From: Tom Fucoloro [tfucoloro@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 13, 2010 6:40 PM
To: AWV SDEIS Comments
Subject: EIS shows that the tunnel does not accomplish its goals

I-047-001

From a post I wrote at Seattle Bike Blog: http://seattlebikeblog.com/2010/12/07/is-this-even-a-better-waterfront/

So this is the dream view of the waterfront after the deep bore tunnel project? Really? And the only big difference between this vision and the surface/transit option is that there is a $2 billion tunnel underground that costs $7 round trip and will only reduce traffic by 47,000 vehicles per day? Oh, and there's basically no transit in this plan. And no I5 improvements.

I don't get it. I thought the big benefit of the tunnel was that we would have this beautiful new waterfront park. Sure, there's more space along the waterfront for a park (clearly the red space in the image is not yet designed). But there is also a big four to six-lane boulevard that is harder to cross on foot than the viaduct (the P.I. has more "before and after" pics here).

Look, I know some of you are really sick of talking about this tunnel. But I really, really don't understand what is good about it. No one has yet to give me one good reason, and I can't just let a mistake this large go. The best you get is, "The viaduct is ugly." People say this will keep traffic moving, but that's just not true. Without new alternatives (like improved transit service), the tunnel project will dump 65,000 more cars into downtown streets. That's not a solution that drivers should be embracing. For the price tag, you should demand better!

What is that price tag? Well, $2 billion to move 40,000 cars per day comes out to about $42,500 per car. I have crunched those numbers a bit before here, but let's put them in perspective another way. We could build Portland's entire bike infrastructure for the same cost we will be paying to move just 1,500 cars through the tunnel. For the cost of just 5,882 cars, we could complete the entire bike master plan.

Or think about it this way. If we spent even a fraction of that $2 billion on transit and biking, I bet we could get 40,000 cars per day off the road entirely. For example, 100,000 vehicles drive over the upper and lower West Seattle bridges every day (tens of thousands of which end up on the viaduct). What if there were light rail to West Seattle? How many thousands of people would take it instead of driving?

This is a giant investment in unsustainability. We cannot talk of big environmental dreams and waning ourselves off foreign oil if even forward-thinking Seattle invests this kind of money on a project that only encourages the movement of people and goods via vehicles. Like Martin at Seattle Transit Blog, I would rather build another viaduct with transit and money savings than build a tunnel. At least the investments in transit will provide more people with a viable alternative to driving.

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The Final EIS Chapter 2, Alternatives Development, describes the environmental documentation and alternatives analysis that occurred prior to the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS, which included the I-5, Surface, and Transit Hybrid. This approach was seriously considered, but was rejected because the lead agencies determined it lacked the capacity to serve the long-term needs of the region. The Surface and Transit Scenario Year 2030 Analysis Results is included in the Final EIS Appendix W, Screening Reports.

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 that it has received from diverse interests. If the Bored Tunnel Alternative is selected, the final configuration of Alaskan Way and design of the public space along the central waterfront would be determined through the City of Seattle's Central Waterfront Project.

Overall project costs are included with the project description and are used for the analysis of economic impacts. Cost estimates for mitigation are included in the overall project costs. These estimates, along with other cost estimates, are refined as the planning and design process proceeds and details are developed. All cost estimates allow for escalation and inflation and include contingencies for unforeseen events. The project is included in the financially-constrained long range plan adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council (the area's Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO). Cost estimates for the alternatives evaluated in the Final EIS are:

- Bored Tunnel – $1.96 billion
- Cut-and-Cover Tunnel – $3.0 to $3.6 billion
- Elevated Structure – $1.9 to $2.4 billion

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The state is taking public comments on the environmental impact statement until December 13. You can send your comments to awv2010SDEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov.

If you have an argument that justifies even a fraction of the tunnel's cost, please comment. I really want to be convinced so I can stop stressing about it. And "Stop arguing and build the damn tunnel" or "It's a done deal, fuhgettaboutit" do not count as arguments.

We have stopped terrible highway projects that were "sure things" before. I now live a couple blocks from the almost-built Thomson Expressway. I can't thank the citizens who fought to stop that atrocity enough.

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These cost estimates do include different elements. The Bored Tunnel Alternative cost does not include replacing the seawall, improving the Alaskan Way surface street, or building a streetcar. Costs for the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel and Elevated Structure Alternatives do not include replacing the seawall between Union and Broad Streets.