

SR 519 INTERMODAL ACCESS PROJECT PHASE 2: SOUTH ATLANTIC CORRIDOR

Visual Quality Discipline Report

Prepared for



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and

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

C

CEQ Council on Environmental Quality

E

EIS environmental impact statement

F

FHWA Federal Highway Administration

I

I-90 Interstate 90

I-5 Interstate 5

N

NEPA National Environmental Policy Act

R

RFFAS reasonably foreseeable future actions

S

SEPA State Environmental Policy Act

SODO South of Downtown

SR 519 State Route 519

W

WSDOT Washington State Department of Transportation

Glossary of Technical Terms

Context-sensitive design – A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical surroundings and is responsive to the community’s scenic, aesthetic, social, economic, historic, and environmental values and resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.

Intactness – Measures the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.

Landscape unit – Subunits of a study area that make evaluating the entire study area easier. Visual character and visual continuity define these landscape units.

View – Aspects of the environment that a viewer can see from the study area and what the viewer can see of the project from nearby surroundings.

Viewer – Person who has views of or from the project. We usually discuss viewers in terms of general categories of activities, such as resident, motorist, or pedestrian, and we often refer to them as “viewer groups.”

Viewer sensitivity – The extent of the viewer’s concern for a particular view or viewshed. Described as low, medium, high.

Viewpoint – An identified location and position of a viewer.

Viewshed – The area that a viewer can see from the project and surrounding area.

Visual or landscape character – Impartially describes what exists within the landscape. Both natural and built landscape features and their relationships make up the character of an area or view. The perception of visual character can vary greatly between seasons and can even vary between hours as

weather, light, shadow, and the elements that compose the viewshed change. The basic components used to describe visual character for most visual assessments are the elements of form, line, color, and texture of the landscape features. To further define visual character, the appearance of the landscape is described in terms of its dominant features, scale, diversity, and continuity. The types of land uses that can be seen in a landscape also greatly influence visual character. Examples include landscapes located in farmland that can be said to have a rural character or landscapes set in downtown business districts that have an urban character.

Visual quality – An assessment of the visual character of a viewed landscape which identifies the character-defining features for selected views. This assessment asks: Is this particular view common or dramatic? Is it a pleasing composition (with a mix of elements that seem to belong together) or not (with a mix of elements that either do not belong together or are eyesores and contrast with the other elements in the surroundings)? Three attributes are used to determine visual quality. They are; vividness, intactness, and unity. The visual quality of a viewed landscape is evaluated and given a numeric rating based on the relative degree of its vividness, intactness, and unity. The visual quality rating is devised by adding the ratings of vividness, intactness, and unity and dividing their sum by three. Visual quality is ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 indicating a high (desirable) degree of visual quality. Vividness, intactness, and unity are described below.

Vividness: Describes how the elements of landform, water, vegetation, and human development combine to form a memorable composition. Vividness is ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with a rating of 7 indicating a high degree of vividness.

Intactness: Measures the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements that are visually inconsistent with the viewed landscape. Well-kept urban and rural landscapes can

have a high degree of intactness. Encroachment is ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with a rating of 7 indicating no encroachment and 1 indicating a high degree of encroachment.

Unity: Measures the compositional harmony of the landscape or the degree of visual coherence when considered as a whole. High unity frequently reflects an intact natural landscape or in a human altered landscape, the careful design of individual components and their relationship in the landscape. Unity is rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing a landscape with a coherent, harmonious (desirable) visual pattern.

Summary

What is the proposed project and why is it needed?

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) proposes to construct improvements to State Route (SR) 519 in Seattle as Phase 2 of the SR 519 Intermodal Access Project.

The project would include three components:

- A proposed new Interstate Highway 90 (I-90) off-ramp to South Atlantic Street (I-90 off-ramp)
- A proposed new South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass (BNSF Railway overpass)
- Roadway widening along the existing South Atlantic Street east of First Avenue South and improvements to the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street

SR 519 is an important thoroughfare for cars, trucks, and pedestrians in Seattle's South of Downtown (SODO) district. In 2004, WSDOT opened Phase 1 of the SR 519 project, consisting of the South Atlantic Street overpass (Edgar Martinez Drive) and a new on-ramp from South Atlantic Street to Interstate Highway 5 (I-5) and I-90. The Proposed Action (SR 519 Intermodal Access Project – Phase 2: South Atlantic Corridor) would complete the SR 519 project by providing a direct westbound connection from the I-5/I-90 freeway system to the Seattle waterfront and Port of Seattle. Currently, westbound traffic from the freeway exits at Fourth Avenue South and follows a circuitous route to South Atlantic Street to cross safely over the BNSF Railway tracks located just east of Safeco Field and Qwest Field. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic on South Royal Brougham Way must use an at-grade railroad

crossing. New roadway structures are needed to allow vehicles and pedestrians to reach their destinations safely, quickly, and directly.

The Proposed Action would connect the existing westbound off-ramp from I-5 and I-90 to the current South Atlantic Street overpass, and it would construct improvements at the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street and widen South Atlantic Street to accommodate traffic along this new route. A grade-separated crossing over the railroad tracks at South Royal Brougham Way would also be built.

This project would increase traffic mobility and safety by improving connections between Interstates 5 and 90 and Port of Seattle terminals, the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock, waterfront commercial interests, and the stadium area. The project would also allow people to walk more safely to and from the stadium area.

What is the affected environment?

The affected environment for this Visual Quality Discipline Report is located in the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center near the southern edge of the South of Downtown (SODO) district, in the heart of Seattle's stadium area. The affected environment encompasses all locations from which the new improvements would be seen. However, given the developed nature of the area where the Proposed Action would be built and the number of large-scale facilities that would block or partially block views of the improvements, the affected environment (or viewshed) for this discipline report focuses on areas that would be in the foreground (within 0.25 mile of the viewer) and middleground (between 0.25 and 2 miles of the viewer) viewing distances from the improvements. These areas are contained along four straight corridors that include Fourth Avenue South between South Jackson Street and South Holgate Street, First Avenue South between South Massachusetts Street and South Royal Brougham Way, and both South Atlantic Street and South Royal Brougham Way between Alaskan Way South and Fifth Avenue South.

Potential viewers of the proposed project were classified as either “motorists” or “neighbors”. Motorists include drivers and passengers of vehicles, buses, and trains. They include residents, tourists, or others passing through the study area. Their views of the study area are of short duration. Neighbors were categorized as business employees and customers, pedestrians and bicyclists, stadium/event center patrons, and residents. These viewers tend to have views of the project that are of longer duration than motorists.

How were the effects of the project on visual quality analyzed?

The project team followed a procedure recommended by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for assessing the visual effects of highway projects (FHWA, 1988). They divided the study area into four landscape units, each of which has a different visual character. Each landscape unit is represented by one or more viewpoints selected to describe existing visual conditions and to identify and evaluate the effects of the Proposed Action on visual character and visual quality.

The assessment of the project’s compatibility with respect to visual character involved a qualitative evaluation of how consistent project elements (along with potential mitigation measures) would be with the existing character of the study area as seen from each viewpoint. To assess the project’s compatibility with visual quality, the project team assigned numeric rating scores for existing and with-project attributes (vividness, intactness, and unity) to determine how visual quality would change with the project. A substantial decline in visual quality would be considered to occur if there were a consistent decline in visual quality ratings near a project without the ability to offset the decline with mitigation measures.

What visual quality effects would occur during construction of the project, and what mitigation is proposed?

Construction could temporarily affect the project footprint and the surrounding area. Typical construction effects that temporarily affect visual quality include dust, the presence and movement of equipment and materials, removal of existing vegetation, exposure of soils, glare and lights associated with construction, storage of construction materials, and general visual changes to the viewed landscape during the duration of construction. Rerouting traffic would temporarily increase traffic volumes in some areas, and this could be considered to produce a temporary negative visual effect. Because of their temporary nature and lack of substantial effect, no measures are proposed to mitigate construction-related effects on visual quality. Screening of construction staging sites could be considered in visually sensitive areas, and night lighting could be shielded so that the light does not go offsite.

What visual quality effects would occur during operation of the project, and what mitigation is proposed?

Potential long-term effects of the Proposed Action on visual quality would include the following changes:

- Views along the portion of South Royal Brougham Way near Safeco Field and the Qwest Field Event Center as well as Third Avenue South and Fourth Avenue South as a result of building the South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass
- Views of walls/fences along the BNSF Railway tracks in the South Royal Brougham Way right-of-way
- Views of approach fill (walls) that would be visible underneath the overpass from Occidental Avenue South, South Royal Brougham Way near First Avenue, and South Royal Brougham Way near Third and Fourth Avenues
- Views of the new I-90 off-ramp connecting the existing I-90 westbound ramp to South Atlantic Street,

particularly from a short segment of Fourth Avenue South where the structure would impinge upon views of downtown buildings (including Seattle designated historic landmarks) to the north and Mount Rainier to the south

- Minor changes to lighting, glare, and shading

To minimize adverse effects on visual quality, WSDOT would incorporate various types of mitigation. Among the measures would be incorporating context-sensitive considerations into the design of the project components to help them better fit into their visual environment. Architectural and urban design themes or elements from the study area (particularly from the stadiums and existing highway features) could be used in the project to reinforce existing character and improve or minimize negative effects on visual quality. Using I-90 design standards and design standards developed for Phase 1 of the SR 519 expansion project could also help the project components to blend in with existing highway features and help ensure visual continuity. A number of potential mitigation measures are identified in Chapter 5 (Exhibit 5-7).

Although the Proposed Action would permanently change the visual environment for people traveling on SR 519 or viewing it from the surrounding area, the project would be consistent with the existing industrial and sports-stadium/exhibition-center complex character of the study area. The changes in the visual quality ratings of the six representative viewpoints that were selected to assess changes to visual quality would be very minor. Three of the viewpoints would experience slight declines in visual quality. Viewpoint 3, South Royal Brougham Way near Third Avenue South, would decrease slightly, but still be rated as low. Viewpoint 4, South Royal Brougham Way near Occidental Avenue South, would decrease slightly from average to between moderately low and low. Viewpoint 6, Fourth Avenue South, would change from slightly above moderately low to slightly below moderately low. The mitigation measures would very slightly increase visual quality for three of the viewpoints. Viewpoint 1, Fourth Avenue South near South Royal Brougham Way, and Viewpoint 2, Fourth

Avenue South near South Royal Brougham Way, would improve slightly, but remain moderately low. Viewpoint 5, South Atlantic Street, would improve somewhat, but remain moderately low.

What cumulative effects would there be on visual quality?

The Proposed Action would not contribute substantially to a cumulative change in the visual environment of the study area in the reasonably foreseeable future. Potential mitigation measures could help improve the visual quality of the study area by creating a more visually consistent or intact viewed landscape and introducing more human-scale elements to help soften the large-scale human-made elements that visually dominate the study area. The No Build Alternative would contribute somewhat to a cumulative decline in the visual quality of the study area by perpetuating the increasing trend in traffic congestion in the vicinity of Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way near the railroad crossing.

Are any of the identified effects considered substantial?

No effect of the Proposed Action on visual quality would be substantial. The project would introduce elements into the viewed landscape that would be consistent with the existing visual character of the study area. The project elements would be consistent with the existing industrial and sports-stadium/entertainment complex character of the study area. Existing transportation elements such as elevated freeways and ramps along with arterial roads are major and visible parts of the urban landscape in the study area, and the structural components of the Proposed Action would be similar in scale, form, line, and color. By introducing additional large-scale transportation elements to the viewed landscape, the Proposed Action would result in slight increases in visual quality ratings for three viewpoints (Viewpoints 1, 2, and 5) and slight decreases in ratings for three viewpoints (Viewpoints 3, 4, and 6). These changes are not considered to be substantial.

What effects on visual quality would occur if the Proposed Action were not built?

Under the No Build Alternative, the visual quality of most of the study area would generally remain the same, although future large-scale projects could affect visual character and quality. These effects could be either negative or positive, depending upon how much consideration is given to improving or maintaining visual quality when planning and designing new projects. One part of the study area where visual quality would be expected to decline under the No Build Alternative would be the area along South Royal Brougham Way. Increased traffic volumes and traffic conflicts among passenger vehicles, freight trucks, trains, bicyclists, and pedestrians would cause the visual environment to deteriorate and would have a negative influence on the public perception of that location.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1 Why is visual quality considered in this report?

The construction or modification of public highways can have a considerable effect on the visual character and quality of the landscape. Visual resources along a highway are particularly important; research has shown (FHWA, 1988) that the view from the road is the basis for much of what people know about their everyday environment and helps to shape their mental image of the landscape. Likewise, views of highways and related infrastructure also have a great influence on the visual environment that many people experience daily.

Because of the public nature and visual importance of highway projects, it is important to assess and consider both negative and positive visual effects during project construction and operation. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that all actions sponsored, funded, permitted, or approved by federal agencies undergo planning to ensure that environmental considerations such as effects related to aesthetics and visual quality are given due weight in project decision-making. The State of Washington Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) mandates a similar procedure for state and local actions. The assessment is also useful in identifying how project elements can be designed to harmonize better with the surrounding landscape.

2 What are the key points of this report?

The improvements associated with the Proposed Action would generally be compatible with the existing visual character of the study area and would have minor effects on visual character and quality. Although the proposed project would permanently change the visual environment for SR 519 users and viewers

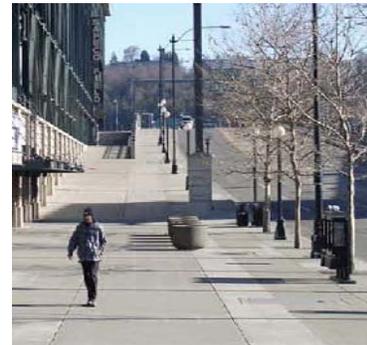
from the surrounding area, it would be consistent with the existing character of the study area. Changes in visual quality ratings would not be substantial. WSDOT would incorporate context-sensitive considerations into the design of the project components to help them better fit into their visual environment. Architectural and urban design themes or elements from the study area (particularly from the stadiums and existing highway features) could be used in the project to reinforce existing character and improve or minimize negative effects on visual quality. Using I-90 design standards as well as SR 519 Phase 1 standards would help the project components to blend in with existing highway features and help ensure visual continuity.

The greatest change to visual quality would occur along South Royal Brougham Way between Third Avenue South and Occidental Avenue South. These changes would be due to the presence of the South Royal Brougham Way rail overpass and, to a lesser extent, the associated stairs and elevator. Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians crossing above the railroad tracks would avoid the existing situation of traffic backups at the railroad crossing, and avoid passing by the unattractive areas that parallel the railroad tracks east of the Safeco Field. This would improve viewers' visual experience compared to the existing situation.

The elevated structure on South Royal Brougham Way would provide views looking west along the north face of Safeco Field toward First Avenue South and close-up views of the plaza that the spiral ramp would wind around. Other changes to the viewed landscape in the study area would be concentrated in the area along Fourth Avenue South, South Atlantic Street, and First Avenue South near South Atlantic Street. These changes would have less effect on visual quality than the changes along South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South.

Chapter 2 Description of Alternatives

SR 519 is an important thoroughfare for cars, trucks, and pedestrians in Seattle's South Downtown (SODO) district (Exhibit 2-1). In 2004, WSDOT opened Phase 1 of the SR 519 project, consisting of the South Atlantic Street railroad overpass (Edgar Martinez Drive South) and a new eastbound on-ramp from South Atlantic Street to I-5 and I-90. The overpass separates road and railway traffic at Third and Fourth Avenues South and improves access to the freeway system from important waterfront facilities such as the Port of Seattle terminals, railroad freight yards, and the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock.

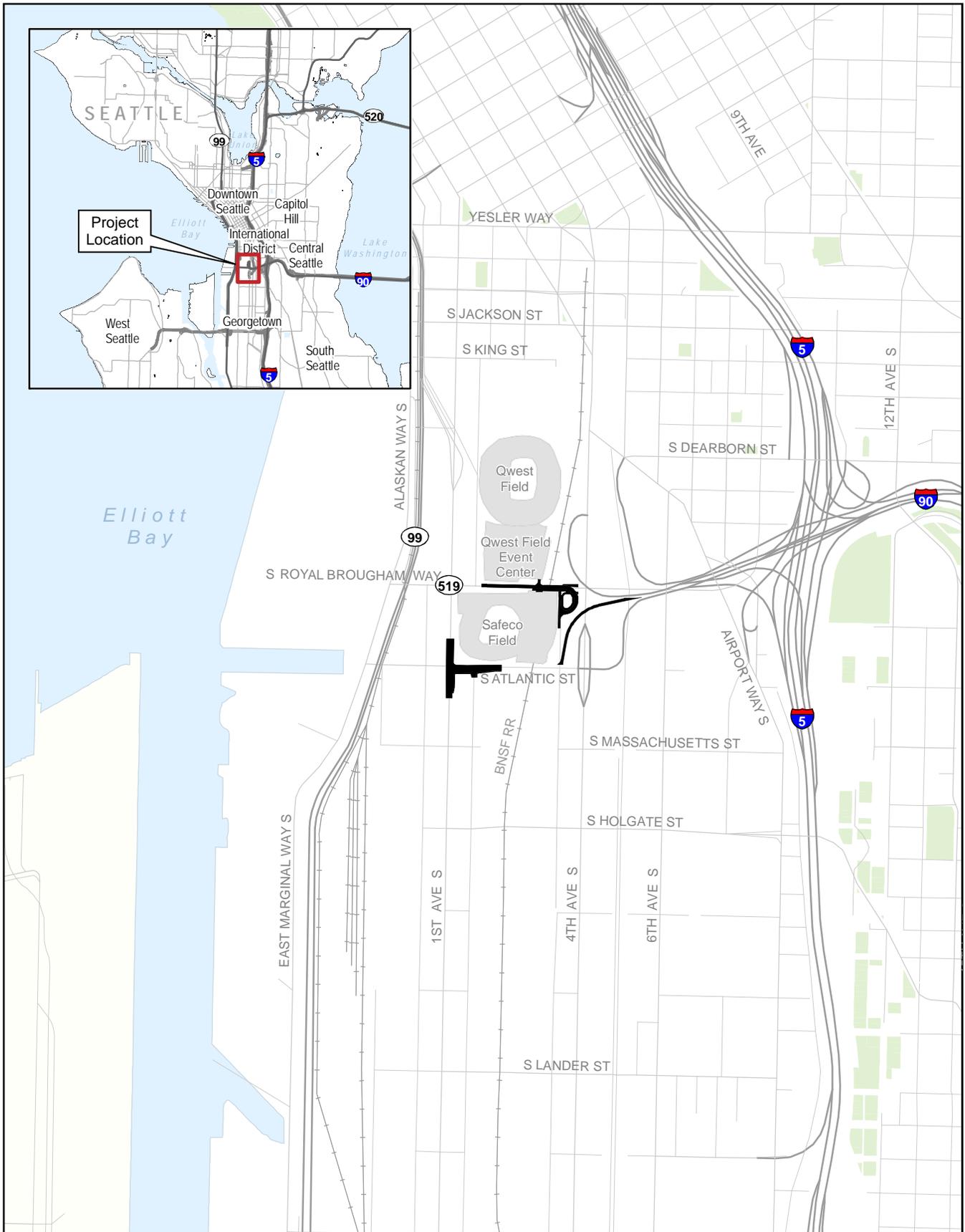


New South Atlantic Street overpass built in SR 519 Phase 1

The Phase 1 project had four main components which:

- Provided the eastbound connection from the waterfront to I-5 and I-90 via South Atlantic Street
- Removed the old eastbound I-90 ramp on Fourth Avenue South
- Made improvements to South Atlantic Street between First Avenue South and the Alaskan Way South/East Marginal Way intersection
- Constructed the South Weller Street Pedestrian Bridge

When Phase 1 opened, eastbound freight, ferry, and event traffic immediately moved more freely, because connections from the Port of Seattle, waterfront, and stadium area to the freeway system were improved.



Source: City of Seattle (2007) and King County (2006)

- Stadiums
- Project



**Exhibit 2-1
Vicinity Map**

1 Why is the Phase 2 project needed?

SR 519 provides a vital roadway system for east-west traffic through Seattle, but it currently does not assist in the efficient westbound movement of cars, trucks, trains, and pedestrians through Seattle's SODO district. The route passes through an area that has changed so much in recent years that the roadway arrangement is not well suited to present conditions. A new design and new roadway structures are needed to allow vehicles and pedestrians to reach their destinations safely, quickly, and more directly.

This project would help to resolve several issues:

- Safety concerns from traffic and people crossing surface-level railroad tracks in the stadium area
- The expected increase in rail traffic and pedestrian crossings at South Royal Brougham Way when Sound Transit Central Link light rail service begins in 2009, resulting in safety concerns and travel delays
- Poor westbound access between I-5/I-90 and the Seattle waterfront, especially the Port of Seattle terminals and the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock
- Delays in moving products between Port of Seattle terminals and local, regional, and national markets

2 What is the purpose of the project?

This project would improve traffic mobility and safety by improving westbound connections between I-5/I-90 and the Port of Seattle terminals, the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock, waterfront commercial interests, and the stadium area. The project would allow people to walk more safely to and from the stadium area.

The purpose of the project is to:

- Provide a more direct route between I-5/I-90 and the Seattle waterfront, so that westbound freight, commuters, and local traffic can move more safely and efficiently through the stadium area

- Improve safety and reduce railroad and vehicle delays at the surface-level rail crossing on South Royal Brougham Way west of Fourth Avenue South
- Improve safety for people walking to events, work, and neighborhood destinations
- Reduce truck and rail traffic conflicts so that freight operators can move products more efficiently between Port of Seattle terminals and markets

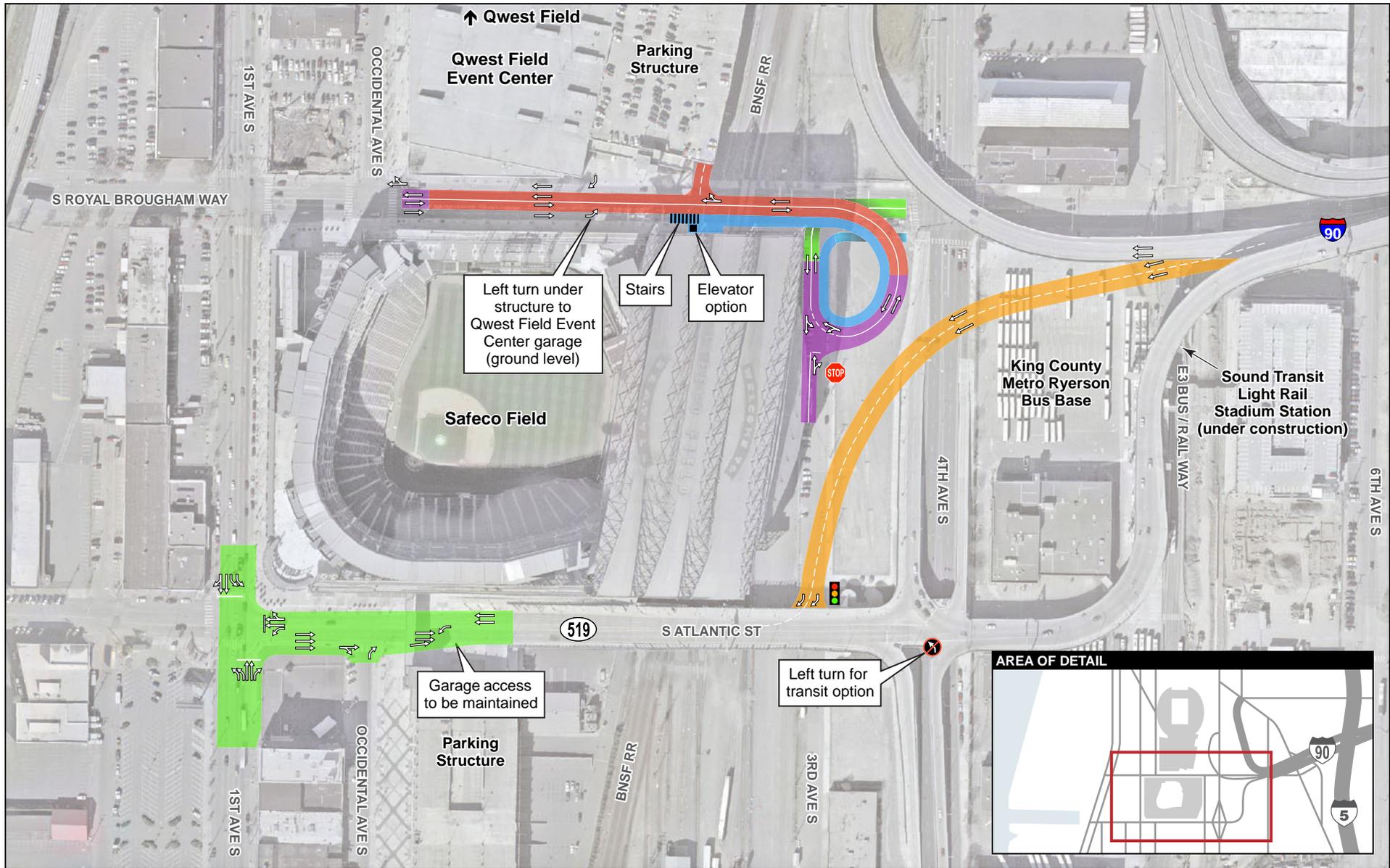
3 What are the project alternatives?

Two alternatives were analyzed for this report: the Proposed Action and the No Build Alternative. The Proposed Action, which has been designed to meet current and projected future traffic conditions, was developed following the completion of an earlier NEPA Environmental Assessment and associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (USDOT et al., 1997) and builds on the more recent screening and evaluation of 21 preliminary Phase 2 options by WSDOT in a feasibility study (KPFf et al., 2006).

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action (SR 519 Intermodal Access Project Phase 2: Atlantic Corridor) would connect the existing westbound off-ramp from I-5 and I-90 to the existing South Atlantic Street overpass. It would also provide improvements at the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street to accommodate traffic more efficiently along the route. In addition, it would build a grade-separated crossing over the railroad tracks at South Royal Brougham Way. These proposed improvements are described in more detail below and are illustrated on Exhibit 2-2. Traffic flow with the proposed improvements in place is shown in Exhibit 2-3. All proposed improvements would comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

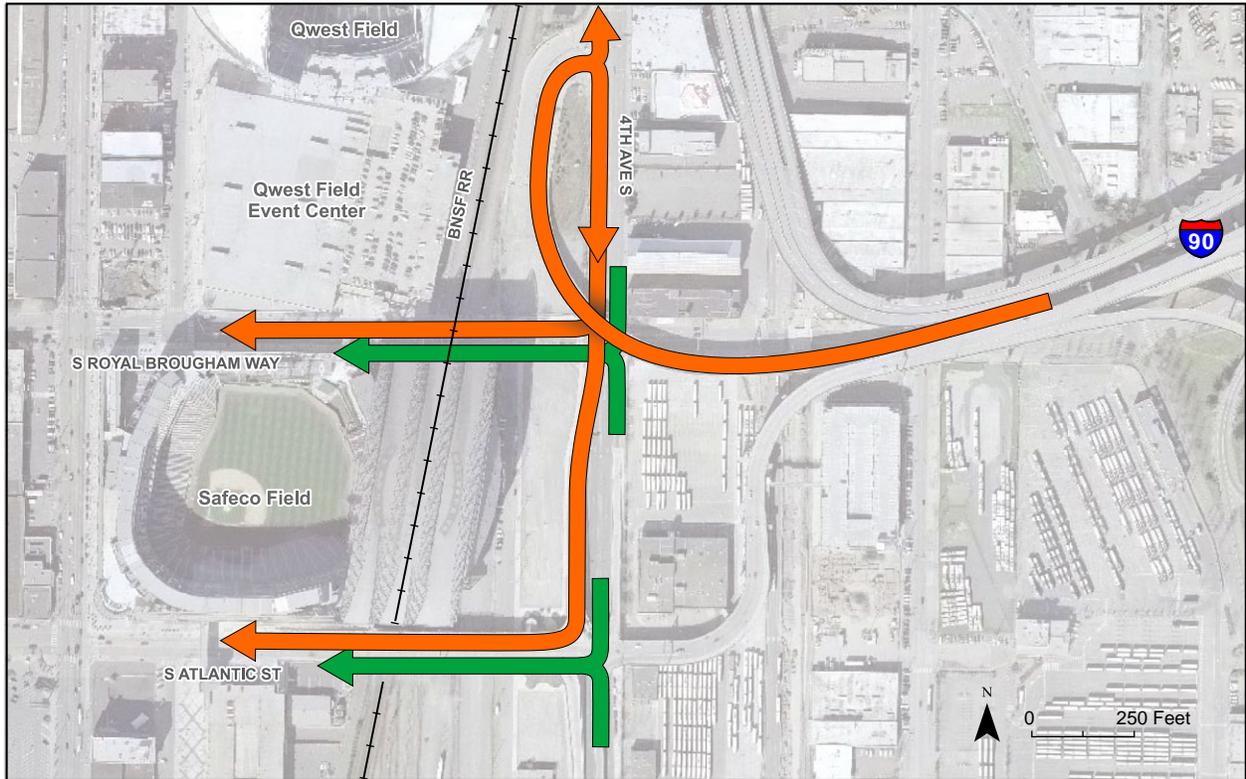
I-90 Off-Ramp to South Atlantic Street. A new two-lane elevated ramp connection would be built from westbound I-90 to terminate at a signalized T-intersection on the South Atlantic Street railroad overpass.



- █ Arterial Bridge
- █ Elevated Ramp
- █ Pedestrian Bridge
- █ Surface Improvements
- █ Fill Embankment

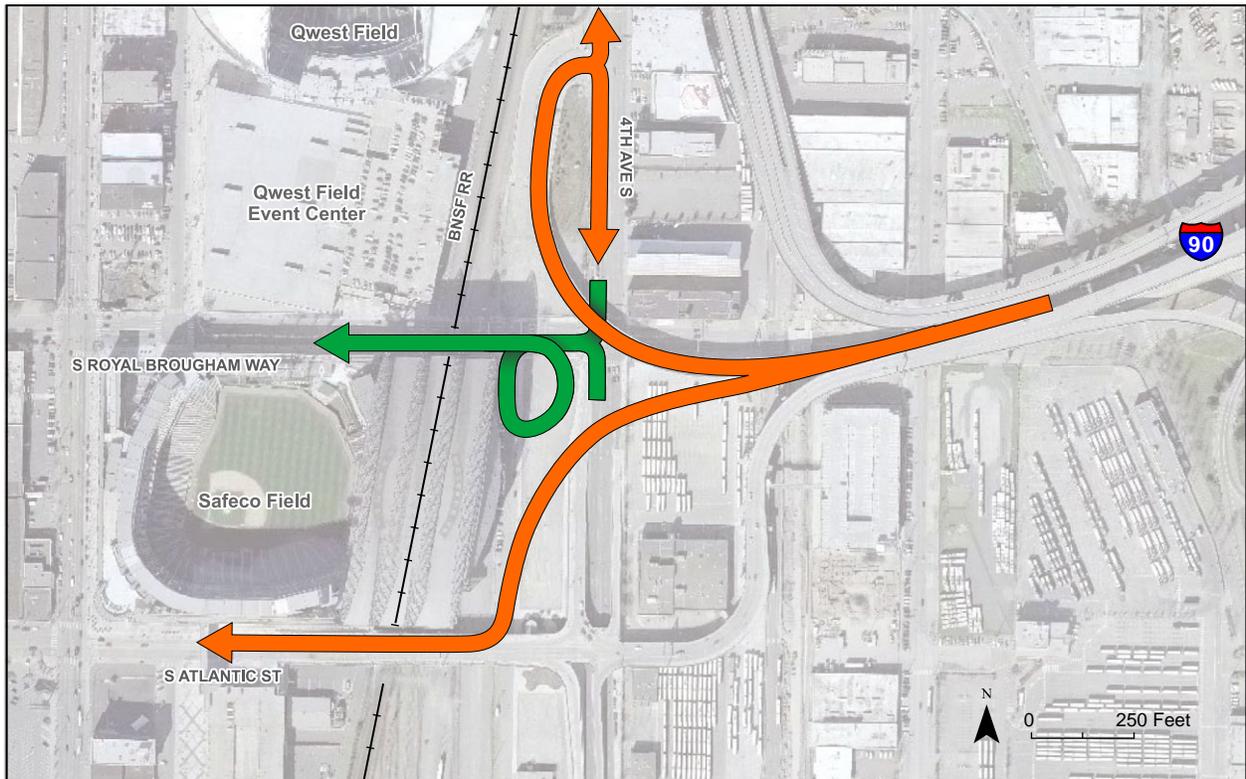


Exhibit 2-2
Project Elements



- Existing Westbound Regional Routes
- Existing Westbound Local Routes

Existing Westbound Travel Routes



- Proposed Westbound Regional Routes
- Proposed Westbound Local Routes

Proposed Westbound Travel Routes

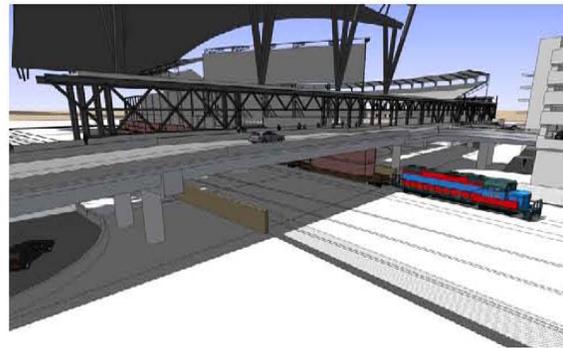
Exhibit 2-3
**Existing and Proposed
 Westbound Travel Routes**

The new South Atlantic Street connection would serve westbound freeway traffic exiting I-90 and I-5. The new ramp would be entirely elevated, passing over Fourth Avenue South and Third Avenue South and connecting to the South Atlantic Street overpass southeast of Safeco Field. Exiting northbound I-5 traffic would be routed to South Atlantic Street, while exiting southbound I-5 traffic would have the option of using either the new off-ramp to South Atlantic Street or the existing I-90 off-ramp to Fourth Avenue South.

South Royal Brougham Way Railroad Overpass. The South Royal Brougham Way at-grade railroad crossing would be closed, but it could possibly be opened to public services in the event of a major emergency in the vicinity. A new two-lane elevated structure would be built, connecting Occidental Avenue South to Third Avenue South. The new overpass would transport vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic over the railroad tracks and provide a new connection and entrance from South Royal Brougham Way to the second level of the Qwest Field Event Center parking garage. The new ramp would accommodate local two-way traffic and provide ADA-compliant access.



Proposed ramp at east end of South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass



South Royal Brougham Way existing at-grade railroad crossing (left) and proposed overpass (right)

Improvements to the Intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street. The project would widen the intersection by adding additional turn lanes to each approach. Existing parking lanes along First Avenue South would be converted into travel lanes, with a new eastbound lane added to South Atlantic Street. Sidewalks along the southern edge of

coordinate with and minimize unwanted effects on the following:

- Stadiums and Event Center activities
- Port of Seattle container operations
- Washington State Ferries
- BNSF Railway mainline and yard operations, AMTRAK mainline operations, and Sound Transit commuter rail operations
- Sound Transit Link light rail operations, Sounder commuter rail service, and Regional Express bus operations
- King County Metro Ryerson Bus Base operations and Metro bus service throughout the affected area, including through-routes operating within the area, and access to the bases and downtown Seattle transit tunnel
- Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center freight operations

Temporary construction staging areas would be required to store equipment and materials during construction. A gravel lot owned by WSDOT, bounded by South Atlantic Street and South Royal Brougham Way, and Third Avenue South and Fourth Avenue South, would serve as the primary construction staging area for the SR 519 Phase 2 project. This lot is vacant, and no adverse environmental effects are expected from staging at this location. Other temporary staging areas would be determined through consultation with King County and the City of Seattle during project design.

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the three proposed Phase 2 components discussed above would not be built. Westbound traffic exiting from I-5 and I-90 would continue to flow as shown in Exhibit 2-3.

4 What permits would be required to build the project?

The SR 519 Phase 2 project would be built under close regulatory scrutiny. WSDOT would apply to the State of Washington, King County, and the City of Seattle for a number of permits and approvals. They would most likely include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction Stormwater General Permit (Washington State Department of Ecology)
- Wastewater Discharge Approval (King County)
- Street Use Permit (City of Seattle)
- Side Sewer Permit (City of Seattle)
- Noise Variance (City of Seattle)

WSDOT will confirm the requirement for these and other permits as engineering design and construction planning proceed in coordination with the permitting authorities.

Chapter 3 Methodology

1 What is the study area for visual quality and how was it selected?

The study area for this discipline report was defined through review of aerial maps, several site visits, community input, and review of existing plans, policies, and maps. It includes the areas and corridors near the proposed project that would have views of project components or would be seen from the proposed project. These areas are contained within the foreground distance zone (within 0.25 mile of the viewer) or middleground distance zone (between 0.25 and 5 miles of the viewer) of project components. Even within these viewing distances, the presence of existing public infrastructure such as major arterials, bridges, ramps, stadiums, and railways can screen or block views.

The study area includes the following four corridors and the areas near them:

- Fourth Avenue South between South Holgate Street to the south and South Jackson Street to the north
- First Avenue South between South Massachusetts Street to the south and South Royal Brougham Way to the north
- South Atlantic Street between Alaskan Way South to the west and Fifth Avenue South to the east
- South Royal Brougham Way between Alaskan Way South to the west and Fifth Avenue South to the east

These four corridors include the four landscape units that were designated to describe the existing visual environment of the study area. The landscape units are described in Chapter 4. The inside of Safeco Field was considered as a fifth landscape unit to assist in the evaluation of potential project effects inside the

stadium. Upon closer examination, it was determined that the improvements associated with the Proposed Action would not be seen from most areas within the stadium and if seen at all, would very likely not be noticeable to most patrons.

Although this discipline report focuses on views from within the four corridors identified above, the three project components (the I-90 off-ramp, the BNSF Railway overpass, and the South Atlantic Street and First Avenue South widening and improvements) would be visible from some distant elevated viewing areas such as buildings in downtown Seattle and Pioneer Square, I-5, Beacon Hill, and the Alaskan Way Viaduct. However, many views of the project components from these areas would be blocked, screened, or visually absorbed by existing buildings and large-scale infrastructure such as Qwest Field, Qwest Field Event Center, Safeco Field, I-90 (and associated ramps), and I-5. Where viewers would see project components from these distant areas, they would be looking across and down on the larger Stadium District landscape. Effects of the proposed project on the visual character and quality of views from these more distant locations would be minor.

2 How was the information collected?

The project team identified existing conditions by visiting the study area multiple times. During the site visits, they documented existing conditions such as potential viewers and their viewing sensitivity, visual features, and viewsheds, and took photographs from selected viewpoints. After the site visits, they reviewed additional background materials such as maps, aerial photographs, and City of Seattle planning and policy documents. The project team also reviewed the comments gathered during public scoping and agency consultation, and noted community concerns regarding key views and concerns about potential project effects on visual and aesthetic character. In addition, relevant information from other discipline reports, including Public Services and Utilities, Cultural Resources, and Land Use, was reviewed.

With this information as the starting point, the project team documented existing conditions following the methodology in the *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* handbook (FHWA, 1988). This methodology includes the following components:

- Identify the existing regional (study area) visual character.
- Identify the affected viewshed.
- Determine the visual resources of the project site.
- Identify the importance to people, or sensitivity, of views of the visual resources in the landscape.
- Determine the viewers—those who have a view of and from the project.
- Identify key views to and from the project site.
- Describe and evaluate the visual landscape under current conditions.

3 What methods were used to evaluate potential effects of the Proposed Action and the No Build Alternative?

The project team used the FHWA visual assessment methodology to assess the visual effects of the Proposed Action and No Build Alternative. This methodology has a generally accepted set of tools and terms that are used to describe visual effects. The project team described visual effects first by qualitatively discussing how the proposed project components would be consistent with or change the landscape character of the study area. Next, the FHWA visual quality rating methodology was used to quantitatively assess how the proposed project would change existing visual quality ratings. This was done by examining changes to the three attributes (vividness, intactness, and unity) that together determine visual quality ratings. This analysis was conducted by comparing the existing ratings of the six representative viewpoints with what the ratings would be of the same views with the project in place. The project team developed “with-project” ratings by

comparing existing photographs with computer renderings (visual simulations) of what the viewed landscape would look like after the project was built (it should be noted that the details [guard railings, column shape, etc.] of the project components shown in the simulations are conceptual only and do not necessarily reflect final design). For each viewpoint, a qualitative description was made of how the most sensitive viewers at each viewpoint would be affected by the project. Finally, the consistency of the proposed project with governmental plans, policies, and guidelines related to visual quality were examined. A number of important terms are used in this report and are described in the Glossary. Three terms or concepts in particular are important for describing the methodology that was used to evaluate potential effects of the Proposed Action and the No Build Alternative. They are discussed below.

Visual or Landscape Character: Descriptions of how a proposed project would be consistent or inconsistent with existing visual or landscape character can help qualitatively describe the effects of a project on the visual environment. Visual or landscape character (the terms are used interchangeably in this discipline report) describes both natural and built landscape features and the relationships between them that make up the character of an area or view. The perception of visual character can vary greatly between seasons and even between hours as weather, light, shadow, and the elements that compose the viewshed change. The basic components used to describe visual character for most visual assessments are the form, line, color, and texture of the landscape features. To further define visual character, the appearance of the landscape is described in terms of its dominant features, scale, diversity, and continuity. The resources and features used to define visual or landscape character include the following:

- Landforms: types, gradients, and scale
- Vegetation: types, size, maturity, and continuity
- Land uses: size, scale, and character of associated buildings

- Transportation facilities: types, sizes, scale, and orientation
- Overhead utility structures and lighting: types, sizes, and scale
- Open space: type (e.g., parks, reserves, greenbelts, and undeveloped land), extent, and continuity
- Viewpoints and views to visual resources
- Water bodies, historic structures, and downtown skylines
- Apparent “grain” or texture, such as the size and distribution of structures and open spaces of the landscape
- Apparent upkeep and maintenance of natural and built landscape features

Visual Quality: Assessing changes to visual quality ratings can help quantitatively determine the effects of a project on the visual environment. Visual quality is an assessment of the visual character of a viewed landscape which identifies the character-defining features for selected views. This assessment asks: Is this particular view common or dramatic and memorable? Is it a pleasing composition (with a mix of elements that seem to belong together) or not (with a mix of elements that either do not belong together or are eyesores and contrast with the other elements in the surroundings)? Are natural elements present and do they soften the human-made elements in the view? Visual quality is evaluated and given a numeric rating based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity (the three attributes that establish visual quality ratings) seen from a view. The visual quality rating is devised by adding the ratings of vividness, intactness, and unity and dividing their sum by three. Visual quality is ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 indicating a high (desirable) degree of visual quality. Vividness, intactness, and unity are described as follows:

- **Vividness** describes how the elements of landform, water, vegetation, and human development combine to form a memorable composition. Vividness is ranked on a scale of

1 to 7, with a rating of 7 indicating a high degree of vividness and 1 a low degree.

- **Intactness** measures the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape (quality and appropriateness of development) and its freedom from encroaching elements that are visually inconsistent with the viewed landscape. Well-kept urban and rural landscapes can have a high degree of intactness. Encroachment is ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with a rating of 7 indicating a high level of natural elements present in the view, a high quality of development, and no encroachment, and 1 indicating a low degree of development and/or a high degree of encroachment.
- **Unity** measures the compositional harmony of the landscape or the degree of visual coherence when considered as a whole. High-unity landscapes frequently contain elements in the built and/or natural environments that visually “fit” together in a compatible manner. Unity is rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing a landscape with a coherent, harmonious (desirable) visual pattern and 1 indicating a landscape that is not visually coherent or harmonious.

Viewer Sensitivity: Defined as the extent of the viewer’s concern for a particular view or viewshed. Viewer sensitivity considers a combination of the following three factors for a specific view:

- How many people see the view?
- How long can they see the view? Motorists such as commuters, local users, tourists, and drivers of commercial vehicles typically see views for a short time (duration) due to the speed of travel. Pedestrians and adjacent residents can see views for longer durations.
- What is their level of concern or sensitivity likely to be about the aesthetics and quality of the view? The level of concern is a subjective response influenced by the visual character of the surrounding landscape, the activity or

purpose of the viewer, and his or her values, expectations, and interests.

Viewer sensitivity to the viewed environment is classified as low, medium, or high.

4 What would be considered a substantial adverse effect on visual quality?

To assess the likely effects of the Proposed Action on visual quality, the project team assigned numerical ratings for existing and with-project attributes (vividness, intactness, and unity) to determine how visual quality would change with the project. A substantial decline in visual quality would be considered to occur if there were a consistent decline in visual quality ratings near a project without the ability to offset the decline with mitigation measures.

Chapter 4 Affected Environment

1 What is the current visual character of the study area?

The project would be located in the northern portion of the South of Downtown (SODO) district in Seattle, within the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center. Traditionally characterized by its working/industrial environment, the study area and nearby areas are undergoing transition from the pressure of several forces. The most noticeable changes to the visual character of the study area resulted from the construction of two major league professional sports stadiums and an exhibition facility. These facilities created a sports-stadium/exhibition center or entertainment district in the SODO area which has had a great influence on visual character. The study area is also experiencing pressure from other sources, including an expanding International District and a growing downtown/business district. This is especially true along the Fourth Avenue South corridor. Revitalization and change in land use at older developments along First Avenue South and Occidental Avenue South and an increasing demand for uses other than industrial within the area are also changing the study area's character.



The sports stadium-exhibition center complex at the core of the study area

The study area serves as a major southern gateway to downtown Seattle and is the western terminus of the Mountains to Sound Greenway. The area's traditional mix of industrial uses and historic elements greatly influences its character. At the same time, the study area is being affected by the growing presence of new structures. Some of these structures exhibit modern design themes, and others reflect and integrate historic

elements. Safeco Field was designed to integrate with the historic and industrial character of much of the study area. It uses materials and elements such as structural steel work, light fixtures, and railings that are compatible with and reflect the architectural character and heritage present in the neighborhood. Qwest Field uses newer architectural materials and forms, but also uses some design elements such as light fixtures and railings to tie into the historic feel of areas near it.



Aerial and surface infrastructure intersecting in the area

In addition to the sports stadiums and event center, the character of the study area is strongly influenced by the presence of generally low- to mid-rise warehouse, manufacturing, and commercial buildings; lots for storage and parking; and large-scale transportation infrastructure, such as elevated freeways and off-/on-ramps, the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the BNSF Railway tracks, and surface arterial streets. The transportation facilities are used by a wide range of vehicles, but due to the industrial nature of many of the nearby businesses, trucks and trains are present in greater numbers in the study area than in many places in Seattle, which reinforces the area's industrial character.

Although the study area is visually very complex, its character can best be described as a mixture of several character types, most notably industrial and sports stadium/exhibition center complex.

2 Who are the viewers within the study area and what is their viewing sensitivity?

People who would see the project would either have views “of the project” (looking at it) or views “from the project” (looking from it). Viewers of the project would be people looking at the project from other locations and would include all viewer types (see next paragraph). Viewers “from the project” would have elevated views from project elements (after they were built) and would include pedestrians on the pedestrian bridge and motorists and bicyclists on the new I-90 off-ramp structure.

The largest viewer groups of the proposed project have been classified as “motorists” and “neighbors”. Motorists include drivers and passengers of vehicles, buses, and trains. They include residents, tourists, or others passing through the study area. Their views of the study area are characterized as being of short duration. Neighbors were categorized as business employees and customers, pedestrians and bicyclists, stadium/event center patrons, and residents. These viewers tend to have views of the project that are of longer duration than motorists. The following paragraph describes the two major groups in more detail.

Motorists

Motorists are comprised of local drivers/passengers and tourists/visitors who view the study area from vehicles while passing through it. Transit passengers can also be considered members of these groups. The two groups are described below.

Local Drivers and Passengers

This category includes local people passing through the study area on the way to somewhere else or those driving specifically to the area. Drivers and passengers view the landscape at higher speeds than neighbors. This reduces their cone of vision and generally results in less time to see a view (which is why it is important to minimize visual clutter and unify elements along roads). Viewer sensitivity for drivers is considered low, because they are preoccupied with way-finding and safety. Because passengers are not preoccupied with driving, their viewing sensitivity is considered slightly higher than that of drivers, between low and medium. Passengers on buses and trains have similar viewing sensitivity. From elevated structures in the study area, motorists can see the stadiums and more distant vistas of the downtown Seattle skyline, Elliott Bay and Puget Sound, and Mount Rainier.

Tourists/Visitors

Tourists/visitors include people driving to the study area to visit it or attend an event, or passing through the study area for other destinations (such as the ferry terminal or downtown Seattle/Pioneer Square). Their viewing sensitivity is considered to range between medium and high. Although some would

likely be preoccupied with way-finding and would not be too observant of their surroundings, others would be observant of the area, especially considering that the Stadium District is a gateway to downtown Seattle, the Seattle waterfront, and the ferry dock.

Neighbors

The second major viewing group has been identified as neighbors. It consists of four categories of people who view the study area from viewpoints other than vehicles passing through the study area. The four groups are described below.

Business Employees and Customers

There are a number of different kinds of business owners, employees, and customers in the study area. The focus of many in terms of the visual environment tends to be inward towards the activities they are engaged in that are contained within the building or outdoor area where they work. Viewers associated with the more industrial or warehousing types of businesses would be more concerned with access and connectivity and less focused on views outward. Their viewing sensitivity is considered to be low. Owners, employees, and customers of local retail and eating and drinking establishments would be more concerned with views and the visual quality of the pedestrian environment than other types of business owners, employees, and customers. Their viewing sensitivity is considered medium. Temporary vendors associated with the stadiums and event center would be expected to be less concerned about the aesthetic setting of the area and more concerned with access for potential customers during events. Their viewing sensitivity is considered to be low.

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Pedestrians and bicyclists have more intimate views of the study area due to slower viewing speed and more attention to detail. They are considered to have high viewer sensitivity.

Stadium/Event Center Patrons

The stadiums and event center draw a large number of pedestrians and motorists to the area. These viewers experience the area in moments of great congestion and in general are

likely to be more concerned with accessing the stadiums or event center than with the aesthetic or visual condition of area. The viewer sensitivity of both groups is considered to be medium.

Residents

Although there are few actual residents in the study area at present, there is a growing number of residents to the north of the study area, in the central part of the SODO district. Residents in the general vicinity of the study area can be divided between those gravitating toward the Fourth Avenue South corridor and those in the First Avenue/Occidental Avenue area. Residents near the Fourth Avenue South corridor tend to focus their attention on the corridor, which, due to a number of bus routes located along it, is more transit-oriented than the First Avenue/Occidental Avenue area. First Avenue/Occidental Avenue residents are more connected to the Pioneer Square district to the north and tend to focus on areas north of the study area. The viewing sensitivity for residents is considered to be high.

3 What landscape units were selected for the study area?

Landscape units are “subunits” of a study area. They are used to break down an analysis of a study area into smaller descriptive units that help to characterize the visual environment and visual experience within the study area. Landscape units are characterized by having distinct visual character and a sense of continuity. They are often defined by landforms, land cover, or structures that may enclose them or define their edges. Typically, visual awareness heightens where a change between landscape units occurs. The project team established four landscape units within the study area, as shown in Exhibit 4-1.

The four landscape units selected for this discipline report have distinctive visual character, but also have similarities. Among the similarities is the large scale of many of the viewed elements (stadiums, elevated transportation structures, and buildings) in the study area. The study area also contains vast

areas of on-grade pavement (parking, storage, and streets) and is generally devoid of vegetation (except for occasional street trees). The expansive areas of pavement, large-scale buildings, elevated transportation elements, traffic (especially the heavy use by trucks), and scarcity of vegetation and other natural elements contribute to an area that is generally not pedestrian-friendly and has few elements that are of human scale.

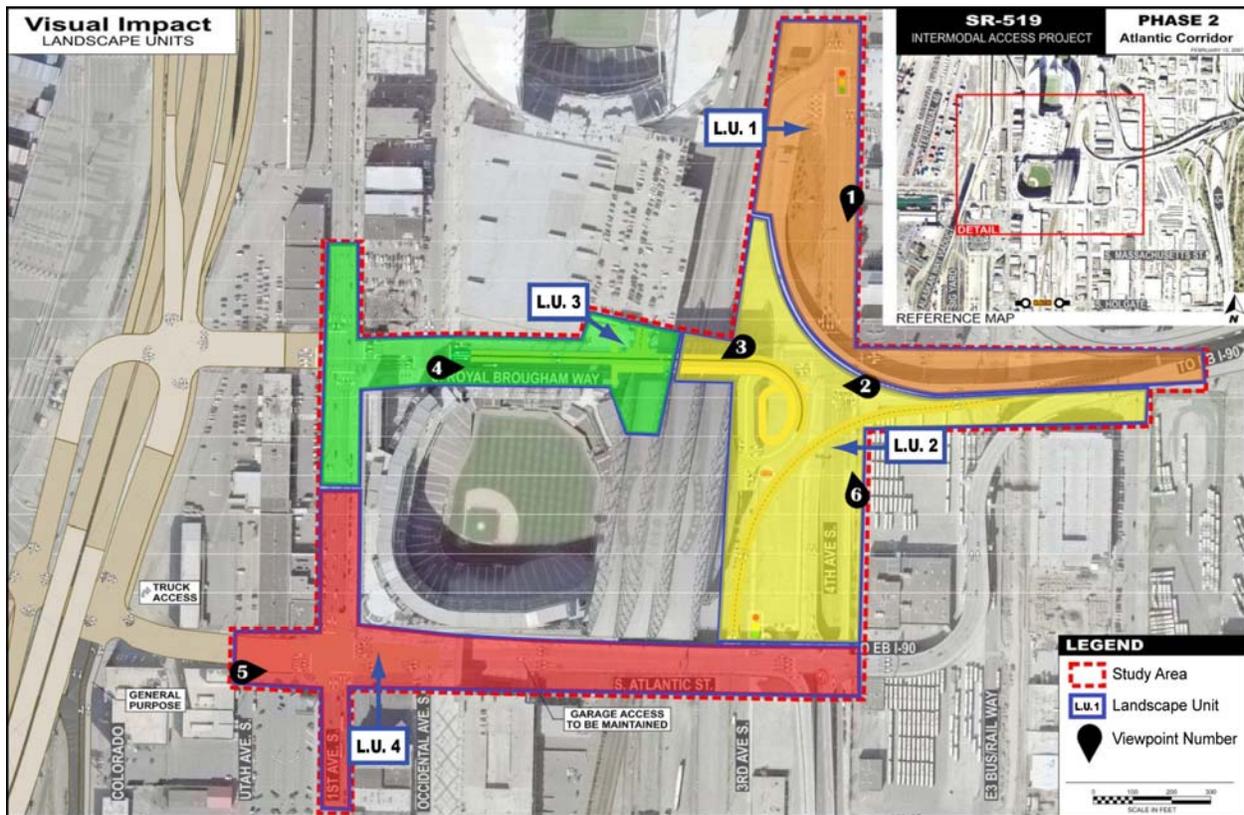


EXHIBIT 4-1. LANDSCAPE UNITS AND VIEWPOINTS

Landscape Unit 1 - North of the Existing I-90 to Fourth Avenue South Off-Ramp

The first landscape unit includes the area north of the I-90 Fourth Avenue South off-ramp and is defined by Third Avenue South and the BNSF Railway tracks to the west and by building facades on the east side of Fourth Avenue South to the east. Because of its visual character and the similarity of views

toward the project components, the portion of South Royal Brougham Way east of Third Avenue South is also included in this landscape unit.

Landscape Unit 1 is dominated by the I-90 Fourth Avenue South off-ramp as it transitions from an overhead structure connected to I-90 to grade at Fourth Avenue South. This part of Fourth Avenue South is seven lanes wide and has a sidewalk on the east side of the street only. The area is generally devoid of natural features and vegetation, although there are some trees planted between Fourth Avenue South and the I-90 Fourth Avenue South ramp and occasional trees in parking lots. A series of warehouse, commercial, and other buildings on the east side of Fourth Avenue South (interspersed with paved and graveled lots for storage and parking) provides a strong visual edge to the landscape unit. The northern backdrop of the landscape unit includes views of the downtown skyline (Exhibit 4-2).



EXHIBIT 4-2. NORTH END OF LANDSCAPE UNIT 1 - VIEW LOOKING NORTH

Southward beyond the I-90 Fourth Avenue South ramp is a partial view of Safeco Field and the Atlantic Street bridge structure. To the west beyond the ramp is a full view of the

Qwest Field stadium and parking garage. Viewers in this landscape unit consist primarily of motorists (from I-90, Fourth Avenue South, and other streets), transit riders (buses and trains), and industrial business employees.

Landscape Unit 2: North of the Existing Eastbound SR 519 On-Ramp (South Atlantic Street) to the I-90 Fourth Avenue South Off-Ramp

Landscape Unit 2 includes the area on the north side of the existing eastbound SR 519 on-ramp and continues north along Fourth Avenue South to the south side of the I-90 Fourth Avenue South off-ramp. This section of Fourth Avenue South contains seven lanes and a sidewalk along the east side. South Royal Brougham Way west of Fourth Avenue South is seven lanes wide (including parking) and contains sidewalks on both sides. The landscape unit is edged by the Safeco Field roof storage area and BNSF Railway crossing to the west, and the Metro bus depot area to the east.

This landscape unit has an industrial character. Several prominent freeway and local access ramps are very visible. The Safeco Field roof structure (which has an industrial look and feel) is the dominant visual element. Other features that are quite visible within this landscape unit and that reinforce its industrial character include paved and gravel lots used for equipment storage and parking, the BNSF railroad tracks, and the Metro bus yard (Exhibit 4-3). Landscape Unit 2 is generally devoid of vegetation or views of natural features, although Fourth Avenue South contains some street trees along the sidewalk on the east side of the street. More distant views within this landscape unit include partial views of the downtown Seattle skyline (to the north) and the west edge of Beacon Hill (to the east). Viewers in Landscape Unit 2 consist primarily of motorists (from SR 519, Fourth Avenue South, and other streets) and industrial business employees. During events, viewers also include people traveling from bus stops to the stadiums/event center and back.

Landscape Unit 3: South Royal Brougham Way

Landscape Unit 3 includes the portion of South Royal Brougham Way west of the railroad tracks to the intersection of

First Avenue South and then approximately a half block north and south along First Avenue South (Exhibit 4-4). This section of South Royal Brougham Way is seven lanes wide (including parking) and contains sidewalks on both sides. First Avenue South north of South Royal Brougham Way is also seven lanes wide and has sidewalks along both sides.



EXHIBIT 4.3. LANDSCAPE UNIT 2 – VIEW FROM SOUTH ATLANTIC STREET LOOKING NORTH



EXHIBIT 4.4. LANDSCAPE UNIT 3 - VIEW FROM SOUTH ROYAL BROUGHAM WAY (NEAR FIRST AVENUE INTERSECTION) LOOKING EAST

This area is visually dominated by the presence of the stadiums and the event center. The Alaskan Way Viaduct can be seen when looking west along South Royal Brougham Way. The existing sidewalks, plazas, stairs, and other urban design amenities along South Royal Brougham Way and First Avenue South, such as period street lights, public art, street trees, and trash cans, are well designed, improve visual quality, and create a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape than is found in the other landscape units. Despite these amenities and considerable pedestrian activity during games and events, the area is still automobile-oriented and has a character that is a combination of industrial and stadium – exhibition center.

Landscape Unit 4: South Atlantic Street Area

The last landscape unit includes the full length of South Atlantic Street from west of the First Avenue South intersection to the beginning of the eastbound SR 519 on-ramp. It also includes areas north and south along First Avenue South. South Atlantic Street contains four lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street, while First Avenue South contains seven lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street.

The portion of the landscape unit that includes the South Atlantic Street Bridge is visually dominated by the south facade of Safeco Field (Exhibit 4-5).

The south side of Safeco Field and the Safeco Field parking garage are the main features of the south edge of the area. The portion of this landscape unit along First Avenue South is edged by the western side of Safeco Field. The Alaskan Way Viaduct can be seen when looking west along South Atlantic Street and the west edge of Beacon Hill can be seen when looking to the east. The area at the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street is very active during events because of the presence of Safeco Field and nearby eating and drinking establishments. Urban design amenities along First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street include entryways/plazas at the northwest and southwest corners of Safeco Field, period street lights, scattered street trees, and other street furniture.



EXHIBIT 4-5. LANDSCAPE UNIT 4 - VIEW EAST ALONG SOUTH ATLANTIC STREET

They somewhat improve the visual quality of the area, although the area remains automobile-oriented. Viewers in this area include motorists passing through it, customers of nearby eating and drinking establishments and other commercial businesses, employees, and event patrons.

4 What representative viewpoints were selected for the study area and what are the existing visual conditions of the viewpoints?

Representative viewpoints within landscape units are used to describe the existing visual character and quality of specific locations within a landscape unit (Exhibit 4-6). The viewpoints are then used to describe if and how a proposed project would be compatible with existing visual character and/or would change visual quality.

Six representative viewpoints were selected for this discipline report, as shown in Exhibits 4-1 and 4-6. The locations of the viewpoints were chosen on the following criteria:

- Each landscape unit had to contain at least one representative viewpoint.

- The view from the viewpoint would represent views of major viewer groups.
- The viewpoints had to represent views looking towards the project or future views from the project.
- The viewpoint had to offer views of locations where the project would be highly visible and would have the potential to change existing visual character.

EXHIBIT 4- 6. LANDSCAPE UNITS AND REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS		
Landscape Unit	Viewpoint	Notes
L.U. 1 – North of I-90 – Fourth Ave. S ramp between Fourth Ave. S and BNSF railroad tracks.	Viewpoint 1. View from east side of Fourth Avenue S. looking south along Fourth Avenue	View includes I-90 – Fourth Avenue S. ramp, Fourth Avenue S., Safeco Field retracted roof, Safeco Field. Industrial character.
L.U. 2 - East of Safeco Field between I-90 – Fourth Ave. S. ramp to north and S. Atlantic St. to the south.	Viewpoint 2. View from SE corner of intersection of Fourth Avenue S. and S. Royal Brougham Way looking west.	View includes retracted Safeco Field roof, storage area under roof, east end of the ballpark south of S. Royal Brougham Way; BNSF tracks; vacant lot, the Qwest Field Event Center parking structure north of S. Royal Brougham Way, and Fourth Avenue South. Mixed industrial, sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex character.
L.U. 2	Viewpoint 3. View from S. Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue S. looking west.	View includes retracted Safeco Field roof, storage area under roof, Safeco Field, BNSF tracks and crossing, S. Royal Brougham Way, Qwest Field Event Center parking structure. Mixed industrial, sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex character.
L.U. 2	Viewpoint 6. View from east side of Fourth Avenue S. (several hundred feet south of existing westbound SR 519 ramp) looking north along Fourth Avenue S.	View includes Fourth Ave S., Qwest Field, Qwest Field Event Center parking structure, the Fourth Street S. ramp, and downtown high-rise buildings. Primarily sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex character with downtown views (that have an urban character).
L.U. 3 - Along S. Royal Brougham Way between BNSF railroad tracks and First Ave. S. and approximately a half block north and south along First Ave. S.	Viewpoint 4. View from intersection of S. Royal Brougham Way and Occidental Avenue S. looking east along S. Royal Brougham Way.	View includes S. Royal Brougham Way and streetscape elements along the wide sidewalk, the north facade of Safeco Field, the south facade of the Qwest Field Event Center, and the BNSF crossing. Primarily sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex character.
L.U. 4 – S. Atlantic St. from west of First Ave. S. to the beginning of the SR 519 on-ramp.	Viewpoint 5. View from S. Atlantic St. at its intersection with S. Utah Street (1/2 block west of First Avenue S.) looking east along S. Atlantic St. past Safeco Field.	View includes the intersection of S. Atlantic St. with First Avenue S., the “main” entrance to Safeco Field, the south side of the stadium, the pedestrian overpass between Safeco Field and the nearby parking structure that passes over S. Atlantic Street, and the S. Atlantic St./SR 519 on-ramp to I-90. Mixed sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex character and industrial.

Viewpoint 1: View South from Fourth Avenue South

Viewpoint 1 is located in Landscape Unit 1. The viewpoint is situated on the sidewalk near a King County Metro bus stop along the east side of Fourth Avenue South, approximately halfway between the SR 519 off-ramp and South Royal Brougham Way (Exhibit 4-7).

The view from Viewpoint 1 is oriented to the south and represents the view of the project that most viewers from this location would have. Viewers include transit users, pedestrians, and motorists. Pedestrians are considered the most sensitive viewers from this location and have medium sensitivity to changes to the visual environment.



EXHIBIT 4-7. VIEWPOINT 1 – EXISTING CONDITIONS – VIEW SOUTH ALONG FOURTH AVENUE SOUTH

The shape and large scale of the retracted Safeco Field roof is a dominant and memorable visual element from this location. The roof and rest of the stadium are unofficial Seattle landmarks. The other major visual elements that are seen from this viewpoint are transportation-related and include the I-90 westbound off-ramp to Fourth Avenue South, the Fourth

Avenue South ramp to South Atlantic Street (which can be seen below the I-90 westbound ramp to Fourth Avenue South), and Fourth Avenue South. These transportation elements are utilitarian in appearance. The form, line, and color (shadow) of the Fourth Avenue South ramp to I-90 encroach through the southward sightline along Fourth Avenue South. Some street trees and trees in parking areas can be seen from this location, but are too scattered and young to have much of a visual presence.

The landscape character of this view can be described as a combination of industrial and the “backside” (or “service side”) of a sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex. The transportation elements detract from the vividness created by the stadium roof, overall view intactness, and unity. The existing visual quality rating for this view is between low and moderately low.

Viewpoint 2: View West from the Intersection of Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way

Viewpoint 2 is located in Landscape Unit 2 at the intersection of Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way. The view direction is to the west along South Royal Brougham Way and represents views that people traveling (by vehicle or foot) towards Safeco Field, the Qwest Field Event Center, or First Avenue South have from this intersection (Exhibit 4-8).

Viewers consist primarily of motorists, stadium/event-center patrons, and local business employees. Stadium/event-center patrons are the most sensitive viewers with medium sensitivity.

Viewpoint 1 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	2
Intactness	2
Unity	3
Visual Quality	2.3
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



EXHIBIT 4-8.VIEWPOINT 2 – EXISTING CONDITIONS: VIEW WEST ALONG SOUTH ROYAL BROUGHAM WAY FROM INTERSECTION WITH FOURTH AVENUE SOUTH

The retracted Safeco Field roof and east end of the ballpark are seen to the south, as is the storage area under the roof. Both Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way are also important, if common, visual features. The stadium and roof are memorable features from this viewing angle due to their shapes and sizes (which dominate the area and are not pedestrian-friendly). The area under the roof that includes the BNSF Railway tracks, stored train cars, and graveled areas for parking and storage is less memorable and is visually unappealing. A vacant lot and the Qwest Field Event Center parking structure can be seen north of South Royal Brougham Way. Street trees have been planted along parts of both sides of South Royal Brougham Way, but are too isolated and scattered to have much influence on visual quality. The terminus of the view to the west is the Silver Cloud Inn, located on the corner of First Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way.

The view from this location is enclosed by the stadium to the south and the Qwest Field Event Center and parking structure to the north. These large-scale elements tower over viewers and

dominate the viewed landscape. Some street trees can be seen along South Royal Brougham Way and add a touch of green to the area. The viewed landscape includes a mixture of visual elements which create a landscape character that can best be described as a mix of industrial and sports-stadium/ entertainment-center complex. The visual quality rating for this view is low.

Viewpoint 3: West from South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South

Viewpoint 3 is located in Landscape Unit 2 just west of the intersection of South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South on the north side of South Royal Brougham Way. It is adjacent to the BNSF Railway crossing (Exhibit 4-9). The view from this location is to the west and represents the views that people have while walking west toward Safeco Field or First Avenue as they approach the crossing. The view is similar to that of Viewpoint 2 but is closer to the area along South Royal Brougham Way that would change if the proposed project were constructed. Most viewers from this area are stadium or event center patrons, motorists, local business employees, and train passengers (although they would pass by this view several dozen feet farther to the west of this location). Stadium and event center patrons have the highest viewing sensitivity (medium).

Exhibit 4-9 shows the crossing closed for the passage of the *Sounder* passenger train. When the crossing is closed and traffic backs up on either side of the crossing, the presence of waiting cars is very noticeable. Whether the crossing is closed or open, part of the retracted Safeco Field roof and its main structure can be seen from this location. The roof and main structure are massive in scale, dominate views, are superior in viewing angle to viewers, and cast shadows across South Royal Brougham Way.

The best description of the utilitarian character of the landscape seen from this view is that it is the “back side” of a sports stadium-entertainment center complex. Street trees planted along South Royal Brougham Way add some human scale to the scene, but are too small at this

Viewpoint 2 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	1.8
Intactness	2
Unity	2
Visual Quality	2.1
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

Viewpoint 3 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	1.8
Intactness	2
Unity	2
Visual Quality	1.9
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

time to have much influence on visual quality. Vividness, intactness and unity ratings are low as is overall visual quality.



EXHIBIT 4-9. VIEWPOINT 3 – EXISTING CONDITIONS: VIEW WEST ALONG SOUTH ROYAL BROUGHAM WAY FROM NEAR THIRD AVENUE SOUTH INTERSECTION

Viewpoint 4: View East from South Royal Brougham Way and Occidental Avenue South

Viewpoint 4 is located in Landscape Unit 3 on the south side of South Royal Brougham Way next to Safeco Field, near the intersection of Occidental Avenue South. The view from this location is to the east and represents the views that pedestrians have while crossing the crosswalk that connects the sidewalk near Occidental Ave South with the sidewalk on the south side of South Royal Brougham Way, next to Safeco Field (Exhibit 4-10). It also represents the view that motorists have from this location when driving east on South Royal Brougham Way.



EXHIBIT 4-10. VIEWPOINT 4 – EXISTING CONDITIONS: VIEW EAST ALONG SOUTH ROYAL BROUGHAM WAY FROM CROSSWALK NEAR OCCIDENTAL AVENUE SOUTH

Viewers primarily consist of stadium or event center patrons, motorists, and local business employees. Stadium and event center patrons are the most sensitive viewer types, with medium viewing sensitivity.

The view from this location includes the north facade of Safeco Field, South Royal Brougham Way, and the south facade of the Qwest Field Event Center. The presence of the stadium to the south and its carefully detailed and designed façade along with its large size create a vivid edge for this view. A number of pedestrian-oriented amenities on both sides of South Royal Brougham Way can be seen from this location. The amenities include sidewalks on both sides of South Royal Brougham Way (23 feet wide on the south side), waste receptacles, ornamental street lights, and the carefully designed façade of the stadium. The south side of the more utilitarian appearing Qwest Field Event Center can also be seen from this location. Street trees have been planted at regular intervals along both sides of this

Viewpoint 4 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	2.8
Intactness	4
Unity	5
Visual Quality	3.9
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average , 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

section of South Royal Brougham Way and have a positive influence on the visual quality of the view.

The landscape character of this view is sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex. Visual intactness and unity are higher than average to moderately high, and overall visual quality is average.

Viewpoint 5: View East from South Atlantic Street and Utah Avenue South Intersection

Viewpoint 5 is located in Landscape Unit 4 at the intersection of Utah Street (1/2 block west of First Avenue South) and South Atlantic Street. The viewpoint represents what people traveling east toward Safeco Field and the South Atlantic Street on-ramp to I-90 see as they approach First Avenue South. Most viewers from this location are stadium or event center patrons, but also include local business employees and commuters. The viewing sensitivity of the most sensitive viewer types (stadium and event center patrons) is medium.

The view from this location includes South Atlantic Street, the South Atlantic Street on-ramp to I-90, First Avenue South, one of the main entrances to Safeco Field, the south side of the stadium, and the pedestrian overpass over South Atlantic Street between the Safeco Field parking structure and Safeco Field (Exhibit 4-11).

As is the case in the other viewpoints, Safeco Field is a unique appearing structure. The elevated pedestrian bridge to the stadium introduces a horizontal visual element that somewhat encroaches on views to the east. However, because the pedestrian bridge was designed to be architecturally consistent with the stadium, it somewhat contributes to visual intactness and unity. Street trees along South Atlantic Street and in nearby parking lots can be seen from this location and will help improve the visual quality over time as they grow larger. The character of the landscape seen from this location is best described as a mix of sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex and industrial. Visual intactness and unity are average, and overall

Viewpoint 5 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	2
Intactness	3
Unity	4
Visual Quality	3
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

visual quality is moderately low.



EXHIBIT 4-11. VIEWPOINT 5 – EXISTING CONDITIONS: VIEW EAST ALONG SOUTH ATLANTIC STREET FROM INTERSECTION WITH UTAH AVENUE SOUTH

Viewpoint 6: View North from Fourth Avenue South

Viewpoint 6 is located in Landscape Unit 2 on the east side of Fourth Avenue South, several hundred feet south of the existing westbound I-90 off-ramp (Exhibit 4-12). This location was chosen primarily because it would provide a clear view of the proposed I-90 ramp to South Atlantic Street. Viewers of this area consist primarily of motorists and local business employees. The viewing sensitivity of these viewer types is low.

Qwest Field, the Qwest Field Event Center parking structure, Fourth Avenue South, and the Fourth Avenue South off-ramp are clearly seen from this location. The distinctive arches of Qwest Field along with the upper stands of the stadium are strong visual elements from this location, as is Fourth Avenue South.



EXHIBIT 4-12. VIEWPOINT 6 – EXISTING CONDITIONS: VIEW NORTHWEST FROM EAST SIDE OF FOURTH AVENUE SOUTH

Glimpses of downtown Seattle in the middleground viewing distance are also possible from this location. If Qwest Field were not present, the view from this location would not be memorable. Young street trees planted along Fourth Avenue South and in some parking areas can be seen, but are too scattered and small at this time to have much influence on visual quality.

The character of the viewed landscape from this location is sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex. The vividness rating is low, while the intactness and unity ratings are average. The overall existing visual quality is between moderately low and average.

Viewpoint 6 - Existing Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating
Vividness	2
Intactness	3.5
Unity	4
Visual Quality	3.2
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

5 What government regulations apply to the views and visual characteristics within the study area?

A number of federal and state regulations ensure that the effects of transportation projects on visual resources and aesthetics are adequately considered. NEPA Section 101(b)(2) states that it is the “continuous responsibility” of the federal

government to “use all practicable means” to “assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.”

Federal regulations that address visual quality include the following, although some do not apply to this project:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC Section 4231-4335; Section 101(b)(2)
- Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 CFR 1500-1508
- FHWA-23 CFR 771-Environmental Impact and Related Procedures
- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Act of 2003 (SAFETEA)
- Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, 49 USC 303(b)-303(c)
- Highway Beautification Act, 23 USC, 131, 136, and 319 and 23 CFD 750-752
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 USC 1271-1287
- National Historic Preservation Act, 16 USC 470f

In addition to federal regulations, several state regulations address visual quality and aesthetics, including the following:

- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Chapter 197-11 WAC, Chapter 43.21C RCW)
- Transportation Commission and Transportation Department State Environmental Policy Act Rules (Chapter 468-12 WAC)
- Highway Beautification Act (Chapter 47.40.010 RCW)
- Open Space Land Preservation Act (Chapter 84.34 RCW)

The FHWA and the WSDOT also provide policy and standards guidance related to aesthetics and visual quality, including the following:

- FHWA Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects, Publication No. FHWA-HI-88-054, 88
- FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A (October 1987)
- WSDOT *Environmental Procedures Manual* (M 31-11)
- WSDOT *Roadside Classification Plan* (M 25-31)
- WSDOT *Roadside Manual* (M 25-30, Section 500)

6 Are there any City of Seattle plans, policies, or guidelines related to visual quality that are applicable to the study area?

In addition to federal and state regulations and guidance, local plans and policies were reviewed for relevance to the project. Although city comprehensive plans do not have jurisdiction over state highway projects or highway design, the project team reviewed the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan (City of Seattle, 2005) and related documents. The Comprehensive Plan provides some general city-wide guidance as to visual resources and aesthetics in the Cultural Resource section. Cultural Resources Goal 4 and Cultural Resources Policy 5, (page 10.4 of the Comprehensive Plan) are relevant to the project. Goal 4 calls for the City to “use public projects and activities to help define Seattle’s identity, especially civic spaces that provide residents and visitors with strong symbols of the city or neighborhood identity.” This goal is followed by CR5 (Policy 5), which states:

Capitalize on the potential that public projects have for serving as symbols of the city, and for expressing the identity and special character of the area where they are located by encouraging public art and excellent urban design and architecture that:

- respond to local climate conditions, respect the surrounding context, use local building and

- landscaping materials, emphasize conservation, and draw on the region’s cultural heritage;
- communicate the purpose of the project and the identity, history and uniqueness of different places within the city;
- enhance accessibility; and
- integrate art into the design of the project.”

Chapter 23.74 (Stadium Transition Overlay District) of the City of Seattle Municipal Code’s Land Use Code (Title 23) contains directives that are relevant to the study area, most of which is within the Overlay. Section 23.74.002 of that chapter provides a statement of the City’s intent that is relevant to the visual quality and aesthetics of the study area. The Overlay “is intended to contribute to a safer pedestrian environment for those attending events and permits a mix of uses, supporting the pedestrian-oriented character of the area as well as the surrounding industrial zone, while minimizing conflicts with industrial uses. Within the overlay district, use provisions and development standards are designed to create a pedestrian connection with downtown; discourage encroachment on nearby industrial uses to the south; and create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.”

In addition to the Stadium Transition Overlay District directives, Title 25 (Environmental Protection and Historic Preservation) of the Municipal Code contains policies relevant to the study area. Subsection P (Public View Protection) of SMC (Specific environmental policies) states that it is the City’s policy to protect public views of significant natural and human-made features such as Mount Rainier, the downtown skyline, major bodies of water, and historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board. Attachment 1 of that section identifies view corridors from which public views are protected. Relevant to this project are the protected views from sections of South Royal Brougham Way, First Avenue South, and Fourth Avenue South. Potential effects on

views from these corridors must be identified during the SEPA review process.

The Livable South Downtown Plan (which has not yet been adopted) makes frequent reference to the visual character of the area for architectural style of new construction, parking requirement consideration, land use change, recreation area requirements, visual connections, and compatibility with historic character. The recommendations included in the plan do not go beyond a generic reference to the existing “visual character.” There is no reference to guidelines or other specific design criteria.

The City of Seattle’s *Urban Forest Management Plan* (City of Seattle, 2007c) was reviewed for this discipline report. It should be consulted during further project design efforts.

In addition to the planning documents mentioned above, the City of Seattle Design Commission provides review, input, and guidance for proposed projects relative to City planning and design policies.

Chapter 5. Environmental Consequences and Mitigation Measures

1 How would project construction temporarily affect visual quality in the study area?

Proposed Action

Construction would create a temporary zone of disturbance around the project footprint. Generic construction effects would include dust, the presence and movement of equipment and materials, glare from building materials and equipment, lights associated with nighttime construction, storage of construction materials, and general visual changes to the viewed landscape during construction. Traffic detours would also temporarily increase traffic volumes in some areas, which could be considered a temporary negative visual effect.

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, there would be no SR 519-related construction effects on the study area.

2 How would the project permanently affect visual quality (and visual quality ratings) in the study area?

Project Components

The following subsections provide a general description of how the proposed project components would appear in the viewed environment. The discussion of the effects of the Proposed Action on viewpoints later in this section analyzes the effects of the project components on visual character, visual quality, and viewers in more detail. It should be noted that the details (such as railing design, column shape, etc.) of project components depicted in the simulations are conceptual only. The simulations were developed to provide general graphic overviews of how the proposed project would fit into the

landscape in which it would be built. Final design will occur after further refinement of the project.

New I-90 Off-Ramp to South Atlantic Street

The proposed elevated I-90 off-ramp to the South Atlantic Street overpass would be highly visible in the approximately 725-foot-long section of Fourth Avenue South between the existing I-90 off-ramp to Fourth Avenue South and the existing South Atlantic overpass. The elevated structure and its concrete support columns would add strong visual elements to areas from which they could be seen. Views toward the off-ramp from north and south of it would tend to be blocked by the existing elevated structures of the I-90 off-ramp to Fourth Avenue and the South Atlantic overpass. The proposed new off-ramp would be similar in appearance (in terms of line, form, texture, color, and scale) to existing nearby off-ramps. The proposed off-ramp would also be consistent with the mixed industrial and sports-stadium/ entertainment-complex character of the area in which it would be located. Specific effects of the off-ramp on visual quality are discussed below under Viewpoints 1 and 6.

South Royal Brougham Way Railroad Overpass

The South Royal Brougham Way Railroad Overpass would be quite visible from along South Royal Brougham Way, parts of First Avenue South, the BNSF Railway tracks, and sections of Third and Fourth Avenues South. Its location between Safeco Field and the Qwest Field Event Center, however, would greatly reduce its visibility from many areas. The top of the elevated vehicular and pedestrian overpass would be about 25 to 30 feet above grade at the structure's highest point. The bottom of the structure would be a minimum of 18 feet above grade at the railroad track crossing. The structure and its concrete support columns as well as walls under the structure and fences along the BNSF railroad tracks would be highly visible from nearby areas along Third and Fourth Avenues South. The descending overpass ramp would be quite visible from South Royal Brougham Way and First Avenue South when looking east. The overpass would change the existing appearance of the portion of South Royal Brougham Way

immediately adjacent to Safeco Field and the Qwest Field Event Center. Depending upon sun angle, the overpass would create shadowing underneath it, which would be seen by people on the ground, but would not be easily seen by people on the overpass. Shadows cast by the much taller Safeco Field to the south would cover the overpass for much of the day. At certain sun angles (generally early morning and mid to late afternoon), the overpass would add shadows along South Royal Brougham Way. Most of both sides of the overpass between South Occidental Avenue and First Avenue South would be filled in with non-load-bearing walls, so shadows cast by the overpass would not be seen under it in these areas.

The pedestrian overpass would be used by many people during games and special events and would provide elevated views of the general area, including the potential plaza in the center of the circular pedestrian overpass near Third Avenue South, the north face of Safeco Field, and First Avenue South to the west. Train passengers would pass through the area at higher speeds than pedestrians and would have short-duration views of the changes, which would have minimal effect on their visual experience. The specific effects of the overpass on visual quality are discussed below under Viewpoints 3 and 4.

Improvements to the Intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street

The proposed improvements to the First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street intersection would be much less visible than the previous two improvements. The effects would be more subtle than those associated with the I-90 off-ramp and railroad overpass because the changes would be made at level grade and would not introduce structural elements. The effects of the street improvements on visual quality are discussed below under Viewpoint 5.

Viewpoint Assessment

The following subsections discuss how long-term operation of the project would affect visual character and quality. The discussion of each viewpoint includes a description of the compatibility of project components with existing visual character, and a comparison of the visual quality rating of the

proposed project with the existing visual quality rating. Potential effects on viewers are also discussed.

Viewpoint 1: View South from Fourth Avenue South

The South Royal Brougham Way railway overpass would be seen from this location (Exhibit 5-1). The I-90 off-ramp to South Atlantic Street would also be seen from this location, framed underneath the existing I-90 to Fourth Avenue South off-ramp elevated structure. The back side of Safeco Field would serve as the background for most of these two improvements, so neither would be silhouetted against the sky, or “sky-lined” (which generally makes an object more visible than when the object is seen against a similar-appearing background).

The addition of two new large-scale transportation elements to the viewed landscape of an area that already has a mixed industrial and sports-stadium/ entertainment-center complex character would have a minor effect on visual character.

The already moderately low visual quality rating (2.3) would be increased slightly (2.6) because of a small increase in vividness and intactness. The addition of a new pedestrian plaza (and vegetation) at the corner of Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way, and the planting of street trees along Fourth Avenue South, would slightly improve vividness and intactness when viewed from this location. Effects from project-related shadows, light, and glare would not be substantial.

Motorists, transit users (bus and train), and pedestrians who would see the project-related changes would not be likely to have a negative reaction, because the changes would not contrast greatly with existing conditions.

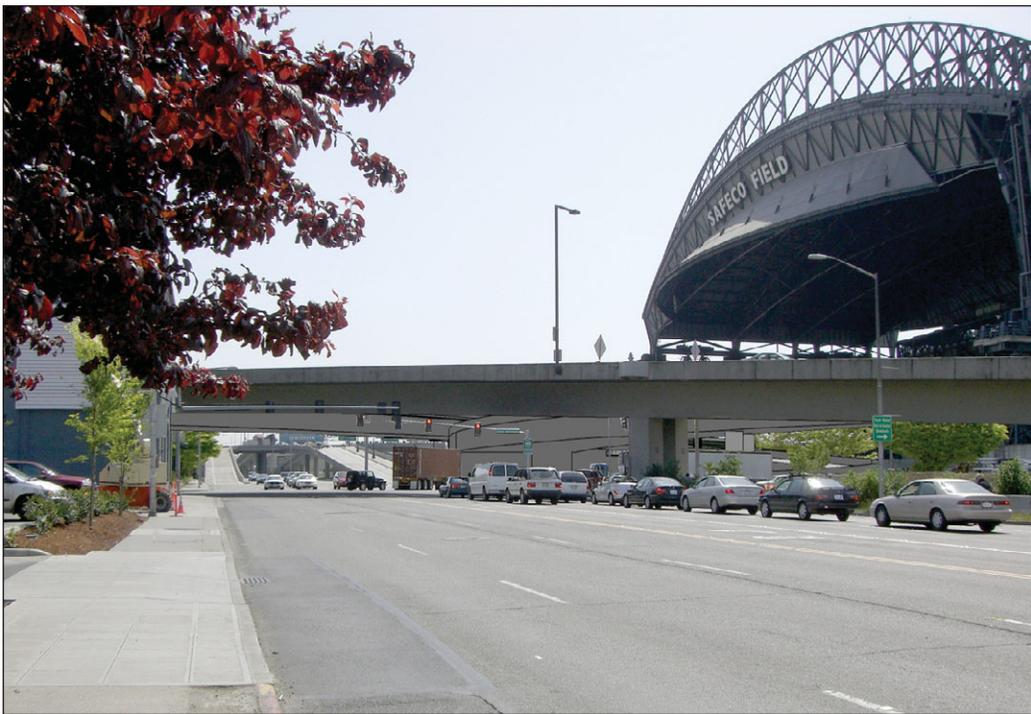
Viewpoint 2: View West from Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way

The South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass, pedestrian ramp, pedestrian plaza, and new street trees would be seen from this location and would be compatible with the existing character of the area which is a combination of industrial and sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex.

Viewpoint 1 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating – - Existing - (With Project)
Vividness	2 (2.2)
Intactness	2 (2.5)
Unity	3 (3)
Visual Quality	2.3 (2.6)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



Viewpoint 1: Existing View Looking South from Fourth Avenue South



Viewpoint 1: View of Project Looking South from Fourth Avenue South



Viewpoint Location

Exhibit 5-1
Viewpoint 1
Existing and With Project Illustrations

Project components would block views from this location of the area under the retracted roof of Safeco Field that is used by BNSF and the stadium for parking and storage, as well as views of the Qwest Field Event Center parking structure (Exhibit 5-2).

By blocking these views, the Proposed Action would create a slight increase in vividness, intactness, and unity ratings. The area under the ramp down onto South Royal Brougham Way would be largely screened by the new fencing that would be installed along the BNSF Railway tracks. Project elements such as the pedestrian ramp, the pedestrian plaza, and street trees would add human-scaled elements to the area and make it more pedestrian-friendly. In addition, the proposed project would result in less traffic passing by this intersection (or waiting to cross the BNSF tracks), which would also result in a slight increase in vividness and intactness ratings.

Overall, the Proposed Action would slightly increase the existing visual quality rating of 2.1 (almost low) to 2.4. The slight increase in rating would be attributed to potential additional trees in the view (which would eventually screen views of the Qwest Field Event Center parking garage and provide additional greenery to the area) and the pedestrian plaza. Viewers most likely to see the project components would be motorists and local business employees.

Pedestrians (primarily stadium and event center patrons) who currently have this view as they walk west along South Royal Brougham Way toward Safeco Field or the Qwest Field Event Center would be rerouted south to the pedestrian overpass. The viewing sensitivity of the most sensitive viewer types in this area (stadium and event center patrons) is medium. Some viewers would likely appreciate the slight improvement in visual quality that would result if the overpass were built. The overpass and I-90 off-ramp would create some shadows (when not enveloped by the shadows of the much larger adjacent Safeco Field).

Viewpoint 2 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Rating - Existing - (With Project)</i>
Vividness	1.8 (2.2)
Intactness	2.5 (2)
Unity	2 (3)
Visual Quality	2.1 (2.4)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



Viewpoint 2: Existing View Looking West from Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way



Viewpoint 2: View of Project Looking West from Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way



Viewpoint Location

Exhibit 5-2
Viewpoint 2
Existing and With Project Illustrations

However, the shadows would not have substantial negative effects from this location, because relatively few people would see them, and if they did, the shadows created by the structures would be much smaller in size than those associated with the baseball stadium.

Glare from the sun reflecting off passing vehicle windows might be noticeable at times, but it would be too transient to be considered a negative visual effect.

Viewpoint 3: West from South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South

The South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass would cross over this location. It would dominate the view, essentially blocking views of the sky, creating shadows, and blocking views to the west (Exhibit 5-3). New fencing installed along the railroad tracks would block views to the west below the overpass. The overpass would change the view from this location but would be consistent with the mixed sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex and industrial character of the area.

The existing visual quality rating of 1.9 is low. The addition of the overpass as seen from this location would slightly lower the rating to 1.7. While the visual quality of the landscape seen from this location would be altered with the proposed project, it is important to note that many of the motorists or pedestrians who currently see the view from this location would be diverted to the vehicular or pedestrian lanes, respectively, of the overpass to the south. This new perspective would replace the existing on-grade view from this location with an elevated view from the top of the new overpass structure. Street trees and other potential streetscape elements could make the area more pedestrian-friendly and new street and pedestrian lighting associated with the proposed project would make the area under the overpass brighter at night.

Viewpoint 3 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating – - - Existing -With Project)
Vividness	1.8 (1.7)
Intactness	2 (1.5)
Unity	2 (2)
Visual Quality	1.9 (1.7)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



Viewpoint 3: Existing View Looking West from South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South



Viewpoint 3: View of Project Looking West from South Royal Brougham Way and Third Avenue South



Viewpoint Location

Viewers of this area would not be negatively affected by the proposed changes and might appreciate the new potential streetscape elements, new lights, not having to cross over BNSF tracks, and not passing areas adjacent to the tracks. Train passengers would see changes as they passed by, but they would likely not be affected by the project-related changes to the view.

Viewpoint 4: View East from South Royal Brougham Way

The view from this viewpoint is similar to what people accessing the crosswalk from Occidental Avenue South to the sidewalk on the north side of Safeco Field would see as they look east along South Royal Brougham Way. The new overpass would ramp down near this location and would dominate views and enclose viewers from this location when looking east (Exhibit 5-4).

The overpass ramp would not permanently remove the street-oriented design elements that are in place along South Royal Brougham Way (wide sidewalk, street trees, architectural detailing on the façade of Safeco Field, street lights, etc.). The character of the view from this location would, however, change from a pedestrian-oriented streetscape within a sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex to a more transportation-oriented landscape (due to the presence of the ramp and overpass). The western portion of the ramp would block views for pedestrians walking on sidewalks along both sides of South Royal Brougham Way when attempting to look across South Royal Brougham Way to the opposite side of the street. The railroad fence that would cross the existing right-of-way along BNSF tracks would impede views from west of the tracks when looking east along South Royal Brougham Way.

The railroad overpass would decrease vividness, intactness, and unity ratings. The existing visual quality rating of average would decrease to between low and moderately low with the proposed project. This is the greatest decrease (a decrease of 1.4 points) in visual quality ratings of any of the six viewpoints.

Viewpoint 4 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating – - Existing - (With Project)
Vividness	2.8 (2)
Intactness	4 (2.5)
Unity	5 (3)
Total Visual Quality	3.9 (2.5)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



Viewpoint 4: Existing View Looking East from South Royal Brougham Way



Viewpoint 4: View of Project Looking East from South Royal Brougham Way



Viewpoint Location

Exhibit 5-4
Viewpoint 4
Existing and With Project Illustrations

Viewpoint 4 represents the “worse case” effect scenario, because it is located in an area that has relatively high existing visual quality and would be close to a project component that would dramatically change the immediate visual environment.

The viewing sensitivity of the most sensitive viewer types in this area (stadium and event center patrons) is medium.

These viewers would notice the change in the visual environment, the shade/shadow that would be created by the overpass ramp, and the overall reduction in visual quality. These viewers would be negatively affected by the proposed ramp from this viewpoint, but because these viewers would only be affected for short periods of time before and after games and special events, the effect of the overpass ramp on these viewers is not considered substantial.

The lights of cars coming straight down the overpass ramp (headed west) at night would be more noticeable than under existing circumstances, because the vehicles would be traveling downhill. The effect of these headlights on viewers would be considered minor in this urban environment.

Viewpoint 5: View East from South Atlantic Street and Utah Avenue South

Visible changes to the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street would consist primarily of surface improvements that would not have much effect on existing landscape character and visual quality (Exhibit 5-5). Wider sidewalks would introduce slightly more pavement to the view from this location, but potential new street trees along with crosswalks that could have a different color and/or texture than the pavement of the roads would slightly increase visual unity. Overall, there would be a slight improvement to the existing moderately low visual quality rating. Most of the viewers from this location are stadium and event center patrons, local business employees, and motorists.

Viewpoint 5 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
Attribute	Rating – - Existing - (With Project)
Vividness	2 (2)
Intactness	3 (3)
Unity	4 (44.5)
Total Visual Quality	3 (3.2)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	



Viewpoint 5: Existing View Looking East from South Atlantic Street and Utah Avenue South



Viewpoint 5: View of Project Looking East from South Atlantic Street and Utah Avenue South



Viewpoint Location

Exhibit 5-5
Viewpoint 5
 Existing and With Project Illustrations

The stadium and event center patrons are the more sensitive (medium) of the two viewer types. People who had visited the area prior to the project would likely notice the slight but positive improvement to visual quality.

Viewpoint 6: View North from Fourth Avenue South

The I-90 off-ramp to South Atlantic Street would be highly visible from this location (Exhibit 5-6).

Its long, horizontal, curving form and large scale would block views to much of the Qwest Field Event Center parking structure, the I-90 to Fourth Avenue South off-ramp, and to a lesser extent, part of the interior (stands) and exterior of Qwest Field, as well as the sign on the side of the stadium. It would also block views of the top of Smith Tower from this location.

The proposed off-ramp would not interfere with views of the stadium's two arches. Parts of the South Royal Brougham Way overpass would also be seen beneath the I-90 off-ramp, as would glimpses of the new pedestrian plaza at the southwest corner of Fourth Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way. Although the I-90 ramp would be clearly visible from this location, it would not constitute a major encroachment. Its curved configuration would blend with the curves of the two stadium arches and it would be compatible with the existing character seen from this portion of Fourth Avenue South.

Although this section of Fourth Avenue South has been identified by the City of Seattle as a view corridor, the new off-ramp would not have a substantial effect on views of downtown and historic landmarks from along most of this section of Fourth Avenue South. The off-ramp would block views toward downtown from several hundred feet of Fourth Avenue South immediately south of the off-ramp.



Viewpoint 6: Existing View Looking North from Fourth Avenue South



Viewpoint 6: View of Project Looking North from Fourth Avenue South



Viewpoint Location

Exhibit 5-6
Viewpoint 6
Existing and With Project Illustrations

Effects from project-related shadows, light, and glare from this location would be minor, although shadows of the off-ramp would be seen crossing Fourth Avenue South.

The project components that would be seen from this location would not change the existing character, which is a combination of sports-stadium/entertainment-center complex and industrial. The components would reduce overall visual quality from between moderately low and average to somewhat below moderately low. Because the viewers from this location are primarily motorists and local business employees, their viewing sensitivity is low, and they would not be negatively affected by the proposed project.

Viewpoint 6 – Project Related Changes to Visual Quality Rating	
<i>Rating –</i>	
<i>Attribute</i>	<i>- existing - With Project)</i>
Vividness	2.3 (2)
Intactness	3.5 (3.5)
Unity	4 (3)
Total Visual Quality	3.2 (2.8)
Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3= moderately low, 4 = average, 5 = moderately high, 6= high, 7 = very high.	

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the visual quality of most of the study area would generally remain the same, although future large-scale projects would have some effect on visual character and quality. These effects could be either negative or positive, depending upon how much consideration is given to improving or maintaining visual quality when planning and designing the projects. One part of the study area where visual quality would be expected to decline under the No Build Alternative would be the area along South Royal Brougham Way. Increased automobile and truck traffic would potentially create more glare than currently exists and add more moving elements to the viewed landscape. Some viewers would find that the increased traffic would have a negative influence on the viewed environment.

3 What has been done to avoid or minimize adverse effects of the Proposed Action on visual quality?

Many of the potential mitigation measures discussed below were developed as part of the planning process for this project in order to avoid and minimize potential adverse effects on visual quality. These potential measures were identified to help the project fit in to the neighborhood from a visual quality and urban design perspective. Special attention would be paid to

how a potential measure would fit into the existing visual setting in terms of scale, line, form, texture, and color. The following discusses potential mitigation measures for construction and operations.

Construction Mitigation

Temporary negative effects on visual character and quality related to construction activities, such as dust, night lighting, glare from equipment, and the presence of equipment and materials, are not expected to require mitigation measures beyond BMPs required by WSDOT.

Operational Mitigation

A number of potential mitigation measures have been identified that could help the proposed project fit in with its visual environment, minimize negative effects on visual quality, and, in some cases, improve existing visual quality (Exhibit 5-7). WSDOT generally incorporates context-sensitive design principles and considerations into the design of its projects. Considerations for this project would include incorporating architectural or urban design themes or elements from the study area (particularly from the stadiums) into the project components to link them visually to their environments. In addition, following some of the design guidelines established for I-90 would help ensure a visual transition from I-90 to First and Fourth Avenues South. Following many of the guidelines proposed for Phase 1 of SR 519 would likewise help ensure the proposed project's visual consistency with its surroundings.

Many of the potential measures identified in Exhibit 5-7 are general in nature. However, those selected will guide the design of the project past its current 10 percent complete phase. The design phase of the project will involve more detailed examination and selection of mitigation measures as outlined in the Roadside Funding Matrix for WSDOT Capital Projects (WSDOT, 2005). During the design phase, design standards will be developed for project elements such as signs, lighting, walls, barriers, fencing, railings, plantings, paving, etc. These standards will be developed with input from the City of Seattle and other stakeholders to help ensure that the project fits in with its neighborhood.

EXHIBIT 5-7. POTENTIAL MITIGATION MEASURES		
Potential Mitigation Measures	Description	Benefit or Improvement to Existing Conditions
Have project design elements reflect appropriate aspects of existing relevant design standards.	Make attempts to have project components be compatible with project vicinity in terms of line, form, color, and texture. Consider using or reflecting nearby existing architectural, engineering, and urban design elements and standards such as those established for I-90 and Phase 1 of SR 519.	By considering line, form, color, and texture, the project could better blend with existing positive elements and features. Would help project fit into area it would be built in and improve the visual environment of the area. Would help establish a visual transition from I-90 to SODO surface streets and the terminus/beginning of the Mountains to Sound Greenway.
Use streetscape elements to help link the proposed project to its neighborhood.	Use streetscape features similar to those used in the design of the Safeco Field area (including SR 519 Phase 1) when possible. Features may include street lights, trees, tree grates, paving treatments for sidewalks and crosswalks, and curb treatments.	Would help visually link the proposed project elements with the existing streetscape along First Avenue South, South Royal Brougham Way, and South Atlantic Street to create a more unified visual environment for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
Pedestrian overpass design features.	Use urban design features for the overpass ramp similar to, or the same as, those discussed above. Screen overhead lights that would be seen from Safeco Field.	Visually link the project with its neighborhood and help visually link the project vicinity together.
Build plaza near pedestrian overpass (center of circular ramp).	Could be an attractive urban design element that would be used by crowds of people as they exited buses (or future Sound Transit trains) to access the stadium or wait for pickup after events. Plaza could be very simple or more elaborate and detailed.	Would help make the overpass area more pleasant to use and functional for crowds of departing and waiting people.
Plant more street trees and follow the City of Seattle Urban Forestry Management Plan.	Encourage the use of trees and be consistent with the Seattle Urban Forestry Management Plan.	Street trees and other trees can help visually unify neighborhoods that may lack visual unity, soften utilitarian human-made elements, and provide human scale. Trees can also add more human scale and shelter to an area with very large-scale features. Would have visual and environmental benefits in an area that generally has few trees.
Maintain existing street trees where possible.	Protect maturing trees when possible.	Saving maturing trees results in less waiting for the benefits of newly planted trees to be realized.
Encourage the use of other types of vegetation.	Encourage the use of low-maintenance plantings (generally shrubs) where possible.	Shrubs and ground covers can help visually unify neighborhoods that may lack visual unity. Would have visual and environmental benefits in an area that generally has few trees.
Install Mountains to Sound Greenway sign or other marker.	Inform the public where the ending/beginning of the Mountains to Sound Greenway is.	Add interest to neighborhood and mark an important national (I-90) and regional (Mountains to Sound Greenway) transportation icon.

Many of the potential measures discussed in this discipline report are general in nature. However, those selected will guide the design of the project past its current 10 percent complete phase. The design phase of the project will involve more detailed examination and selection of mitigation measures as outlined in Roadside Funding Matrix for WSDOT Capital Projects.

4 Are any of the identified effects considered substantial?

No effects of the Proposed Action on visual character or quality would be substantial. In many respects the project's use of context-sensitive design principles and considerations and visually unifying elements such as street trees would help visually unify the project vicinity. This would be particularly true along areas of Third and Fourth Avenues South that currently have little to no visual unity.

The area most affected by the project would be the area near the South Royal Brougham Way railroad overpass. The overpass ramp would change the visual quality of the narrow corridor that is formed between Safeco Field and the Qwest Field Event Center and parking structure. Although the change to the existing visual setting would be very noticeable from some areas, potential project design mitigation measures, such as a plaza in the center of the circular pedestrian overpass, street trees, and other measures, could help offset the visual presence of the overpass.

Safeco Field and the Qwest Field Event Center and parking garage would block views of the overpass from the immediate south and north, which would help reduce the degree to which the overpass would be seen in the study area. In addition, the location of the west end of the overpass ramp (just east of the intersection of South Royal Brougham Way with Occidental Avenue South) would place it a block east of First Avenue South, which would reduce its visibility from First Avenue South and other areas to the west. Most close-up viewers would be stadium and event center patrons who would only occasionally or irregularly visit the area. This limited exposure,

in combination with the generally mixed sports stadium/exhibition center and industrial character of the surrounding environment, would limit the magnitude of the visual effect.

5 How consistent would the proposed project be with City of Seattle plans, policies, or guidelines related to visual quality that are applicable to the study area?

Although city comprehensive plans do not have jurisdiction over state highway projects or highway design, the City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code were reviewed for policies and goals that would be applicable to the proposed project's study area. The following describes how consistent the proposed project (as it now stands at the 15 percent design stage) would be with the relative policies and goals.

The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan's Cultural Resource Goal 4 calls for the City to "use public projects and activities to help define Seattle's identity, especially civic spaces that provide residents and visitors with strong symbols of the city or neighborhood identity." Cultural Resource Policy 5 states: "Capitalize on the potential that public projects have for serving as symbols of the city, and for expressing the identity and special character of the area where they are located by encouraging public art and excellent urban design and architecture."

The potential mitigation measures for the proposed project that were discussed in Chapter 5 and are displayed in Exhibit 5-7, would be a good start to achieving the Comprehensive Plan's Cultural Goal 4 and Policy 5 in the study area. This would be accomplished by emphasizing that project components be compatible with the neighborhood and reflect its identity and special character. Ensuring that the proposed project would meet the intent of Goal 4 and Policy 5 would have to occur during the design phase of the proposed project, when project component design details are proposed, reviewed, and finalized.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, the City's Municipal Code contains items that are relevant to the study area. Chapter 23.74 (Stadium Transition Overlay District) contains several directives that are relevant to the visual quality and aesthetics of the study area. Among them are stating that projects should support the pedestrian-oriented character of the area (as well as the surrounding industrial zone) and create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The mitigation measures included in this discipline report would be good starts toward meeting those directives. The success of meeting those directives would depend upon final design details.

In addition to the Stadium Transition Overlay District, the Municipal Code's Subsection P (Public View Protection) states that it is the City's policy to protect public views of significant natural and human-made features such as Mount Rainier, the downtown skyline, major bodies of water, and historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board. The subsection also identifies parts of First Avenue South, Fourth Avenue South, and South Royal Brougham Way as view corridors from which public views are protected.

The proposed I-90 off-ramp to South Atlantic Street would intrude on views to the north (that are above the existing elevated structure for the I-90 to Fourth Avenue South off-ramp) for several hundred feet of Fourth Avenue South that would be directly south of the proposed off-ramp. Views include the top of Smith Tower and parts of downtown. Views to the south toward Mount Rainier from parts of Fourth Avenue South north of the proposed I-90 off-ramp to Atlantic Street would also be somewhat impinged upon by the proposed structure. Although the section of Fourth Avenue South that passes through the study area has been identified by the City of Seattle as a view corridor, the new off-ramp would not have a substantial effect on views of downtown (and historic landmarks) or to Mount Rainier for most of the portion of Fourth Avenue South that is in the view corridor.

Chapter 6. Cumulative Effects

1 What are cumulative effects, and why are they important?

Cumulative effects are important because they help us to understand the project in terms of a “bigger picture.” They can reveal possible unintended consequences of the Proposed Action or No Build Alternative that might not be apparent when we look at the project by itself. Because of this, cumulative effects help us to evaluate how sustainable the project is likely to be in future years, and how it might interact with other projects that are planned but have not been built yet.

2 How did the study team identify expected cumulative effects on visual quality?

The study team identified expected cumulative effects of the Proposed Action and No Build Alternative by following a process recommended by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ, 1997) and as identified in Chapter 412 of the WSDOT *Environmental Procedures Manual* (WSDOT, 2007). First, the team considered other past and present projects that have already affected visual quality. These past and present actions have changed visual quality in and around the SR 519 study area from their original condition. Next, the expected direct and indirect effects of the project on visual quality, discussed in Chapter 5, were added. Finally, the probable effects of other reasonably foreseeable future actions (RFFAs) that are planned but not yet built were considered. The project team used year 2030, the project design year, as the future boundary for the cumulative effects assessment.

The project team combined past and present actions and RFFAs with the expected direct and indirect effects of each of

What are cumulative effects?

Cumulative effects are impacts on the environment that result “from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Defined by FHWA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.7)” (WSDOT, 2006)

the two alternatives to produce a cumulative picture of how visual quality might be affected, with and without the Proposed Action, in the future.

Past and Present Actions

As discussed in Chapter 5, the study area is undergoing a profound transformation from its original working/industrial environment. During the past decade two professional sports stadiums and an exhibition center were built in the core of the study area. These projects have helped change the character of the study area from almost strictly industrial to a mix of industrial and sports-stadium/exhibition-center complex character. The stadiums have become major landmarks and they attract large numbers of people to the area. They have also attracted business interests that have converted existing warehouse and industrial buildings into retail/dining establishments that have further changed the visual character of parts of the study area. As the area continued to attract visitors and employees (and their vehicles), WSDOT built new ramps from I-90 to Fourth Avenue South to improve circulation.

Although the stadiums have attracted new users and are new types of land uses, it can be assumed that much of the study area will remain industrial and will retain an industrial character. The study area is located within the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center (City of Seattle, 2006, 2007a). *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, the City's comprehensive plan as amended through 2005 (City of Seattle, 2005), and the *Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Plan* (Greater Duwamish Planning Committee, 1999) consistently emphasize industrial activities as the dominant land use within the area. Their policies prioritize manufacturing, warehousing, marine uses, transportation, utility, construction, and similar uses. Therefore, even though parts of the study area are likely to receive new types of uses that may not be perceived as having an industrial character, the study area will very likely retain a strong industrial presence and will continue to be supported by major (and highly visible) transportation infrastructure

elements. The presence of industrial land uses and activities along with the major transportation will influence visual character and likely keep visual quality ratings in the study area lower than average compared to other parts of urban Seattle.

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Proposed Action

Chapter 5 discusses how the proposed action would directly and indirectly affect visual character and visual quality in the study area. The three main components of the Proposed Action would be consistent with the existing visual or landscape character of the portions of the study area where they would be built. The direct and indirect effects of the proposed action on the generally below-average existing visual quality would not be substantial. In general, the effects would slightly lower the existing visual quality scores of the six viewpoints selected from around the study area.

Direct and Indirect Effects of the No Build Alternative

In the No Build Alternative, the visual quality of most of the study area would remain generally the same, although future large-scale projects would no doubt have some effect on visual character and quality. New large-scale projects would have the potential to help clean up and visually unify the areas near them. With good planning and project design, it could be possible for future large-scale projects to use unifying architectural and urban design elements to provide human scale and improve the visual quality of the study area.

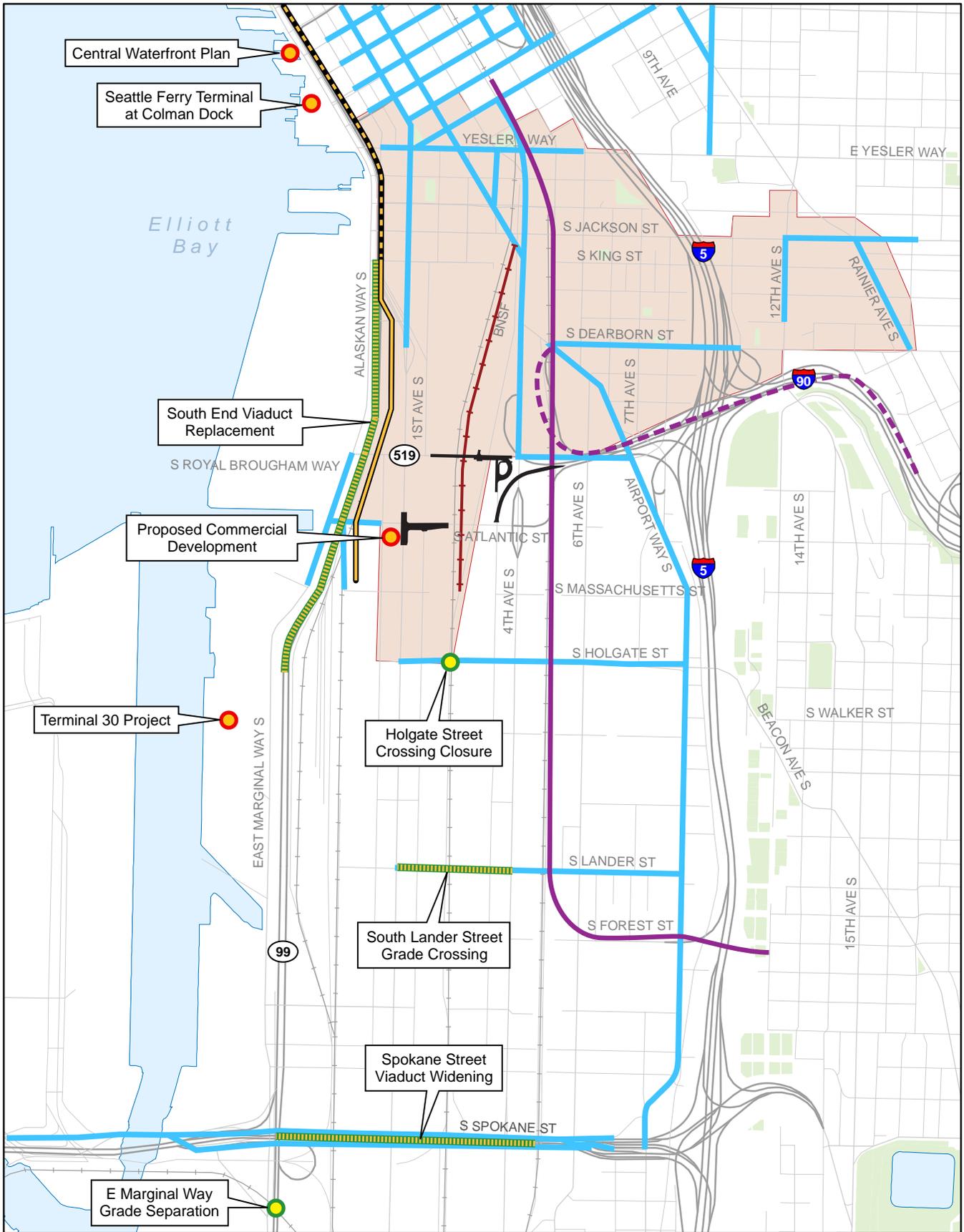
The one part of the study area where visual quality would be expected to decline under the No Build Alternative in a way that could contribute cumulatively to area-wide negative visual effects would be along South Royal Brougham Way. Increased traffic along this city street and conflicts among passenger vehicles, freight trucks, and pedestrians, particularly at the BNSF Railway crossing, would worsen the visual environment in the reasonably foreseeable future.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Exhibit 6-1 shows approximate locations of some of the larger reasonably foreseeable future actions (RFFAs) that could add to or interact with the Proposed Action to contribute to cumulative effects on air quality. Exhibit 6-2 briefly summarizes information about these projects. They include, but are not limited to:

- The South Holgate Street to South King Street Viaduct Replacement Project, and the two-phase Electrical Line Relocation Project, which are Moving Forward projects within the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program
- The South Spokane Street Viaduct project
- Completion of BNSF Railway track improvements
- Sound Transit light rail projects
- Closure of the South Holgate Street rail crossing
- Conversion of the Port of Seattle's Terminal 30 to a container terminal
- The East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project
- The City of Seattle's Central Waterfront Plan
- The City of Seattle's Bridging the Gap paving projects
- Washington State Ferries Terminal Improvements at Colman Dock

Urban development is increasing in portions of the South Downtown area immediately north of the study area. This area, which includes Seattle's International District/Chinatown/Little Saigon neighborhood, is currently the subject of Livable South Downtown, a major planning effort by the City of Seattle's Department of Planning and Development. In November 2007, the City of Seattle released the *Draft EIS for Livable South Downtown Planning* (City of Seattle, 2007b), a SEPA programmatic EIS which evaluates options for a comprehensive neighborhood plan for the South Downtown area.



Source: City of Seattle (2007) and King County (2006)

- Project
- Livable South Downtown Study Area (Approx.)
- BNSF Railway Completion
- Electrical Line Relocation Phase 1 and Phase 2
- Sound Transit Central Link
- Proposed Sound Transit East Link
- Bridging the Gap Paving Project
- Road Project
- Development Project

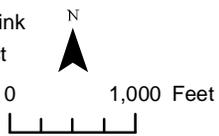


Exhibit 6-1
Reasonably Foreseeable
Future Actions

EXHIBIT 6-2. REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE ACTIONS IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREA				
Project ^a	Location	Purpose	Proponent	Expected Construction Time Frame ^b
South Holgate Street to South King Street Viaduct Replacement Project	SR 99 from South Holgate Street to South King Street	Build new SR 99 between South Holgate Street and South King Street. Includes South Atlantic Street and South Royal Brougham Way grade separation, detour routes, and temporary connections	Washington State Department of Transportation	2009-2012
Electrical Line Relocation	Phase 1: South Massachusetts Street to South King Street Phase 2: South King Street to Union Street	Remove network distribution lines and transmission lines that are located under the existing Viaduct before it is demolished	Washington State Department of Transportation	Phase 1: Construction scheduled for 2008-2009. Phase 2: To be determined.
Completion of BNSF Railway Improvements	King Street Station to South Royal Brougham Way	Reduce rail transportation conflicts along the BNSF right-of-way; increase safety at the BNSF crossing of South Royal Brougham Way	BNSF Railway	Improvements at South Royal Brougham Way have been completed; with additional improvements along the BNSF right-of-way currently in progress.
Central Link Light Rail	Downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac Airport	Provide light rail service between downtown Seattle and Sea-Tac Airport	Sound Transit	2008-2009
East Link Light Rail	Downtown Seattle to Redmond	Provide light rail service between downtown Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond	Sound Transit	Construction not scheduled. Environmental impact statement scheduled for release in fall 2009.
Proposed Commercial Development	South side of South Atlantic Street between First Avenue South and Utah Avenue South	Provide office and retail uses	Gull Industries	2010-2012
Livable South Downtown Planning Study	The study examines growth and planning issues specific to Pioneer Square, the Chinatown/International District (including the Little Saigon area east of I-5), and the northernmost edges of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center.	Stimulate housing and related development consistent with the Mayor's Center City Seattle strategy	City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development	Environmental impact statement and legislative proposals in 2008

EXHIBIT 6-2. REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE ACTIONS IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREA				
Project ^a	Location	Purpose	Proponent	Expected Construction Time Frame ^b
Closure of South Holgate Street at BNSF Railway Crossing	South Holgate Street at the BNSF Railway crossing	Eliminate conflicts between rail and vehicle traffic.	City of Seattle, Department of Transportation	Construction not scheduled
South Lander Street Grade Separation	South Lander Street between First Avenue South and Fourth Avenue South	Improve safety and traffic flow by constructing a roadway bridge for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians over the BNSF Railway tracks.	City of Seattle, Department of Transportation	2009-2011
South Spokane Street Viaduct Widening	South Spokane Street from Sixth Avenue South to West Seattle Bridge	Improve traffic safety and upgrade the structural and seismic performance of the viaduct that connects I-5 to the West Seattle High Level Bridge. Construct a new eastbound loop ramp to Fourth Avenue South, to the south of South Spokane Street.	City of Seattle, Department of Transportation	Seismic retrofit, median barrier installation, and street-level utility relocations have been completed. Viaduct widening and ramp construction is scheduled to start in 2008 and would be constructed in phases as funds become available, so exact construction range not known.
Bridging the Gap Paving Projects	Seattle arterial streets	As part of a larger program, the paving projects will resurface, restore, or replace approximately 300 lane-miles of arterial streets; rehabilitate or replace 3-5 bridges and seismically retrofit 5 additional bridges; repair or restore approximately 144 blocks of existing sidewalks; build approximately 117 blocks of new sidewalks; rehabilitate approximately 50 stairways; and restripe about 5,000 crosswalks.	City of Seattle, Department of Transportation	2006-2013

EXHIBIT 6-2. REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE ACTIONS IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREA				
Project ^a	Location	Purpose	Proponent	Expected Construction Time Frame ^b
Central Waterfront Plan	South Atlantic Street to West Thomas Street along the shoreline edge of the Center City	Following replacement of the existing Alaskan Way Viaduct, construct new parks and open spaces, shoreline and habitat improvements, improved linkages to the downtown core, <i>and</i> transit connections, <i>and implement</i> land use and regulatory changes.	City of Seattle	Presently in planning process. Construction will begin with the removal of the viaduct and will be ongoing for several years.
Terminal 30 Conversion	East Marginal Way South between approximately South Holgate Street and South Lander Street	Terminal 30 had been used for cruise operations but will be converted back to its original use as a container terminal. This and the adjacent Terminal 25 will provide 70 acres for container use.	Port of Seattle	2007-2009
East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project	East Marginal Way South just south of South Spokane Street	Provide a north- and southbound grade separation on Duwamish Avenue South, relocating East Marginal Way through this corridor to improve access among Port of Seattle terminals, rail yards, and industrial warehouses.	Port of Seattle	2006-2008
Washington State Ferries Terminal Improvements at Colman Dock	Pier 54 at Seattle Waterfront on Alaskan Way South	Upgrade structures and facilities and increase capacity.	Washington State Department of Transportation	Construction not scheduled. For 2008-2009, focus will be on system-wide planning and coordination with nearby projects, including the proposed SR 519 Phase 2.
<p>^aOnly major planned projects are listed. Many other projects that could be implemented in the reasonably foreseeable future are not shown.</p> <p>^bDates are approximate.</p> <p>Sources: General information from the WSDOT, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and Sound Transit websites.</p>				

The study examines growth and planning issues specific to Pioneer Square, the Chinatown/International District (including the Little Saigon area east of I-5), and the northernmost edges of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center. Preliminary recommendations were released by the City's Department of Planning and Development in March 2006. Land use and zoning changes considered as part of this process will require conducting an environmental review prior to legislative decision-making.

The project team examined these RFFAs to see if they might interact with the Proposed Action to produce a cumulative effect on visual quality.

The project most likely to interact with the Proposed Action in the near future is the South Holgate Street to South King Street Viaduct Replacement Project, which will replace the south end of the Viaduct (Exhibit 6-1). That project, a Moving Forward project within the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program, is scheduled for construction from 2009 to 2012, the same time frame as the Proposed Action. The visual effect of the completed project will depend on the design of the replacement facility, which has not been determined. Although this project is planned immediately west of the Proposed Action, it is unlikely to add to, or interact with, the visual effects of the proposed I-90 ramp to South Atlantic Street or the elevated structures proposed at South Royal Brougham Way because of the intervening presence of Safeco Field.

Because much of the study area is contained within the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center as identified in the *Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Plan* (Greater Duwamish Planning Committee, 1999), it is likely that future projects in this area will emphasize industrial activities and will reflect an industrial visual character. Therefore, even though some parts of the study area are likely to receive new types of uses and developments, the study area will very likely retain a strong industrial presence.

3 Would the Proposed Action contribute to cumulative effects on visual quality?

The Proposed Action would not contribute substantially to a cumulative change in the visual environment of the study area in the reasonably foreseeable future. The addition of transportation-related structures would be consistent with the visual character of the existing environment. RFFAs, discussed above, would be too distant to interact visibly with these improvements in ways that would cumulatively affect the visual quality of the study area.

4 How would cumulative effects on visual quality be monitored, mitigated, and managed?

Cumulative effects are produced by the contributions of many different projects and activities managed by private firms and governmental agencies. For that reason, the Proposed Action or No Build Alternative would contribute only a small addition to the overall cumulative effect on the visual quality of the study area. Direct and indirect contributions of the Proposed Action to a cumulative effect on visual quality could be mitigated through measures such as those discussed in Chapter 5 and shown in Exhibit 5-7. The Proposed Action would be consistent with design features already incorporated into Phase 1 of the SR 519 Intermodal Access Project and visually compatible with the stadium buildings and highway structures already present in the study area, minimizing the cumulative effect of the Proposed Action on the visual environment.

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