From: Sophie Lagace
To: AWV SDEIS Comments;
CC:
Subject: Alaskan Way/Seattle Waterfront: Support for a highway-free option
Date: Friday, September 22, 2006 2:52:35 PM
Attachments:

To whom this may concern:

I-607-001

As a resident of Seattle, I am deeply interested in the fate of the Alaskan Way viaduct and seawall. As we all know, the viaduct and the seawall are in danger of catastrophic failure should a significant seismic event hit Seattle. We cannot afford to wait for such a disaster to happen; public safety, as well as wise logistic and financial management, require that Seattle and the State of Washington take action quickly.

Two alternatives have been at the forefront of the discussion: a new, expanded viaduct that would replace the existing one; and the current frontrunner option, a partial tunnel that would take Highway 99 underground for a limited segment between King Street and Pine Street, then into an open trench from Pine Street to Battery Street. Both options would include replacing the seawall with another similar, vertical structure (with the tunnel or trench section acting as a seawall segment in the selected alternative).

I would like to voice my support for an option that has received too little consideration until now: a combination of measures to redistribute and reduce traffic so that the new, rebuilt Alaskan Way would see reduced use, accompanied by a sloped, ecologically friendly seawall. This option has been conceived, evaluated and promoted by the People's Waterfront Coalition for the last three years. Although the proposed concept has received nationwide recognition for its quality, it has not received the attention it deserves from the City or the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

Many of the crucial measures proposed in the People's Waterfront

I-607-001

Many people asked the lead agencies to consider an alternative that would remove the viaduct and replace it with a four-lane surface roadway along Alaskan Way and include transit improvements. Without a host of improvements and modifications, a four-lane Alaskan Way would create even more congestion on I-5 and downtown streets than the alternatives evaluated in the Draft and Supplemental Draft EISs. Transportation studies performed for this project indicate that replacing the viaduct with a four-lane surface street would substantially increase congestion for most of the day and part of the evening on I-5 through downtown Seattle, downtown streets, and Alaskan Way. On downtown streets, traffic would increase by 30 percent; though traffic increases to specific areas like Pioneer Square and the waterfront could exceed 30 percent. With a four-lane roadway, traffic on Alaskan Way would quadruple to 35,000 to 56,000 vehicles per day compared to about 10,000 vehicles today. This traffic increase would make Alaskan Way the busiest street downtown, carrying more traffic than Mercer Street does today. The increased traffic congestion would also make travel times worse for buses, making transit improvements along these streets largely ineffective. Finally, neighborhoods west of I-5 (Ballard, Queen Anne, Magnolia, and West Seattle) would be less accessible and would face longer commute times.

I-607-001 Coalition's highway-free shore alternative are necessary or strongly advisable under any alternative considered.

I-607-002 In the short-term:

* Assess and implement measures to expand capacity on Interstate-5 as soon as possible;
* Remove bottlenecks and improve traffic flow on existing arterial streets that are currently under-used;
* Create priority freight routes on I-5 and improved arterial streets.

In the longer term:

* Improve and coordinate public transit systems;
* Stop the exodus toward the suburbs and stem traffic increase by encouraging denser, more pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

Seattle should start implementing these steps immediately, regardless of Alaskan Way replacement options. But beyond these elements, I urge WSDOT

I-607-003 and the City to consider /not/ rebuilding a freeway along our waterfront. The many benefits from the highway-free waterfront alternative include:

* Improved quality of life along the entire West Edge and Downtown area;
* Increased business opportunities in a highly valuable area;
* Reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to traffic reductions;
* Improved fish habitat in Elliott Bay;
* Improved recreational and tourist opportunities;
* Increased safety in the face of seismic events;
* Reduced costs compared to the other alternatives;
* Quicker completion compared to the other alternatives;
* More flexibility to respond to future changes in conditions;
* Promotion of sustainable solutions rather than relying on assumptions of open-ended growth.

The citizens of Seattle, King County, and the greater Puget Sound area need to be aware that the only two alternatives they have seen to date are not as good as they have been led to believe, and that there is another, better option available.

Sincerely,

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I-607-002

One of the main benefits of the Bored Tunnel Alternative is the ability to maintain operations on SR 99 throughout the construction period. Current construction plans call for a relatively short (several week) closure during the end of construction to connect the tunnel with the remainder of SR 99. A detailed discussion of the construction effects on transportation facilities and services is provided in Chapter 6 of the Final EIS Appendix C, Transportation Discipline Report. Also included in Chapter 6 is a listing of the planned construction transportation mitigation activities. Several of these mitigation actions would stay in operation after construction has been completed and would provide longer term benefits. Separate from this project, WSDOT is looking into ways to improve traffic flow along I-5, and the City of Seattle is working on the Central Waterfront Project. Both of these projects will consider access for all types of transportation modes throughout the Seattle area.

I-607-003

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