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AWVSP Team Office

May 28, 2004

Ms Allison Ray
Washington State Department of Transportation
999 Third Avenue South, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: AWV/SR:99 Draft EIS - Comments

Dear Ms Ray:

The State of Washington and City of Seattle face enormous challenges in the years ahead with the redevelopment of the Alaska Way Viaduct and the related connections to the adjacent street grid. The AWV/SR:99 project is a hugely important development for the future of our region and the complexity of the proposed construction phasing and full redevelopment of the corridor is simply mind-boggling.

The three undersigned organizations represent just three of the many organizations that call Seattle Center home. Taken together, however, we draw over 10 million visitors to the Seattle Center campus each year. The majority of our visitors rely on the I-5 corridor and SR:99 to get to Seattle Center. It is therefore of keen interest to us collectively that proposals for modifications to these major traffic corridors are ones that have been fully studied to create more efficient traffic connections to the campus.

B-013-001

Because of the size and complexity of the AWV/SR:99 project it's possible that elements of the plan and its numerous alternatives may not have been as fully coordinated as you might have liked. However, we wanted to draw your attention to the following three specific topics that appear to have received less than adequate review: 1) traffic flows on a two-way Mercer from the I-5 corridor to First Avenue North; 2) traffic distribution around the perimeter of the Seattle Center campus with the elimination of Broad Street, and finally 3) the mitigation of traffic impacts during the construction of each phase of the overall project.

Two-way Mercer
We understand that responsibility for implementation of Mercer Street improvements is divided between the Mercer corridor study being handled by City of Seattle Department of Transportation and the AWV/SR:99 project. The component of the work under the auspices of AWV/SR:99 is a two-way Mercer Street from Dexter to Fifth Avenue North. The scope of work to be carried out by SDOT is Mercer Street from I-5 to Dexter. Apparently the study of traffic flows and impacts west of Fifth Avenue on Mercer Street is not yet within any agency's review. How will a two-way Mercer Street west of Fifth Avenue (two lanes eastbound and two lanes westbound) handle the traffic volumes that are currently handled by six lanes? Will signal wait times be increased? What volume of traffic will be handled by the proposed two-way Mercer and how does this compare to existing conditions?

B-013-001

Since the publication of the Draft EIS in 2004, the project has evolved. The City of Seattle is leading separate projects to improve Mercer Street between Elliott Avenue W. and Fifth Avenue N. and from Dexter Avenue N. to I-5, which will accommodate two-way traffic. These improvements will coordinate roadway design and construction work with the City to improve Mercer Street between Fifth Avenue N. and Dexter Avenue N.

The Final EIS and Appendix C, Transportation Discipline Report, contain details about the current alternatives, traffic routes and detours during the construction period, and mitigation measures.

B-013-001

We understand from Seattle Center staff that testing and modeling of proposed traffic alternatives for a two-way Mercer will occur sometime this summer. We also understand that selection of the Preferred Alternative for AWV/SR:99 will also occur this summer. How can we be assured that analysis of impacts will be calculated and results integrated into the selection of the Preferred Alternative?

Traffic Distribution Around the Campus

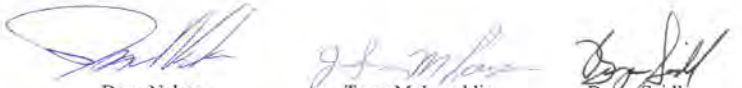
Parking facilities for Seattle Center are distributed around the perimeter of the campus. This distribution of parking has been an intentional design effort to spread parking and congestion impacts around the full perimeter of the campus, not just at Mercer. Broad Street, despite its circuitous route at Valley, becomes an efficient distributor of traffic around the perimeter of the campus to reach parking. With the elimination of Broad Street in all of the AWV/SR:99 alternatives how will this distribution occur? What routes are suggested to replace Broad and what studies have been done to predict changes in travel times to reach all sectors around the campus? This could have a significant impact on our visitors trying to easily reach the Science Center, the Space Needle or KeyArena. Absent thorough consideration and satisfactory resolution of this issue, we urge that Broad St. be retained for service to the Seattle Center campus, no matter what Mercer alignment is selected.

B-013-002

Construction Phasing

The AWV/SR:99 DEIS indicates that the construction period for implementation of all improvements will take from 7.5 to 11 years, depending on the alternative selected. What are the likely impacts associated with traffic rerouting during this period and what sequence of construction phasing might provide the best mitigation for traffic? We know that a broad scale program of communication with our visitors will help this mitigation but we would like the benefit of knowing that every effort has been made to make this extended construction period as manageable as possible.

Sincerely,



Dean Nelson
Space Needle Corporation

Terry McLaughlin
The Seattle Sonics and Storm

Bryce Seidl
Pacific Science Center

Cc: Virginia Anderson

B-013-002

The 2004 Draft EIS evaluated one construction plan that considered brief closures of SR 99 during construction, but otherwise assumed that at least two lanes would be provided in each direction on SR 99 or an alternate detour route. In comments received on the 2004 Draft EIS, many people asked the lead agencies to consider more than one construction plan. Specifically, many people wanted to know if closing the corridor would reduce the amount of time it takes to build the project. To respond to this question, three different construction plans were developed (a shorter construction plan, an intermediate construction plan, and a longer construction plan) and evaluated in the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS. Since 2006, the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel and Elevated Structure Alternatives and the construction approach for each of the alternatives have been refined. One construction plan is analyzed for each of the alternatives (Bored Tunnel, Cut-and-Cover Tunnel, and Elevated Structure) in the Final EIS. Chapter 3 describes each alternative and its construction plan, and Chapter 6 describes construction effects.