



1301 5th Avenue
Suite 2500
Seattle, WA 98101-2611

206.389.7200
206.389.7288 FAX
www.seattlechamber.com

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C-002-001

FHWA, WSDOT, and the City of Seattle appreciate receiving your comments in support of the Bored Tunnel Alternative.

Angela Freudenstein
Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project
Wells Fargo Building
999 Third Ave., Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104-4019

RE: Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement SDEIS

Dear Ms. Freudenstein,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project. We commend WSDOT, the City of Seattle and FHWA for the thorough discussion of alternatives and environmental impacts in this SDEIS. This supplemental document stands on the shoulders of two earlier EIS's, and as a cumulative evaluation it is very thorough in all areas. As required by SEPA/NEPA, some of the analysis includes 'worst-case' scenarios that we're confident can be mitigated or avoided as the process goes forward. We support the decision to not include the so-called 'Surface Alternative' in the SDEIS because it reduces capacity and thus does not meet the project's defined purpose and need.

The Seattle Chamber Continues to Support the Bored Tunnel

In 2009, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce Board of Trustees voted unanimously, on behalf of the nearly 2,400 member companies we represent in this region, to endorse replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct with a bored tunnel. This summer, the Board made the timely and successful completion of the Bored Tunnel one of its top policy priorities. After reviewing the SDEIS, the Chamber would like to voice its continued full support for the bored tunnel. We thank you for listening to stakeholders and the broader community to develop a project that does three important things: creates jobs, relieves congestion, and opens the waterfront.

It Creates Jobs

The Tunnel + Transit project will create thousands of construction jobs, at a time when we need them most. It minimizes economic impacts by allowing the Port of Seattle and the current Viaduct to remain open during construction. It also provides long-term regional economic

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benefits on one of our most important transportation corridors. Moreover, the faster we get going on this project, the more we can put people back to work and save taxpayer dollars by taking advantage of a highly favorable bidding climate.

It Relieves Congestion

The Tunnel + Transit project will maintain capacity and today's travel times for trips through downtown. Other project improvements will help improve mobility for residents, businesses, commuters, transit users and visitors and make it easier to access downtown Seattle. Also, the Tunnel+Transit plan includes \$190 million to fund one million more hours of transit per year and ultimately provide more transportation choices to a broader segment of the population.

Doing nothing in the "Surface Alternative", on the other hand, would have unloaded 110,000 vehicles per day onto downtown streets and guaranteed gridlock. It would have been "game-day traffic" every day, all day long. Construction of a new surface-road would have taken at least 4 ½ years, and drivers could have faced up to 2 years of detours. The surface-road would have also required 27 new stop lights on Alaskan way between SODO and Belltown. According to WSDOT, it would have taken 48 minutes to drive from Greenwood to the airport in stop-and-go traffic, and it would have taken a half an hour to get from West Seattle to downtown or from Ballard to downtown. Ambulances and emergency vehicles would have been stuck in traffic gridlock. According to the Secretary of Transportation, these traffic delays on SR99 would have virtually shut down I-5 and made it a parking lot for most of the day.

It Opens the Waterfront

The Tunnel+Transit project provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to create nine acres of new open space on a waterfront that will be free of the constraints imposed by the existing Viaduct. It will provide a welcoming place for pedestrians, bicycles and transit, restore our shoreline, manage carbon emissions, and capture and clean much of downtown Seattle's stormwater, which is a big boost for the clean-up of Puget Sound. It will eliminate noise, shadowing and view blockage from the existing Viaduct. Finally, it promises to be a new regional center for community activities, tourism and commerce while reducing the environmental impact of cars.

Conversely, according to WSDOT studies, the do-nothing 'Surface Alternative' scenario would have taken away over 400 parking spaces to make room for tens of thousands of idling cars and trucks. It would have hurt downtown merchants and small businesses like those at the Pike

Place Market that depend on a vibrant pedestrian-friendly environment and regional mobility. It would have also increased noise levels to an average of 60 decibels (about the same noise level as standing next to a very loud lawnmower). According to Gehl Architects, an independent and well-respected architectural firm from Copenhagen, the do nothing 'Surface Alternative' would have been the worst possible outcome for the waterfront and downtown's fragile urban landscape.

Let's Get Moving

Public safety and the Viaduct's significant risk of structural failure require that we move the tunnel to construction as soon as possible. Sufficient time has been devoted to the process. It's been nearly ten years since the Nisqually quake shook the Viaduct. Since then, 700 community meetings have been held, 15,000 public comments have been registered and a year-long process that included stakeholders representing diverse interests from across the region deliberated on the solution. Everyone gave something up in that process, but in the end 24 out of the 25 stakeholders reached a broad-based consensus about a positive path forward that was based on the data, the costs and benefits, and the different perspectives each stakeholder brought to the table. The project was subsequently endorsed by the governor, the state legislature, King County, the Port of Seattle, the City of Seattle and a broad and diverse coalition of over 150 business, labor and environmental groups from across the region.

The project has strong accountability and project oversight controls. It is fully funded by the state, and the state has set aside hundreds of millions of dollars within its budget for risk and inflation, providing a significant cushion for any issues related to the tunneling portion of the project. Doing nothing, on the other hand, would have put the project at risk of losing \$2.4 billion in state money that is already on the table. That could have left the City of Seattle on the hook for the entire project costs, amounting to billions of dollars the city doesn't have—particularly during a recession.

It's important to remember that over 150 tunnels have been built in Seattle since 1890, mostly in glacial soils. The most recent example is the Beacon Hill light rail bored tunnels, which were completed on-time and on-budget. Sound Transit is currently boring another tunnel under Capitol Hill. Tunnels as large as Seattle's were recently successfully completed in Hamburg, Moscow, Shanghai and Madrid. Unquestionably, we have the tools and expertise to do this project. It's time to move forward.

By advancing the Tunnel + Transit project, this SDEIS recognizes the safety issues posed by the Viaduct's significant risk of structural failure. It improves mobility, helps create thousands of construction jobs, keeps the economy moving and provides long-term regional economic benefits. It also provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a new waterfront that's a welcoming place for people, bikes and transit.

The Seattle City Council recently voted 8 to 1 to move the Tunnel + Transit project forward. During these proceedings, representatives from a broad coalition of over 150 individuals, elected officials and organizations urged the City Council to advance the project. Support came from groups as diverse as Allied Arts, Anderson Hay & Grain in Ellensburg, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the King County Labor Council, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the Pike Place Market PDA, the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, the Seattle Aquarium and the Waterfront Legacy Committee. Testimony came from baristas, bloggers, bicyclists, construction workers, small businesses, pedestrian activists, and multicultural leaders from the African-American, Filipino-American, Vietnamese-American, Chinese-American, Hispanic-American, Eastern European-American, and Somali-American communities. Support also came from neighborhood leaders from Queen Anne, Downtown, Belltown, Rainier Beach, Seward Park, South Park, the University District, Pioneer Square, West Seattle, Montlake, and Ballard, just to name a few. See the attached 22 page document for the full record of supportive statements from the community.

It's time for all of us to advance this consensus decision forward and leave the chance and risk of further delay and political deadlock behind.

Thank you for your continued leadership and resolve on this vitally important project.

Sincerely,



Phil Bussey
President & CEO