

To: WSDOT, Alaskan Way/SR 99/ Replacement DEIS Staff  
RE: DEIS Comments  
FROM: Virginia Gunby, 2540 NE 90<sup>th</sup> St, Seattle, WA 98115

5/31/04

**Overall Comments:** First of all high complements must be given to those who prepared the Draft EIS for its form, content and the overall product. I have reviewed many transportation EIS documents since the 1970s, and this is one of the clearest and most informative documents that I have ever read. It meets SEPA and NEPA requirements and should be cited by those who rate Environmental Impact Statements, as a model for future documents of this nature. Thanks for doing the kind of work needed to truly withstand any legal challenges in the future, as well as providing a user friendly, objective review of WSDOT's five AWW alternatives.

- I-222-001** **Summary of My Comments:** The plans for the cut and cover tunnel are much cheaper and better than the initial work. The four freeway ramps initially proposed for the heart of the waterfront have been removed and replaced with open space. The proposed AW cut-and cover plan should improve the configuration and design of the connecting viaduct ramp along the length from the Pike Place Market to the Battery Street Tunnel. It must be better integrated with Seattle's plans for revitalizing pedestrian access and the renewal of the waterfront. The waterfront surface-level Alaskan Way should not be eight lanes.
- I-222-002** **Highest Priority for Expedited Construction and Funding:** The AWW replacement must be the highest transportation project priority in our state. WSDOT and the Legislature should seek state, federal and regional funding to replace it as soon as possible. The AW Viaduct/SR 99 is a major state alternative north/south, economic corridor through Seattle, and should be funded with substantial share of state transportation funds. In my opinion, the city of Seattle and the Port of Seattle need to bring predictable funding for sharing the cost of replacing the seawall of the project costs, since they are also primary interests, benefactors and partners in the completion of this project.
- I-222-003** Replacement opponents argue that the Viaduct corridor should not be rebuilt and that the city should study smaller projects to improve our transportation network. But they would not replace the capacity and service of the proposed facility. At the same time the proposed Monorail transit-way, running the length of the north/south Second Avenue, may reduce north and south corridor capacity movement by requiring a traffic lane be removed to provide adequate space between the monorail vehicles/structures and the adjacent buildings. It is unrealistic to remove the SR 99 corridor along the waterfront from the system. It will ultimately join in with new SR 519 connection to I-5 as part of a the interchange with I-90 and with the future SR 509 improvements and help to take the capacity pressures/limits off of I-5.
- I-222-004** **Innovative Funding Support:**  
**1. TIF** The public's investment in the replacement AWW structure will greatly benefit the values of adjacent central city urban properties. **Tax Increment Financing** to fund transportation projects could pay for part of the cost of the major new replaced facility. The public would for the first time get a well-deserved return through increased property taxes, earmarked to pay for part of the cost of the related transportation investment. We know that our state Constitution currently does not permit this type of financing, and amendments has been defeated at the polls in the past, but we need this reform to be able to fund future highway investments and we must pursue this important option as a long range objective.  
**2. Tolling** of the 110,000 a-day AWW users must be evaluated and used for another new approach to funding the high costs of the AWW, and for managing the use of the facility in the future. Tolling could be combined with a very effective Corridor Transportation Demand Management Policy/Agreement with the city as a tool to sustain capacity, reduce or stabilize use, particularly targeted at solo driven autos in the city of Seattle. We must build and manage new infrastructure that supports the city of Seattle's multi-modal policies to encourage transit and HOV use, to decrease gridlock and congestion in our regional center. (Great analysis has been done by the WSDOT office of Urban Mobility on Corridor TDM relating to the SR 520/Translake and I-405 Studies. Analysis of the AWW should be added to their work and tolls should be considered and implemented as part of the project.)
- I-222-005** **Overall Seattle Waterfront Priority Should be for People Over Vehicles--**Transportation should be a tool to implement the planned long-term waterfront development goals, with facilities that are not an end in itself. The AWW should be designed to improve the quality of life, livability and density of the downtown and help Seattle to meet our state and local growth management policies and goals.

## I-222-001

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the 2004 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 2004, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

## I-222-002

The state legislature authorized funding to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct in RCW 47.01.402. According to this law;

"The legislature finds that the replacement of the vulnerable state route number 99 Alaskan Way viaduct is a matter of urgency for the safety of Washington's traveling public and the needs of the transportation system in central Puget Sound."

This legislation also authorizes WSDOT to obligate two billion eight hundred million dollars. In order to fund this obligation the legislation further identifies sources of funding: \$2,400,000,000 of state funding; \$400,000,000 of toll funding. Both the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle are also contributing substantial funding to this project and other complementary improvements.

In the absence of toll funding WSDOT would still have the authorization to issue contracts up to \$2,800,000,000 but the mix of funding sources would change. It is assumed that the toll funding would be replaced by new or reprioritized federal, state, or local funding sources.

## I-222-003

The Monorail Project no longer exists. However, as you note, it is not

**I-222-006** **Best Project Alternative- Alaskan Way Viaduct** – Even though it is initially the most expensive, I support the cut-and cover-tunnel alternative, with some revisions I will discuss later. The transportation project is the catalyst for rebuilding the seawall and for stimulating a 21<sup>st</sup> century Renaissance of Seattle's 'front yard', our waterfront community. The whole will become worth more than the sum of its parts. The tunnel option allows an unprecedented opportunity to rethink and revitalize the Seattle waterfront in a manner worthy of its view vistas, access to the water and the natural environment, in addition to a revival, as a focus on the working waterfront, where needed. As part of the whole renewal, the AWW project needs to broaden its vistas to seek alternatives to replace highway capacity, in this important scenic section of our city. The waterfront should become truly the "Emerald" city's salt-water connection, and the "jewel" attraction.

**I-222-007** **Alaskan Way:** The current "no-person's land" of parking spaces, traffic noise and debris under the viaduct can be regained for a large strip of publicly owned property to be used for creating new open space and other planned public/private development. This can happen only if the elevated viaduct is removed and the number of the Alaskan Way highway lanes is reduced. Existing short-term parking spaces should be replaced with a plan for structured parking in the vicinity of the waterfront. Improved waterfront transit service/circulators should be planned for and implemented to revitalize our waterfront into a pedestrian friendly, well-designed destination activity/area for all kinds of water-related redevelopment and cruise/ferry services. Many obsolete waterfront warehouse structures currently adjacent to Alaskan Way could then be redeveloped. The existing "waterfront" trolley should be relocated to Western Avenue to create additional room on the waterfront for redevelopment and better transit integration and inter-modal connections to other parts of the CBD.

**I-222-008** **Alaskan Way Street Level;** I do not support the DEIS proposal in all of the viaduct replacement options to have Alaskan Way built with at least 8 lanes for vehicles. Through traffic should travel on the new, 6-lane underground state facility, in order that the people gain the use of the waterfront for everyone to enjoy. There should be no increase in present street-level roadway capacity. I urge you to seek to reduce the present capacity. The current proposal would leave less than 30% of the right-of-way for sidewalks and other activities. A great deal of public right-of-way could be available for new public and private uses, if the size of Alaskan Way was reduced, as part of an overall Waterfront Plan that Seattle is developing.

**I-222-009** **Viaduct Ramp to Battery Street Tunnel Needs Ree-evaluation:** This part of the WSDOT 's proposal is a challenge. Moving from underground grade to the level of the Battery Street Tunnel is a difficult construction problem to resolve. It should be revised to include a well-designed, non-weight-bearing viewing lid, around Pine Street to Battery, to reduce noise and integrate it into the redevelopment of the adjacent areas. If well planned it could become part of a new terraced pedestrian promenade from Pike Street down to the waterfront level. I-5 and Mercer Island I-90 have set precedents for partial highway lids over freeways. Portland removed a freeway adjacent to the river and replaced it with a fine waterfront park. San Francisco stopped the waterfront Embarcadero and replaced it with new development. The new Alaskan Way roadway from Pike to the Battery Street Tunnel needs some very of that creative thought and architectural guidance, so that it will be integrated into the overall waterfront plan. Without changing this important part, the money spent for under-grounding part of it could be wasted.

**I-222-010** **Bodemueller Work:** In the 1980's Klaus Bodemueller, a Seattle Architect who now lives and works in Austria, gave me a large legal-size book with a collection of copies and articles about his effort in the 1970/80s to convert the existing viaduct structure. He had worked diligently to gain support for reusing and rebuilding part of it into public viewing platforms, housing and park areas. Now that the structure has been irreparably damaged by an earthquake and is obsolete, the structural quality of the viaduct requires that it be removed in its entirety. I urge that a structurally sound remnant or a facsimile replacement can be used for a waterfront/Elliott Bay/Puget Sound viewing platform, as part of the new plan. It would be a historic reminder to all future generations, of the ugly, noisy, facility that negatively and positively impacted our Seattle waterfront for over the past 50 years. (I could loan you the Bodemueller collection to copy, if you do not have it in your library of project documents.)

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Thank you very much for your fine work on this DEIS. I look forward to reviewing future actions, the decisions to fund and to implement a new Alaskan Way cut-and-cover and revised elevated facility.  
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realistic to remove SR 99 from our transportation system. Careful study shows 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. The build alternatives evaluated in the Final EIS replace the existing capacity of SR 99 in the project corridor.

#### I-222-004

Yes, adjacent property owners could potentially receive indirect economic benefits associated with increased property values and increased potential for redevelopment. However, the lead agencies will not pursue state financing reforms to allow tax increment financing to fund this project.

Tolling the new facility is considered in the Final EIS.

#### I-222-005

If the Bored Tunnel Alternative, the preferred alternative, is chosen, the exact configuration and types of activities provided on the waterfront will be determined by the Central Waterfront Project led by the City of Seattle. The lead agencies are coordinating with the City on its planning efforts for that project. As the City moves forward with that project, there will be opportunities for the public to participate in the master planning effort and to help determine the future of their waterfront.

#### I-222-006

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the 2004 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 2004, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

**I-222-007**

If the preferred alternative, Bored Tunnel Alternative is chosen, the exact configuration and types of activities provided on the waterfront will be determined by the Central Waterfront Project led by the City of Seattle.

If the Elevated Structure or Cut-and-Cover Alternative is chosen, this project would include an Alaskan Way with two lanes each direction with center turn pockets along the central waterfront. Expanded open space, a waterfront promenade, broad sidewalks on both sides of the surface street, bicycle lanes, and parking are also included as part of these alternatives.

Please see the Final EIS for current information about the proposed build alternatives.

**I-222-008**

The Surface Alternative is no longer being considered. The lead agencies are not planning to reduce capacity in the corridor. In addition to improving the earthquake resistance, the purpose of the project is to "maintain or improve mobility, accessibility, and traffic safety for people and goods along the existing Alaskan Way Viaduct Corridor." Both the state and federal governments also require that traffic capacity be the same or greater than it is today as a qualification for funding.

**I-222-009**

A lid was incorporated into the design of the 2006 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative and evaluated in the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS. It was included in the project, due in part to numerous 2004 Draft EIS public

comments requesting the lead agencies to consider a lid in the Pike Place/Belltown area. The proposed lid would extend north from where SR 99 emerges from the tunnel's north portal near Pine Street to Victor Steinbrueck Park near Virginia Street. The design for this lid structure with the current Cut-and-Cover Alternative is described in this Final EIS and in Appendix B, Alternatives Description and Construction Methods Discipline Report.

**I-222-010**

Although retaining a portion of the existing viaduct as a view platform would provide an interesting public open space amenity, space along the waterfront is physically constricted, and preservation of a viaduct section would come at the expense of future transportation facilities and of public open space at ground level.