

THE UPTOWN ALLIANCE

3227-13th Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 206/283-2049

December 2, 2010 DRAFT

Angela Freudenstein
SDEIS Comments Coordinator
Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project
999 Third Avenue
Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104
Awv2010sdeiscomments@wsdot.wa.gov

Dear Ms. Freudenstein:
Re: Uptown Alliance Comments on Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

C-008-001

OPTIMIZING THE UTILIZATION OF BIKE, PEDESTRIAN, AND BUS RAPID TRANSIT MODES IN THE UPTOWN TRIANGLE
Section 13: Project Element: Surface Parking lot adjacent to the Tunnel Operations Building, bounded by Harrison St., Aurora Ave., and Thomas St.

How would the urban centers' economy be permanently affected?
Why is this an important question for the economic development of the Uptown Urban Center and the South Lake Union Urban Center?

- The new surface blocks of Aurora Ave. at the boundary of the Uptown Urban Center and the South Lake Union Urban Center can offer prime mixed use redevelopment sites in a part of these urban centers that has had poor access, but which will become very accessible as Harrison and Thomas Streets are carried across Aurora Ave.
- Surface parking lots are not a preferred type of development in the Queen Anne Plan or the Uptown Design Guidelines.
- The economic health of urban centers depends on the successful use of retail/service space fronting on the sidewalks. A surface parking lot destroys this potential on the aforementioned block face.

C-008-002

Why is the planned parking lot an important environmental issue?

- King County has experienced the nation's largest mode shift for all categories of trips to transit over the last decade – a trend that is projected to continue, despite current transit revenue shortfalls from taxation.
- Washington State government has adopted legislation aimed at reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT.)
- One practical response to the mode shift and VMT reduction is the establishment of bus rapid transit RapidRide transit routes. The route with the widest catchment area will be the Aurora route connecting to the Community Transit Swift service at the north King County line and to dozens of other routes in downtown Seattle.
- The South Lake Union and Uptown Urban Centers, major job locations, will be served by the Aurora RapidRide service.

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C-008-001

Overall, the infrastructure improvements in the north area would improve truck freight mobility and vehicle and pedestrian connections. In turn, these benefits would improve business efficiencies due to the increased circulation near the project area.

The surface parking lot adjacent to the Tunnel Operations Building would provide necessary parking for WSDOT employees stationed at the north portal's Tunnel Operations Building. Currently the remainder of the block is parking; therefore, the future use would not be inconsistent.

C-008-002

The parking lot adjacent to the tunnel operations building would be needed for employees working at the operations building. It would not be a public parking lot.

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C-008-002

• Therefore a functional transit hub connecting the Aurora RapidRide service to bike, pedestrian, and other transit services on the planned surface blocks of Aurora Ave. is an important consideration.

The current plan for a half-block surface parking lot adjacent to the Tunnel Operations Building would preclude construction of a transit hub facility on the west (southbound) side of Aurora Ave. between Harrison and Thomas Streets. King County Metro has indicated that this block face is the preferred stop location serving these two urban centers for the southbound Aurora Rapid Ride service.

A transit hub structure in that location could provide bike storage/service, bike share rentals, food service, pedestrian way-finding, and miscellaneous retail.

Why or why not implement the two following concepts that would retain the parking function for WSDOT and provide for a transit hub which would encourage RapidRide ridership and the use of bike and pedestrian trip extension into Seattle's Center City urban centers?

- 1/ Create a 30' setback along the west side of Aurora Ave. between Harrison and Thomas Streets. This setback would allow a minimal transit hub structure and would invigorate the retail/service economy of both urban centers.
- 2/ Create a public/private project to redevelop the half-block bounded by Harrison St., Aurora Ave., and Thomas St. which would provide space for a transit hub, housing or offices, and other commercial space. The developer would provide parking space for tunnel-related vehicles.

C-008-003

NORTHBOUND TURNS FROM SIXTH AVENUE TO MERCER STREET

It is our understanding that the Viaduct Team determined that a traffic signal allowing NB turns from Sixth Avenue to Mercer Street has been included as part of the Curved Alignment Alternative for Sixth Avenue. The SDEIS Document states this is a possibility, but our understanding is that the alternative now includes the signal. The SDEIS should be updated to reflect this. The signal is an important facility to provide improved access between the Uptown Urban Center and Downtown Seattle.

C-008-004

WIDENING THE MERCER UNDERPASS AT AURORA

The Uptown Alliance supports the need for a six-lane Mercer (with appropriate turn lanes) between Dexter Avenue and Fifth Avenue. While the SDEIS indicates this is included in the preferred alternative, the Uptown Alliance would like to be on record stating that the six-lane widening under Aurora is critical for both motorized and non-motorized transportation needs.

C-008-003

The Final EIS has been updated to reflect this change. Please see the Final EIS, Appendix C Transportation Discipline Report.

C-008-004

The Final EIS assumes that Mercer Street would be widened to six lanes. The Mercer Street widening project is a separate project being undertaken by the City of Seattle. Please refer to SDOT's website for more information on the project.

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C-008-005

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ENSURING ADA COMPLIANCE FOR DISABLED-EQUIPPED VANS STALLED IN THE TUNNEL

Will the Deep Bore Tunnel constructed at the width now designated by the winning contractor group provide space on the shoulders for a van equipped to access a wheelchair to unload in an emergency situation?

Thank you for your consideration of these land-use, global warming, and transportation issues that relate to the proposed surface parking lot adjacent to the Tunnel Operations Building parking lot.

Sincerely,

John Coney, Co-Pres.

Rick Hooper, Co-Pres.

C-008-005

The project is subject to compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) so the final design of the project will meet all the necessary ADA requirements. However, roadway shoulders are not subject to ADA requirements, like sidewalks. The current roadway design within the bored tunnel includes a 2-foot-wide shoulder on one side and an 8-foot-wide shoulder on the side where the emergency exits are located. The 8-foot shoulder is a reasonable width for vehicles to pull off the road in case of emergency. Whether a wheelchair accessible van can unload entirely within the shoulder will depend on the type of wheelchair lift with which it is equipped.

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