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2004 May 20

Attn: Allison Ray
Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project
c/o: Washington State Department of Transportation
Suite 2424
999 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Ray and the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project:

About three weeks ago, I attended one of the Draft EIS review meetings (at Leif Erikson Lodge, in Ballard). Thank you for your work thus far on this difficult and contentious project. I apologize for the delay in my response.

Let me preface my opinions by stating that I grew up in West Seattle and lived there for over 40 years; currently I live in Ballard and still use the viaduct rather than I-5 almost without exception. The viaduct is as important a lifeline for West Seattle as the West Seattle Bridge. I have both traveled through downtown and commuted to it.

1) Note: I did not spend much time looking at construction mitigation, as I believe the final result is the primary concern, whatever the pain required to get there.

I-223-001

2) Please don't underbuild; eliminate the Bypass Tunnel and Surface Alternatives. Though I wish the need for automobiles would diminish or even disappear, neither will happen in the foreseeable future. Capacity is strained with the present three lanes each direction, so down-sizing to two lanes each way is not viable.

I-223-002

3) Eliminate the Aerial Alternative. Given the current strong objection to the existing viaduct, I believe there would be tremendous outrage at building a larger and even more ominous structure (even if the supports are farther apart). I had a friend who was killed when the motorcycle he was riding was pushed over the side of the viaduct by a truck changing lanes, so I am painfully aware of the existing viaducts safety shortcomings. Though not as thoroughly as the Aerial Alternative, the Rebuild Alternative does provide partial shoulders, and significantly addresses safety issues.

I-223-003

4) That leaves the choice between the Tunnel and Rebuild Alternatives, unfortunately the two most expensive, but the Rebuild Alternative could be done as a complete tear-down, making it less expensive than the Aerial Alternative.

   a) **Rebuild Alternative and Seawall Replacement Projects**: These two major projects could be done independently, so any delays in the seawall projects need not interrupt progress on the viaduct. The combined effort might take longer than the tunnel, but if done as a complete tear-down, the viaduct itself might be rebuilt relatively quickly and more cheaply than the Aerial Alternative. However, federal funds might only be provided for the highway project and not for the seawall.

   From a practical point of view and for non-downtown residents, this alternative makes the most sense:

I-223-001

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments and recognize your objection to the Bypass Tunnel and Surface Alternatives. These alternatives are no longer being considered. Please refer to the Final EIS for the alternatives currently being evaluated.

I-223-002

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the Aerial Alternative. Elements of the Rebuild and Aerial Alternatives were incorporated into the Elevated Structure Alternative to meet today's safety standards while minimizing the effects of a wider structure. This alternative was analyzed in the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS, and the design was refined in the Final EIS. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2004, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

I-223-003

Elements of the Rebuild and Aerial Alternatives have been combined to form the Elevated Structure Alternative, which was analyzed in the Supplemental Draft EISs and Final EIS. The latest information on effects to parking, project costs, and the construction plan for the Elevated Structure are included in the Final EIS. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be provided along Alaskan Way.

I-223-003

- Maintains best traffic flow by keeping downtown exit and entrance ramps.
- Maintains public parking for sports events, concerts, shopping, business, and tourists.
- Least expensive viable alternative (if done as a tear-down).
- Probably shortest interruption of highway traffic flow for construction.
- Maintains the most pleasant and scenic highway section in the city.
- Find extra money and the imagination to give it architectural interest; make it a feature of the city (like the original, now sunk, floating bridge once was) instead of a blight on it.
- Add a no-pedestrian bikeway to the structure. This would improve the safety, speed, and viability of bicycle commuting to, from, and through downtown.

I-223-004

b) **Tunnel Project (with Integral Seawall):** This is a single larger project, with more chance for delays (for the highway), however integral use of the seawall as part of the tunnel structure provides some economy in overall cost and schedule, which may prove to be greater than anticipated. Most or all of the seawall could probably be built prior to demolition of the viaduct, limiting likelihood of delays once highway flow is interrupted. Also, since the seawall is integral to the highway, federal funds might be provided for a greater percentage of the overall cost.

From the points of view of downtown livability and aesthetics this alternative makes the most sense:

- Maintains most of the current traffic flow capability and convenience.
- Overall cost may be lower than anticipated (especially for Washington residents).
- Overall project might be completed faster, minimizing waterfront impacts.
- Greatly improved downtown environment for pedestrians, workers, tourists, and residents.
- Improved aesthetics of downtown from other areas and views from downtown.
- Addition of desirable waterfront area greenspace.
- Opportunity for a mini, bicycles-only viaduct. (If the tunnel requires towers to get exhaust fumes above street level, they could be used for some of the supports.)
- Note: A friend expressed some fear of tunnels but indicated that natural light filtering through the ventilation grating in the Battery Street Tunnel makes it more bearable.

I-223-005

Recommendations:

Provisos (whatever the final choice):

- At least 75% of public (on street) parking beneath the existing viaduct is returned to public parking.
- Space occupied by the existing viaduct should be kept as public property.

This is a very tough call, and I don't yet have an absolute choice.

The Rebuild Alternative makes good sense. It would provide travellers stunning views and make city life most pleasant for thousands of non-downtown residents. Build it as a complete tear-down, and use those savings toward adding an integral bikeway and making it an architecturally interesting feature of the city. The Golden Gate Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the original Lake Washington Floating Bridge (now sunk) are examples of structures that make a city proud, not remorseful.

For the city as a whole, the Tunnel Alternative may be the right thing to do? The actual cost for residents could be less than for a viaduct. However, you are underestimating the value and need for mid-downtown entrance and exit ramps. Work them into the project, or at least make provisions for later addition. Also, seriously consider the bicycles only viaduct idea as a follow-on project while placing and sizing ventilation towers.

Sincerely,

Dan Gunderson

I-223-004

The Final EIS analyzed two tunnel alternatives: Cut-and-Cover Tunnel and Bored Tunnel. The Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative would include the replacement of the seawall because it would be a component of the west tunnel wall. The Bored Tunnel Alternative does not include the replacement of the seawall because the alignment of the bored tunnel would not be along the seawall.

The lead agencies have identified the Bored Tunnel Alternative as the preferred alternative. Please see the Final EIS for current information about the alternatives considered and the environmental analysis. The Elliott Bay Seawall will be replaced by the City of Seattle.

I-223-005

After the 2004 Draft EIS was published, your comments along with others led to additional planning, analysis, and the revised alternatives presented in the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS. Following publication of the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS, there was not a consensus on how to replace the viaduct along the central waterfront. In March 2007, Governor Gregoire, former King County Executive Sims, and former City of Seattle Mayor Nickels initiated a public process called the Partnership Process to develop a solution for replacing the viaduct along the central waterfront. Details about the project history are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2004, please refer to this Final EIS for the current information.

In January 2009, Governor Gregoire, former King County Executive Sims, and former Seattle Mayor Nickels recommended replacing the central waterfront portion of the Alaskan Way Viaduct with a single, large-diameter bored tunnel. After the recommendation was made, the Bored Tunnel Alternative was analyzed and compared to the Viaduct Closed (No Build Alternative), Cut-and-Cover Tunnel, and Elevated

Structure Alternatives in the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS. The comments received on the 2004 Draft and 2006 Supplemental Draft EISs, subsequent Partnership Process, and the analysis presented in the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS led to the lead agencies' decision to identify the Bored Tunnel Alternative as the preferred alternative for replacing the viaduct along the central waterfront.

The configuration of Alaskan Way and amount of parking provided on the waterfront will be determined by the Central Waterfront Project, which is being being led by the City of Seattle as a separate project. The area beneath the viaduct is owned by the City of Seattle and will remain under its ownership once the viaduct is removed.