

Viaduct Draft EIS Comment
Seattle, April / May 2004

I-366-001

None of these alternatives offered takes full advantage of this incredible opportunity for Seattle. The Alaskan Way Viaduct has cut Seattle off from its waterfront since the 1950's. The end of its useful life offers us a chance to remedy one of the worst urban planning decisions in Seattle's history, and reclaim our connection to Elliott Bay. Other cities around the globe have recognized and remedied similar mistakes, to the current and long-term benefit of their communities. I believe that the City of Seattle and the Central Puget Sound region will be more vital and more successful if we do not build a new highway along Seattle's central waterfront.

Improvements to the larger transportation system -- arterial connections, the express lanes and entrances and exits on I-5, the downtown grid-- and to transit would allow us to accommodate Viaduct freight and car traffic with existing resources. This simpler and more efficient approach offers us the mobility we need at a cost we can afford, without a decade of disruption to businesses and residents, and the billion dollar liabilities of a megaproject. We should not give up our city's most valuable ecological, civic, and economic land for just a highway. We have a once in a century chance to do better, and we owe it to ourselves and our children to be rethink the way we provide stewardship to Seattle's waterfront. Therefore, I urge you to include a "no-highway" alternative in the Viaduct EIS, to spread the traffic out onto existing resources and open up the larger possibilities for the shore.

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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.