

Alaskan Way Viaduct
North Portal Working Group – May 21, 2009
Meeting Summary

Working Group attendees

- Linda Anderson, Amalgamated Transit Union
- Jill Arnow, Greater Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce
- Glenn Avery, Queen Anne Community Council
- Sharon Coleman, Vulcan
- John Coney, Uptown Alliance
- David Delfs, Magnolia/Queen Anne/South Lake Union Design Review Board
- Ron Hildebrandt, Trident Seafoods
- David Hiller, Cascade Bicycle Club
- John Kane, Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing & Industrial Center (BINMIC)
- Mary McCumber, Futurewise
- Jose D. Montaña, Magnolia Community Club
- Robert Nellams, Seattle Center
- James Watson (substitute for Lee Newgent), Seattle/King County Building & Construction Trades Council
- Vince O'Halloran, Puget Sound Ports Council & Sailors Union of the Pacific
- Marko Tubic, Fremont Chamber of Commerce
- Kim Suelze, CityIce Cold Storage
- Lisa Verhovek, Gates Foundation
- Bob Viggers, Charlie's Produce
- Elaine Wine, Ballard Neighborhood

Working Group members not in attendance

- David Brown, Pacific Northwest Ballet
- Tom Graff, Belltown Business Association
- Bob Grossman, South Lake Union Friends & Neighbors
- Kevin Hughes, Pacific Science Center
- Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition

Agencies and staff in attendance

- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle
- Ron Paananen, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Eric Tweit, SDOT
- John White, WSDOT

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office Deputy Director Ron Paananen welcomed the working group members and the public to the meeting. Bob Powers, SDOT Deputy Director, reviewed activities of the south and central waterfront working groups and directed attendees to the program Web site for [presentations](#) from those groups.

Agenda Item #2 – Presentation on Potential Portal Concepts and Configurations

John White, WSDOT Alaskan Way Viaduct (AWV) Program Director, reviewed the goals of the north portal with the working group members. He then reviewed Concept A with the group. A depiction of [Concept A](#) and the [presentation](#) can be found on the Web site. After John reviewed the details of Concept A, he opened the floor to questions and comments. They are as follows:

Robert Nellams – Could you please review the on- and off-ramps going northbound and southbound?

John White - Heading northbound, the on- and off-ramp is at Roy Street. Heading southbound, there are off-ramps at Valley, Roy and Republican streets. The on-ramp is at Republican Street.

Ron Hildebrandt – Is there a big difference in cost between putting overpasses over John, Thomas and Harrison versus at-grade intersections?

John White – The cost differences would be plus or minus 10 to 20 percent. The biggest difference is that the overpasses would have grades that exceed 10 percent in some cases.

Sharon Coleman – Why would the overpasses have to be elevated to such a great extent?

Eric Tweit – The overpasses would have to clear the on- and off- ramps.

Bob Powers – For the benefit of the group could you explain the bike and pedestrian access as it relates to Harrison and Thomas streets?

Eric Tweit – By widening the underpass on Mercer Street it adds a great deal of space for bike and pedestrian access. All three of the streets (John, Thomas and Harrison streets), will have sidewalks on each side that are between 10 and 12 feet and will connect into the street grids.

David Hiller – Are you still considering raising the bike and pedestrian facility through the underpass to provide easier grades?

Eric Tweit – We've looked at it, but it's a safety concern that cars may not be able to see pedestrians if they are separated and out of the line of sight.

Vince O'Halloran – Are you making any changes to Aurora Avenue south of the Aurora Bridge?

Eric Tweit – There are no changes to Aurora Avenue north of Mercer Street associated with this project.

Lisa Verhovek – Is the only access to uptown at Roy Street?

Eric Tweit – Yes, in this scenario the only way to access uptown from SR 99 is to get off at Roy Street and go around on Mercer Street.

Robert Nellams – If I'm leaving Seattle Center, my only way to get north is on John Street?

Eric Tweit - You may also go across Thomas or Harrison streets, get on Dexter Avenue and get on Aurora Avenue.

Linda Anderson – Transit stop locations are to be determined. Do you have a timeline on when those might be designed and when you want input on that?

Eric Tweit – When transit is coming into downtown, one of the first stops would be near Denny Way. North of the portal, the stops would be similar to today. Decisions on stop locations would be made once the portal design is a little further along.

Next, the group reviewed [Concept B](#).

Ron Paananen – At Republican Street in Concept A it was two-way, in Concept B it is just one-way. Why is that?

Eric Tweit – By making Republic one-way it eliminates a weaving movement at Roy Street.

Robert Nellams – In this concept, could you turn onto Harrison Street?

Eric Tweit – The Harrison Street intersection is a four-lane intersection with the ramps to SR 99 being the north leg.

James Watson (substitute for Lee Newgent) – It appears that Broad Street is eliminated in these concepts? Could it be used for parks?

Eric Tweit – Yes it gets eliminated in all concepts. You get better options for traffic movement if you eliminate it and use it as a street grid. In some cases, the vacated area could be used for parks.

Elaine Wine – Would John, Thomas, Harrison and Mercer streets be signalized?

Eric Tweit – Yes.

Lastly, the group reviewed [Concept C](#).

John Kane – What is the grade on the overpasses at John, Thomas and Harrison streets?

Eric Tweit – They are all over 10 percent.

John Kane – Will large freight and trucks be able to slow down and make these right hand turns? Will there be curb bulbs?

Eric Tweit – The design would accommodate trucks making right turns from Republican Street. If we use curb bulbs, they would be designed for truck use.

Bob Powers then asked the group if they had any additional questions or remarks. They are as follows:

Mary McCumber – Is Concept B the best for transit?

Eric Tweit – Yes, it has more opportunities for transit.

David Hiller – Which works best for biking?

Eric Tweit – Concept B. All of them have the Mercer Street underpass with bike lanes. The at-grade crossings at John, Thomas and Harrison streets help as well.

John Coney – It looks like Concept B presents the best opportunity for economic development in terms of development and connectivity. Also new transit routes going east/west are an improvement.

Elaine Wine – If you're a truck carrying hazardous materials southbound, is the assumption that you would exit at Republican Street, take a right, and then take a left on Mercer Street? What is the thinking for how freight will get downtown?

Eric Tweit – Freight could exit at Denny Way, or they can exit around Roy Street.

Robert Nellams – Have you considered any concepts that doesn't include Sixth Avenue?

Eric Tweit – Sixth Avenue is a fundamental part of this, and we think it provides for good access to Republican Street and the tunnel.

Robert Nellams – What is the truck route if you were going from the tunnel to Ballard? I'm a little concerned about Fifth Avenue.

Eric Tweit – Coming from the tunnel, trucks will likely exit at Republican Street, Dexter Avenue, and Mercer Street. He then reviewed the routes on the [northwest access maps](#).

Jose Montaña – You have three concepts that all rely on two-way Mercer Street, but Mercer Street is over-crowded already. Have you studied other access routes? Have you considered moving southward to between Harrison and Thomas streets?

Eric Tweit – We considered moving the portal further south, but then you could not create the crossings at John, Thomas and Harrison streets and those crossings are very important and create redundancy in the system.

Ron Hildebrandt – What's the projected timing of when the tunnel is completed, you tear down the viaduct and you rebuild the surface street? How long before the surface street connection back into Ballard is done?

Ron Paananen – The tunnel is scheduled to be complete at the end of 2015. The viaduct will come down in 2016.

Bob Chandler – The new Alaskan Way with the improved connections to Elliott and Western avenues is anticipated to take two years, starting in 2016. Alaskan Way along the waterfront will be open during construction of the new Alaskan Way.

Mary McCumber – For the environmental review process, you're building off an old environmental impact statement, so this will be a supplemental environmental impact statement. I'd like to have you layout the environmental review process and what documents you will base your review on. How are you addressing the federal and state requirements?

Ron Paananen – We're going to issue a second supplemental draft environmental impact statement. We will reissue the notice of intent and adjust the purpose and needs statement to address our new direction, then we will launch our typical documentation review process.

Sharon Coleman – Will traffic impacts and mitigation be studied in the environmental documentation?

John White – Yes, we will include a full traffic analysis. We will study the entire system of improvements that come with this project.

Kim Suelze – Was there any discussion about moving the tunnel exit north of Mercer Street?

Ron Paananen – That creates a lot of access issues with the roads north of Mercer Street and it becomes hard to deal with grades as you go north.

Glenn Avery – You show eastbound Mercer Street with no turn lanes until its east of Aurora Avenue – is that the intent?

Eric Tweit – Yes, that is the intent. We will have a left turn lane on Fifth Avenue.

David Delfs – You're not showing Sixth Avenue going all the way through? So Queen Anne will have to continue to use Fifth Avenue?

Eric Tweit – We've looked at this connection in the past, but it would create added costs and increased property impacts north of Mercer Street. There will be a new route via Sixth to Mercer to Taylor as an alternative to Fifth Avenue North.

Marko Tubic – Is there a scale of which concept would take longer to build than the others?

John White – The timeframe difference is not significant between the concepts.

Agenda Item #3 – Action Items and Adjournment

Ron Paananen concluded the meeting by noting that the state, city, county and port think Concept B is the best option for the north portal.

He then reviewed the action items from the meeting as:

- Release information to working group participants in advance.
- Distribute project schedules.

Next meeting: June 4, 2009
4 to 6 p.m.
Seattle Aquarium