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of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration

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August 12, 2011

Ms. Angela Freudenstein Angove
Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project
999 Third Ave., Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Federal Transit Administration Comments on the
Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project Final EIS

Dear Ms. Angove:

F-001-001 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project 2010 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Our primary interest is how the Project will affect local transit agencies' ability to provide adequate service and increase transit's mode share, as called for in all relevant regional planning documents.

FTA has concerns with WSDOT's conclusion that the Project requires no ongoing transit mitigation because it causes no long-term adverse impacts. As discussed in the CEQ guidance document, "NEPA's 40 Most-Asked Questions,"

The mitigation measures discussed in an EIS must cover the range of impacts of the proposal. The measures must include such things as design alternatives that would decrease pollution emissions, construction impacts, esthetic intrusion, as well as relocation assistance, possible land use controls that could be enacted, and other possible efforts. Mitigation measures must be considered even for impacts that by themselves would not be considered "significant." Once the proposal itself is considered as a whole to have significant effects, all of its specific effects on the environment (whether or not "significant") must be considered, and mitigation measures must be developed where it is feasible to do so. Sections 1502.14(f), 1502.16(h), 1508.14.

As we wrote in our December 2010 comments, FTA believes the FEIS would have benefitted had it specified the transit mitigation measures that WSDOT intends to employ. However, we suggest that the ROD can and should acknowledge that the Project will have impacts on transit, and require that WSDOT develop and implement effective measures to reduce those impacts.

F-001-002 We recognize that it may be appropriate to defer the detailed work relating to transit operations until closer to the facility's 2016 opening, and that it will require considerable coordination to best determine appropriate measures, given the range of the project's effects from the Stadium District south of the King Street and Union Stations, along Alaskan Way and past the ferry facilities, throughout downtown Seattle surface streets, and as far north as

F-001-001

The project will not have significant impacts to transit, and the Final EIS discusses mitigation as required by CEQ and FHWA regulations. The project includes several features that will benefit transit operations in the downtown Seattle area. These are described in Chapter 3, Question 4 of the Final EIS and in Appendix C, Transportation Discipline Report and in the Project Commitments section of this Record of Decision. In brief, both the south and north portals include transit bypass lanes that will allow buses to pass general traffic in entering the downtown street grid. Overall transit access through downtown Seattle will be improved by the project as it will support service through more of the street grid than is presently possible; however, transit travel times will vary because access points will change. This is described in the Final EIS in Chapter 5, Question 14.

F-001-002

The foreseeable transportation effects of the Bored Tunnel and associated mitigation measures are described in Chapters 5 and 8 of the Final EIS and in Appendix C, Transportation Discipline Report. There are no further foreseeable effects or mitigation measures to include in this Record of Decision. FHWA, with WSDOT and SDOT, will continue to work closely with transit service providers to ensure the entire transportation system functions smoothly and benefits its users. We look forward to FTA's assistance in this process.

F-001-002 Seattle Center, and affecting multiple transportation services.¹ FTA does not believe that those factors either obviate the need for mitigation or render the mitigation infeasible.

F-001-003 FTA urges that the ROD also address two other issues regarding the FEIS's treatment of mitigation. First, in the FEIS, the Project's proposed Technical Advisory Committee would be charged with developing strategies to ameliorate the impacts of toll-caused diversion on "the transportation network," that is, "on all users" – without any commitment to transit-specific mitigation. Transit's significance to the functioning of the region's densest population center suggests the TAC should be expressly directed to seek transit-specific measures in addition to "network" solutions.

In addition, as noted above, FTA believes the ROD should commit WSDOT to funding the necessary mitigation measures as part of the Project. At a minimum, the ROD should specify that WSDOT must pursue implementation of and seek funding for all appropriate mitigation, not only "[f]or improvements on state facilities or requiring state funding." (FEIS, p. 216) The quoted language might be construed to relieve the Project of seeking to fund mitigation for many of the impacts to King County Metro transit service, for example.

F-001-004 We have worked with WSDOT for many decades on multimodal transportation solutions and consider your leadership in transportation planning, access and equity to be amongst the best in the county, so we also appreciate the challenging nature of this complex project. Thank you for considering our concerns and suggestions for improving its implementation.

Sincerely,



R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

cc: Dan Mathis, Federal Highway Administration
David Mosley, Washington State Ferries
Joni Earl, Sound Transit
Kevin Desmond, King County Metro
Peter Hahn, City of Seattle DOT
Randolph Everett, FHWA

¹ Washington State Ferries, the City of Seattle, Sound Transit, King County Metro, King County Ferries District, the Seattle Monorail, and Amtrak.

F-001-003

The Final EIS includes an analysis of the operational effects of build alternatives on transit travel times, which are described in Chapter 5, Question 14. The Final EIS includes a commitment to mitigate for operational effects of tolling through the establishment of a Tolling Advisory Committee (see Final EIS Chapter 8, Question 1). FHWA understands transit measures will be considered by the Tolling Advisory Committee. King County will be directly involved in the work of the Tolling Advisory Committee.

F-001-004

FHWA appreciates your comments and looks forward to working with FTA in implementing this important project.