



September 15, 2006

Kate Stenberg
Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project
c/o Washington State Dept of Transportation
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Stenberg,

B-022-001

As the owner of a prominent building located on Seattle's waterfront, I feel a responsibility to voice my objection to the replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. I have lived in Seattle all my life and have owned the commuter building, across from Coleman Dock, for many years. Like many people in Seattle, I have always had a "love/hate" relationship with the Viaduct. While we use it to navigate through the city, we seem to ignore the fact that it's an eyesore and has encouraged festering social problems.

Recently my sister-in-law visited from out of town and was excited to visit Seattle's storied waterfront. After parking beneath the viaduct, her eager anticipation quickly turned to dismay. As we stepped out of the car, our senses were assaulted by cars screaming overhead, smells of rotting garbage and human waste, and aggressive panhandlers. My sister-in-law's response was "How disgusting! Why in the world would Seattle let this happen to one of their greatest assets?" I had to agree with her.

In a Seattle Times article about the building of the original viaduct, John A. Thiry Sr., the designer of the Seattle Center grounds for the 1962 World's Fair predicted in 1947: "A two-deck will be so high, it will block off all bordering buildings from the bay. And I've never seen an overhead construction in any city that didn't create slum conditions all around it,"...and that's what happened.

The Viaduct had done its job, moving people from place to place, but times have changed and our city should reclaim one of its greatest assets. Seattle's downtown waterfront should be a place that is revered and celebrated by its citizens and visitors. Repairing or replacing the current Viaduct will not solve this problem. The people of Seattle and its visitors deserve a safe, clean, scenic, and traffic free waterfront that only the proposed underground tunnel will produce. I've seen great examples in Europe, San Francisco, Portland, and Vancouver B.C. of welcoming waterfronts with no barriers. I urge the

Windermere Services Company

5424 Sand Point Way NE • Seattle, WA 98105 • 206/527-3801 • Fax 206/526-7629 • E-mail wsc@windermere.com

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FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the 2006 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative. The alignment for the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative has been refined in the Final EIS. The lead agencies have identified the Bored Tunnel Alternative as the preferred alternative due to its ability to best meet the project's identified purposes and needs and the support it has received from diverse interests. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2006, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

B-022-001

WSDOT, City Council, Governor, and Legislature to find a way to make the tunnel option a reality, or if economics don't work, tear it down and leave it down!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John W. Jacobi', written in a cursive style.

John W. Jacobi

P.S. Please find an article by William Weis, which represents my sentiments, enclosed.

Enclosure

Cc: Governor Gregoire, Representative Frank Chopp, Seattle City Council

Tear down viaduct for a great city

GUEST COLUMNIST

WILLIAM WEIS

One distinctive feature of every great city is its ability to move people into and out of its center—and its resolve to keep through traffic far away from its heart and core. Consider this before dismissing the call to permanently remove the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

To argue for a highway going through the center of Seattle is to argue that Seattle should forfeit its urban center to provide a freeway link between Everett and Tacoma or between Shoreline and Olympia. That is precisely the kind of addled thinking that has destroyed most of the United States' once gleaming cities: Detroit, Atlanta, Miami, Toledo, Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles (yes, even Los Angeles was once a city, not so very long ago), and on and on. Not one of those examples survived the delusion that somehow building throughways through their urban cores would save them—and not one will ever be a city again.

We've been lucky in Seattle. Something is still left of an urban

center—but what is left is precarious and can survive only so many ill-begotten stadiums, lost mass transit opportunities, failed urban parkland initiatives and highways—including Interstate 5—through its town center. Great cities are not hosts to such scars as the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Would you expect to see a freeway dissecting the center of Paris? London? New York? Vienna? Rome? Vancouver?

Vibrant cities worry about how to get people into their centers and out of their centers—but never through their centers. In our case, the state Department of Transportation would like Seattle to sacrifice its soul to move cars and trucks up and down the I-5 corridor—to move people from one side of Seattle to the other. The Seattle City Council and the mayor's office should give notice to DOT, now, that downtown Seattle will no longer be an available alternative for moving cars and trucks from the north to the south of the state. Nothing—nothing—of urban essence will be lost by adding a few more dozen lanes to highways passing through Bellevue, which has no aspirations of ever becoming a city.

The existing infrastructure of

state Route 99 can be fully used in a system of access and exit points to move cars and trucks quickly into, and out of, the downtown Seattle grid. And that can be accomplished far more efficiently than is done by the current viaduct, which is clogged by vehicles passing through (more than 70 percent, even during rush hour) rather than going to and from Seattle. That will free up the north and south directions on SR 99 for people coming to and from Seattle, which is all that our city planners should be concerned about.

Thanks to earthquake vulnerability, we face an unexpected opportunity to begin turning back the movement to destroy what's left of Seattle as a city. Focus on how to make the waterfront and its adjacent spaces the commercial and residential center of Seattle, as are most all waterfronts in great cities with such fortunate geography. Mayor Nickels, tear down this viaduct!

William Weis, Ph.D., is director of the MBA Program at Seattle University's Albers School of Business and Economics.