

From: [T. Gould](#)
To: [AWV SDEIS Comments](#);
CC:
Subject: Comments on Viaduct Project: Realistic Alternatives Needed
Date: Friday, September 22, 2006 5:59:48 PM
Attachments:

22 September 2006

Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project
Washington State Department of Transportation
999 Third Ave., Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Draft EIS Staff:

I-593-001 | The recent updated cost estimates for the Alaskan Way Viaduct project only confirm what has been more and more obvious over time—that neither the tunnel nor the aerial structure alternatives is financially viable. The visual, noise, aesthetic, and waterfront impacts of a replacement aerial Viaduct are too horrendous to contemplate so this alternative ought to be dropped from consideration. While the proposed tunnel opens the waterfront and can lead to vast economic and recreational benefits, the price tag is too great to justify the risk involved in implementing this alternative. The realistic solution is to carefully study a Transit + Streets alternative and remove the present viaduct and construct a four-lane pedestrian-friendly boulevard for a continuous SR-99 route that is well integrated with the existing street grid.

I-593-002 | I have some specific comments on particular design alternatives that are still relevant to all of the possible alignments, including the surface boulevard option that I suggest. Regarding the segment between the Battery Street Tunnel and the north end of the central waterfront, I favor the alignment that lowers SR-99 to pass underneath Western and Elliott Avenues. This routing will produce a less steep slope from the BST to the central waterfront where I propose the roadway be at the surface. Pedestrian lids can be included in the design west of the Pike Place Market to provide wide connectivity to the waterfront over a few blocks of the roadway length. I found the presentation

I-593-001

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.

I-593-002

Thank you for your input on the design concepts. Several of the components you mentioned, such as SR 99 traveling under Elliott and Western Avenues, are a part of the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative, which is one of the three build alternatives discussed in the Final EIS.

I-593-002 of the alternatives somewhat deceiving at the project Open House on September 14, since the graphics seemed to imply that certain size pedestrian lids were associated with a particular selection of SR-99 under or over Western and Elliott Avenues. Only in discussion with staff did the mix and match nature of these alternatives become clear. The larger pedestrian lid coupled with SR-99 underneath these two avenues should be the preferred alignment.

The new South End design concept which constructs an overpass for S. Royal Brougham Way over SR-99, but sends the highway over S. Atlantic St. is preferred to the original design for this area. This alignment can tie in with a surface boulevard option as well as with a tunneled alignment. The design of the road connections in this area needs to be concerned with keeping freight rail corridors intact and not limiting the possibility of direct rail-to-ship cargo transfers at Port of Seattle marine terminals. The Royal Brougham interchange can serve as one junction where traffic can disperse to or from city streets and SR-99. This new South End alternative is likely to cost less money to construct and cause fewer disruptions during the construction period.

I-593-003 An approach that emphasizes moving people and goods, not just vehicles is needed for the SR-99 corridor. WSDOT and other stakeholders need to seriously examine how to remedy the crumbling viaduct through major investments in enhanced transit service, improvements to the street grid to handle redistributed traffic, and construction of a four-lane boulevard along the waterfront to connect the Battery Street Tunnel with the south alignment of SR-99. The project is affordable, feasible, and it creates the least impacts to the environment and downtown commercial activities.

I-593-004 Finally, the implementation of any alternative needs to consider and make allowances for the possible addition of a mass transit line in the corridor. As petroleum prices continue to rise, and urban living becomes more attractive, the addition of mass transit capacity through downtown Seattle will become more important than the addition of capacity to the highway system. The less expensive solution for the highway will allow us to afford more expansions to the mass transit system in the coming future.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS.

Sincerely,
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I-593-003

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.

I-593-004

The project would include a bus-only ramp on northbound SR 99 between S. Holgate Street and S. Royal Brougham Way. Bus-only lanes would also be provided at the north end. The project also would connect the street grid in the south and north ends of the corridor thereby enhancing access to transit and potentially added transit coverage. The City of Seattle's Central Waterfront Project could potentially identify further transit improvements, particularly along Alaskan Way.