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AWWSP Team Office

May 27, 2004

Allison Ray  
Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Office  
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-882-5287

RE: Comment on Draft EIS

Dear Ms. Ray,

The Pioneer Square Community Association (PSCA), which represents over 700 businesses, residents, and property owners in the Pioneer Square neighborhood, submits this response to the Viaduct draft EIS.

Our response will focus on three key areas:

- What option does the Pioneer Square community prefer?
- What neighborhood mitigation efforts should occur in association with this project?
- How should Pioneer Square relate to the waterfront once the project is complete?

**What option does the Pioneer Square community prefer?**

The PSCA polled over 600 members of the organization to ask which option does the community prefer.

Of the responses received, 79% prefer the tunnel option. Thus, the Pioneer Square Community Association officially endorses the tunnel option as the preferred option identified in the DEIS.

The PSCA would also like to encourage WSDOT to fully investigate the current unofficial option of the "No build, No replacement" option that is being promoted by the People's Waterfront Coalition. This option should be included in any future decision matrix regarding the Viaduct.

Finally PSCA would like to encourage WSDOT to investigate the possibility of shortening the overall construction time of the viaduct replacement by completely closing the project area to present viaduct traffic. The shortened construction schedule and cost savings could potentially greatly outweigh the increase in disruption from a loss of circulation.

**What neighborhood mitigation efforts should occur in association with this project?**

The Pioneer Square National Historic District is a fragile and unique neighborhood that will suffer exponentially during the construction of a tunnel

PIONEER SQUARE: Where Seattle begins

### C-003-001

FHWA, WSDOT and the City appreciate PSCA's continuing involvement with the project. Thank you for your comments. PSCA's preference for the 2004 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative is acknowledged. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2004, please refer to this Final EIS for the current information.

Many people asked the lead agencies to consider an alternative that would remove the viaduct and replace it with a new seawall, a four-lane surface roadway along the Alaskan Way surface street, and transit improvements. A four-lane Alaskan Way would create even more congestion on I-5 and downtown streets than the six-lane roadway evaluated in the Draft EIS. Careful study of this alternative shows 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. With so much traffic shifted to street level, Alaskan Way won't be the pedestrian-friendly waterfront you would expect without a viaduct. The increased traffic congestion would also make travel times worse for buses. Finally, neighborhoods west of I-5 (Ballard, Queen Anne, Magnolia, and West Seattle) would be less accessible and would face longer commute times.

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,

C-003-002

to replace the Viaduct. To fully mitigate the expected impacts upon our neighborhood, the Pioneer Square Community Association stands ready to assist WSDOT, SDOT and the City of Seattle in conducting community outreach to fully determine the extent and depth of projected impacts upon our neighborhood.

Our Association will advocate strongly for an appropriate mitigation package to be established and would like to begin work immediately with the Federal, State and City agencies in a collaborative, problem solving, and transparent method to establish this critical piece of the overall Viaduct replacement project.

C-003-003

**How should Pioneer Square relate to the waterfront once the project is complete?**

As a National Historic District, Pioneer Square's unique historic and cultural resources will be at risk both during and after the Viaduct project and it is critical that the neighborhood be given special design assistance in determining the ultimate look and feel of the post-Viaduct waterfront area.

We envision a very special place once the Viaduct replacement tunnel is built that is free from any net increase in roadway but still ensures the connectivity that is critical to our neighborhood's business district vitality. Special consideration should also be given in Pioneer Square to recognize the historic nature of our waterfront and convey through public art and history panels the continuing adaptation of this space to the changing face of Seattle's urban experience.

Sincerely,

Craig Montgomery  
Executive Director

Glen Scheiber – GBSRE  
PSCA Viaduct Planning Group Chair

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.

**C-003-002**

Thank you for your comment and your association's willingness to help with mitigation planning. FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle have been working with the Pioneer Square community (including your organization) since the Draft EIS was published to discuss construction effects and mitigation measures. These discussions will continue throughout project construction. In addition, the Final EIS provides much more detail about construction effects and proposed mitigation.

**C-003-003**

Under the Bored Tunnel Alternative the configuration of the Alaskan Way surface street will be determined by the Central Waterfront Project, which is a separate project being led by the City of Seattle. With the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel and Elevated Structure Alternatives, the Alaskan Way surface street would be improved as part of the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project. Under all alternatives, the design of Alaskan Way and other features in the Pioneer Square Historic District area will be done with its history in mind and be reviewed by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board.