

**From:** [Brian Noves](#)  
**To:** [AWV SDEIS Comments](#);  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** Comments on the Viaduct  
**Date:** Friday, September 22, 2006 2:26:47 PM  
**Attachments:**

---

To the Planning Committee---Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project:

**I-628-001** The leaders of the State of Washington and the Puget Sound region have an opportunity to shape the region, not only for the foreseeable future, but for the next 100 years or more. The decision on the Alaskan Way Viaduct is monumental in my mind, because it is one of the first of the many crucial transportation decisions to be made, and can signal a change in the region's priorities when it comes to transportation projects.

For the Alaskan Way project, my recommendation is planning a street-level option, with both pedestrians and automobiles in mind. Like The Embarcadero in San Francisco, which replaced a raised freeway, Seattle could choose to reconnect the downtown and waterfront without attaching itself to an "albatross" project. The mounting transportation needs of the Seattle area, including the 520 bridge, have to be addressed with the next 10 years. The rapidly increasing population of the city, particularly with the high-density buildings being planned for the downtown, means a real mass transit solution (i.e. not buses) is necessary to lessen the strain on our roads. By choosing a street level option for Alaskan Way, this will force us to build mass transit that spans the entire Seattle region. The elephant in the room during all of these discussions is that for all of the environmental awards and kudos that our "green" city receives, it still does not have a world class mass transit system. But with the light rail going in over the coming years, the foundation for one is taking shape.

Originally I supported Mayor Nickels in his idea of a tunnel; however I now see that choosing the tunnel option, with its larger price tag and increased construction, would not benefit the city. Yes, connecting the downtown and the waterfront would be wonderful, but accomplishing that by sacrificing another 20 years without mass transit is ludicrous. The seawall repairs

## **I-628-001**

Sound Transit constructed the Central Link light rail line in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, which opened in 2009. Sound Transit is working on extensions to this initial light rail segment.

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-628-001

need to be completed, but the additional costs of a tunnel or a raised viaduct are not worth it. By making a tough decision and saving money on this project, a true regional plan can take shape. The introduction of north/south and east/west mass transit options would lessen the need for new roadways.

Having lived and worked in the city of Boston, I've seen first hand the effects that the Big Dig project had on that city, from a day-to-day travel standpoint and by viewing the rift that was created between the government and its citizens. For years, politicians and planners in Boston promised a transformed urban metropolis which would be worth the high cost overruns and years of delay. Today, the city IS transformed, but at a high cost, including the loss of innocent life due to lapses in oversight and shoddy construction. Seattle must learn from the mistakes of others: that while raised freeways are problematic, that certain solutions can be equally damning. By choosing a tunnel, the city risks the same cost overruns and years of construction nightmares that Boston suffered through. Please do not doom Seattle by not heeding history.

The State of Washington and the City should select a street level option, with increased pedestrian access and reduced traffic in mind, while saving necessary funds for the transit options that will benefit the city over the long term. A tunnel is unnecessary and will be too costly for the city and the region to absorb. Funding mass transit, bolstering the cross-lake bridges to support rail, and searching for options to take cars off of the streets should be the focus of the region, not new tunnels or problematic viaducts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Brian Noyes  
2116 N. 86th Street  
Seattle, WA 98103