction Methods Discipline Report, discusses construction in more detail.

See the Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix C, of the Final EIS for information about transit during construction.

F-002-023

The Final EIS describes transportation mitigation measures, including measures relating to the coordination of planning and implementation efforts by transit operators and other agencies as appropriate. Also refer to the Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix C of the Final EIS for a more detailed discussion of transportation mitigation measures.

The ROD will address any comments received on the Final EIS as appropriate.