From: Sharon Florakis
To: AWV SDEIS Comments;
CC:
Subject: VIADUCT REPLACEMENT: SDEIS COMMENTS
Date: Friday, September 22, 2006 4:14:13 PM
Attachments:

In response to the SDEIS, which I did not have time to go over in detail, but got the general idea as described in Chapters 2 and 3.

Here are some comments that I have:

I-586-001 DRIVING ALONG AN ELEVATED VIADUCT IS A COMFORTABLE AND INSPIRING EXPERIENCE FOR SEATTLE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS. With an in-the-air viaduct, everyone can enjoy the view of Puget Sound, instead of only wealthy downtown condo owners. And it enhances tourism, quickly affording tourists a spectacular view and a sense of what the whole downtown is like; solid walls of commercial buildings (which would replace the existing viaduct) would make this impossible. Many commuters are forced to drive long distances nowadays and I believe it is more important to consider THEIR needs than to be mainly concerned about how pleasant the downtown area could be for pedestrians, residents and nearby businesses.

Furthermore, commuters will be more willing to pay a toll to travel along an elevated viaduct than through a confining tunnel, where one's view and radio reception would be blocked, and where a traffic jam would be a miserable, even unhealthy, experience. I for one would never travel through a tunnel, if that is built, as I would find it claustrophobic -- and vulnerable to dangers.

I-586-002 A tunnel would be more vulnerable to terrorist attack than the open viaduct, and thus it would require costly security measures at all times. YET I HAVE NOT HEARD ANYTHING FROM ANY OFFICIALS OR TRAFFIC
EXPERTS ABOUT THOSE TYPES OF SECURITY EXPENSES!! PLEASE ADDRESS THAT
IN THE DEIS!

I-586-001

The views of Elliott Bay, Puget Sound, and the Olympic Mountains are prized by many. Views are currently enjoyed by motorists and passengers traveling on the upper deck of the existing viaduct. However, the views for motorists and pedestrians using downtown streets in the vicinity of the waterfront are interrupted by the existing viaduct structure. This structure is considered by some to be a substantial visual intrusion as well as a source of noise and shadow for the Pioneer Square Historic District and the Central Waterfront. Impacts to views are discussed in the Final EIS and considered in detail in Appendix D, Visual Quality Discipline Report.

The Final EIS considers tolling for all the proposed build alternatives.

I-586-002

Security is being addressed through design and discussions with the first responders (Police, Homeland Security, Fire Department, etc.). The operations and maintenance plan includes cost of staffing and maintaining the facility. Additional details regarding security expenses can be developed once the tunnel operator has been identified.

I-586-003 Moreover, built on an earthquake fault, on shifting landfill, it would not be safe in an earthquake, or would cost too much to ensure such safety.

I-586-004 I like that, according to the SEIS, "the new elevated structure alternative meets today's safety standards for roadway widths while minimizing he effects on view in downtown", and that "it proposes ramps to Columbia and Seneca streets that would have fewer effects than the Aerial Alternative". I like that it would "continue to provide views of the city skyline, Elliott Bay, and the Olympic Mountains for many drivers".

I-586-005 As for times of instruction, according to the SEIS, under the shorter construction plan, "traffic effects would be more intense than they would be under the other construction plans evaluated." I think that the traffic flow during construction must take priority over every other consideration, even if it does mean a significantly more protracted construction period.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

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I-586-003

The preferred Bored Tunnel Alternative is a safe alternative. Generally, structural engineers agree that tunnels are one of the safest places to be during an earthquake, because the tunnel moves with the earth. No Seattle tunnels were damaged during the 2001 Nisqually earthquake, including the Mt. Baker and Mercer Island I-90 tunnels, Battery Street Tunnel, Third Avenue Bus Tunnel, and Burlington Northern Tunnel.

The bored tunnel would be built to current seismic standards, which are considerably more stringent than what was in place when the viaduct was built in the early 1950s. The bored tunnel design includes improving relatively soft, liquefiable soils found near the south tunnel portal. Emergency exits would be provided every 650 feet in the tunnel. Project engineers have studied current data on global warming and possible sea level rise and concluded that the seawall provides enough room to protect the tunnel from rising sea levels. The engineers also considered the possible threat of tsunamis during the design process.

I-586-004

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the Elevated Structure Alternative. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2006, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

I-586-005

Chapter 3 of the Final EIS describes the current construction approach for each of the build alternatives. Replacing the viaduct will be a major undertaking that will involve years of construction. The project area is constrained by natural features and a dense built environment. During construction of the new road and associated structures (tunnel or elevated), ramp and lane closures would reduce the amount of traffic that the corridor could accommodate.

One important trade-off between the alternatives is the ability to maintain traffic on SR 99. Construction of the Bored Tunnel Alternative would keep SR 99 open for all but about 3 weeks of its nearly 5.4-year construction period. The Elevated Structure would close SR 99 to all traffic for 5 to 7 months during its 10 year construction period. The Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative would close SR 99 for the longest period of time during its 8.75-year construction period. This alternative would first close southbound SR 99 to traffic for 15 months before closing SR 99 in both directions for a period of 27 months. Then northbound SR 99 would be closed to traffic for an additional 12 months. During full closures, traffic would be detoured to parallel city streets and I-5. Chapter 6 of the Final EIS discusses the construction effects for each of the build alternatives.