



August 28, 2006

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Jane Garvey, Chair
Expert Review Panel
C/O WSDOT
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Attn: Barbara Gilliland, ERP Administrator

RE: Chamber support of a cut-and-cover tunnel and study of construction impacts

Dear Chair Garvey:

C-049-001

As representatives of the Seattle and Puget Sound business communities, we believe that the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project is the single most important transportation project in the State of Washington. Only the SR-520 Bridge approaches the viaduct in the danger it poses to the safety of the Central Puget Sound region's residents and the health of our state's economy. Therefore, replacing the viaduct in a timely manner remains the top transportation priority of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

C-049-002

Chamber Prefers Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative

Consistent with our May 2004 position, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce supports replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct with the preferred cut-and-cover tunnel alternative, as outlined in the SDEIS.

We fully understand and appreciate that the tunnel alternative's benefits are numerous. Initial 2004 data from Berk and Associates indicated that over a billion dollars of new activity would be created in the City. Recent independent economic analysis by Glenn Pascall has concluded that the completed tunnel alternative's potential revenue generation would far exceed the higher cost of the core project. No other alternative offers the same long-term benefits and opportunity to create a truly world class waterfront than does the tunnel.

In addition, the cut-and-cover tunnel option allows a combined replacement of a portion of the seawall with the western wall of the tunnel. This is a considerable cost savings to the project and moreover means the waterfront won't be disrupted twice by major construction activities.

C-049-003

Serious Study of Construction Impacts is Necessary

Irrespective of which alternative is ultimately chosen, questions still remain about the economic impacts of construction and we urge the project team to thoroughly study these costs and provide a plan for support and mitigation of affected businesses and a growing number of downtown residents in the Final EIS.

Perhaps the greatest challenge, regardless of which alternative is chosen, is measuring and planning for the massive construction effort that will be necessary to complete the project. It was originally envisioned in the 2004 DEIS that, in a side-by-side tunnel scenario, two lanes of traffic in each direction could be temporarily placed in the

C-049-001

Thank you for your support of the project and recognition of the urgent need to replace the viaduct.

C-049-002

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments on the 2006 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative. The alignment for the Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative has been refined in the Final EIS. 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 it has received from diverse interests. Because the project has evolved since comments were submitted in 2006, please refer to the Final EIS for current information.

C-049-003

Economic impacts specific to the Central Waterfront properties were identified in Sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.6, and 6.3.2 of the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS Economics Technical Memorandum. These have been updated in Appendix L, Economics Discipline Report, of the Final EIS. Probable significant adverse impacts are not expected for either the Port of Seattle or the Ballard/Interbay industrial areas with the exception of a decrease in freight mobility and increase in congestion for truck traffic as they use alternative freight routes. The loss of freight mobility will have a resultant loss in productivity, which is discussed in the Economics Discipline Report of the Final EIS as a cost of congestion.

Probable significant adverse impacts for Downtown Seattle would be limited to those properties abutting the construction zone (east and west sides). Significant impacts to the bulk of downtown Seattle will revolve primarily around the increase in congestion as traffic is displaced from the immediate corridor and is absorbed on the surface street network. The increase in congestion will have a resultant loss in productivity, which is discussed in the Economics Discipline Report of the Final EIS



C-049-003

western-most tunnel during construction. Later investigations in the ventilation systems showed that this was not feasible and it appears that construction impacts will be significant.

We understand that the question of how to build any alternative is still open at this point and the project team is considering a range of options with varying amounts of disruption, cost, and time impacts. It is essential that utmost consideration be given to the movement of freight and the flow of commerce, especially during periods of time when the viaduct and Alaskan Way are closed and traffic is at its worst. Waterfront businesses will be especially challenged to maintain operations while the heaviest construction is taking place right at their door steps. The economic stability of the City, the region, and even the state could be jeopardized if the construction and mitigation plans are not well thought through and carefully devised, taking into consideration the needs and concerns of all stakeholders.

Moreover, the Port of Seattle is one of the largest and busiest ports in the United States. The demand to unload and rapidly move cargo throughout the region is essential to the City and the state's continued growth and economic presence regionally and worldwide. The industrial area south of downtown also relies on the use of SR-99 to move goods. Limiting freight travel during or after construction could have serious negative consequences and this issue must be thoughtfully addressed in the Final EIS.

The Chamber supports studying what the construction impacts could be to downtown and what must be done in terms of mitigation and compensation to protect travelers and the economy.

Recently a group of waterfront businesses and cultural institutions have started constructive talks with City of Seattle officials. We applaud this first step towards a specific plan for mitigation to ensure that, after the decade of disruption is over, we still have a vibrant and viable waterfront, a thriving downtown core, and a safe and well-designed transportation artery that serves our entire regional economy.

C-049-004

Finally, the Chamber supports the concept of a Local Improvement District as a fair method to partially fund construction of the cut-and-cover tunnel, however we believe this tax increase should not be collected until after the project is completed and the rise in property values is realized.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important project. The Chamber looks forward to working with you and the project proponents to improve this vital transportation corridor.

Sincerely,

Steve Leahy
President & CEO

James R. Peoples
Chair

Mary O. McWilliams
Incoming Chair

Cc: Governor Christine Gregoire, Mayor Greg Nickels, Deputy Mayor Tim Céis, Seattle City Councilmembers, Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald, Expert Review Panelmembers, Alaskan Way Viaduct SDEIS Manager Kate Stenberg

as a cost of congestion.

A primary goal of construction planning is to maintain adequate access to all businesses so they can continue to operate. As construction phasing and staging is refined throughout the design process, it may be determined that it is neither reasonable nor feasible to maintain access to some businesses. If adequate access cannot be maintained, impacts to affected businesses will be mitigated as discussed in Chapter 8 of the Final EIS. If provisions of the Uniform Relocation Act are met, then relocation assistance would be provided.

Construction activities, especially along the central waterfront and, to a lesser extent the north waterfront, would interfere with access to businesses and properties adjacent to the project on either side of the right-of-way. The project team has met numerous times with the businesses and property owners in the central and north waterfront to prepare them for the upcoming construction and to solicit input on a variety of mitigation strategies (see Chapter 8 of the Final EIS). We anticipate close coordination with nearby businesses and property owners continuing through the rest of the design process and all stages of construction.

C-049-004

A local improvement district is not being considered as part of the proposed funding plan for replacing the viaduct; however, the City of Seattle may consider one as part of the Central Waterfront Project.