

---

# Puget Sound Gateway Project

SR 509, I-5 and SR 167 Funding and Phasing Study: Strategic Corridor Design Review



## Appendix I: Environmental Process Meetings

**Title VI Notice to Public** It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinators, George Laue at (509) 324-6018 or Jonte' Sulton at (360) 705-7082.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information** This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the WSDOT Diversity/ADA Compliance Team at [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA (4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.

**MEETING NOTES**

**Date:** February 27, 2013

**HNTB Project No.:** 50548-DS-001

**Meeting Name:** Puget Sound Gateway Environmental Strategy

**Location:** Goldsmith (John White's office and WSDOT teleconf.)

**Purpose:** The purpose of the meeting was to complete a quick review of existing SR 509 and SR 167 environmental documentation (scope, years completed, key assumptions in ROD, etc)

**Attending:** [In-person] John White, Bill Jordan, Dan Holmquist; [phone] Christina Martinez, Steve Fuchs, Jeff Sawyer

Meeting began at 1:00PM.

1) Brief History

The SR 509 and SR 167 corridor completion projects have over two decades of study, engineering and development. The full build-out for both of the extension projects includes three lanes each direction (two GP lanes and one HOV lane), with a system-to-system interchange at I-5.

The full build-out of I-5 Express Toll Lane Project would include a two lane express toll lane system from Tacoma to Everett, to include conversion of the existing HOV lane and addition of one new lane.

For environmental clearance, both the SR 509 and SR 167 Full build project have Final Environmental Impact Statements (FEIS) with final Records of Decision (ROD). SR 167 has a Tier II FEIS with a ROD issued in 2007. SR 509 has an FEIS and ROD issued in 2003. The I-5 Express Toll Lane Project is at a preliminary level of development and has not had any environmental clearance documentation developed.

2) Where are we now

The Puget Sound Gateway Project would be a phase of the full build-out for the SR 509 Extension and SR 167 Extension projects, combined with part of the southern segment of the I-5 Express Toll Lanes Project. The Gateway Project would build only one lane each direction for the SR 509 and SR 167 project, which would be forward compatible with future construction of the full build-out configuration. On I-5, the existing HOV lane is converted to an express toll lane from SR 16 to the I-5 reversible lane in south Seattle, and a second express toll lane is added from SR 167 to SR 509.

3) Key Considerations

a) Independent utility and Logical Termini

For all three projects, we need to be able to prove independent utility and logical termini. For the SR 509 and SR 167 extension projects, this appears relatively straightforward given that they already are independent projects with respective FEIS and ROD. For the I-5 ETL project however, this may prove more difficult. For the I-5 ETL project and the specific segment from Tacoma to SeaTac, the emphasis would be to show that the this segment could be built without the two extension projects (independent utility), and that the connections to the ETL direct connections at the SR 509 and SR 167 interchanges are logical end points (logical termini). Additionally, the SR 509 and SR 167 project have been included in the long term planning (STIP), and should be considered as baseline projects to which the I-5 ETL would need to connect, again showing logical termini.

b) For the I-5 ETL need to be able to show logical termini.

4) Environmental Documentation Scenarios

In determining how the Gateway Project's environmental documentation might be processed, several considerations need to be included:

a) Should the evaluation look at SR 509, SR 167 and I-5 separately?

- b) What form would the environmental documentation update take (EIS Re-evaluation, Supplemental EIS, Env. Assessment, etc.)
- c) How would you clear the I-5 ETL scope? Early discussions have centered around a Tier 1 corridor approach
- d) What if we were to look at the proposed improvements as a cohesive single proposal?

Using current understanding of the documentation process in combination of with the history of the SR 509 and SR 167 projects, it is anticipated that a re-evaluation of the two projects would be the first step in the update process. Through the re-evaluation process, the need for additional documentation would be determined. Additional documentation could take the form of an EA or a supplemental EIS, likely an EA.

For the I-5 ETL, the environmental clearance would start with an Environmental Assessment which identify additional requirements and could lead to an EIS document.

During the discussion, we identified two approaches for the environmental update and documentation for the projects. They were:

- a) Process the projects individually, initiating re-evaluation of the SR 167 and SR 509 projects and an EA for the I-5 ETL project. All of these documents would address tolling, and the re-evaluations would identify any updates to the project impacts based on refinements developed subsequent to the last FEIS and ROD.
  - b) Process a single EA for all three project areas, noting refinements in the SR 509 and SR 167 corridors, and the addition of tolling in all three corridors. This approach would link the three projects together for the duration of the environmental process, and would not allow their separation unless the process was re-initiated.
- 5) Given the assumptions on the above scenario approaches, what would reasonable schedules look like given what we currently know in each corridor?

For the re-evaluation of the SR 509 and SR 167 projects, the likely schedule could be 12 mo. If this leads to an EA or Supplemental EIS it might add another 16-18 months.

- 6) The following Action Items were identified:
- a) Look to schedule a meeting with WSDOT HQ Env., WSDOT ASDE, Project Staff and FHWA to brief FHWA on project progress and likely environmental scenarios. Anticipate late March or early April.
  - b) In developing further strategy, look at the I-405/SR 167 HOV D-C ramps (WSDOT) project work, the Elizabeth River Tunnel (VDOT), SR 161/Meridian St. Bridge Supplemental EIS, and SR 520/Urban Partnership Account.

Meeting concluded at approximately 2:00PM.

This is our understanding of items discussed and decisions reached. Please contact us if there are changes or additions.

Submitted by,  
HNTB CORPORATION

Dan Holmquist  
Deputy Proj. Mngr

cc: attendees, efile.

**Date**  
June 13, 2013

**To**  
John White, Allison Hanson,  
Christina Martinez, Debra Cade,  
Mark Sawyer



**PROJECT  
CORRESPONDENCE**

**From**  
Dan Holmquist, Pete Smith, Bill  
Jordan

**Subject**  
Environmental clearance for Puget  
Sound Gateway Projects

The Washington State Legislature is currently exploring options for providing funding for Phase 1 of the Puget Sound Gateway Project. The Gateway Project constructs parts of the SR 167 Completion Project, I-5 Express Toll Lanes, and the I-5/SR 509 Corridor Completion and Freight Improvement Projects. Environmental clearance will be necessary. Two viable options exist: one, **separate and distinct NEPA clearances** for SR 167, SR 509, and I-5 Express Toll Lanes; or two, **joint NEPA clearance** of these projects.

**Option 1 - separate and distinct clearance:** Use a NEPA re-evaluation or supplemental analysis for the SR 167 and SR 509 projects based on the issued Records of Decision (RODs) for these projects. This process would take between nine and 12 months. Both re-evaluations would recognize the I-5 Express Toll lane project as a foreseeable action with interchange linkages for SR 167 and SR 509. For the I-5 Express Toll Lane project, start with an Environmental Assessment (EA) to clear both phases of the project. If significant impacts are revealed as part of the Express toll lane project analysis, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) could be completed in recognition of these impacts. The analysis completed for the EA would support the additional development needed to complete an EIS.

**Pro/Con – There are advantages and disadvantages to completing separate and distinct NEPA documents**

- **Pros**
  - Separate documents allow each project to advance on its own timeline. This recognizes the timing differences between NEPA reevaluations for the SR 167 and SR 509 projects with respect to the I-5 express toll lane Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.
  - Separate documents allow a cleared project to still advance if another project's analysis determines there are significant impacts that require additional study.
- **Cons**
  - By having separate projects, it is conceivable that a no-build alternative could be selected for the I-5 project. For the SR 167 and SR 509 projects that advance, the no-build selective alternative may have had elements within that were needed to have the build project function to maximum efficiency.

- A different build alternative could be identified associated with the I-5 project which could require modification to the SR 167 or SR 509 projects. This could trigger additional changes to the SR 167 and SR 509 clearances.

○

**Option 2 - joint clearance:** Complete the environmental analyses together in recognition of the tolling interaction between the projects. This approach would likely take between 12 and 18 months to complete. As options exists to have logical termini and tolling start at the proposed interchanges of I-5 , SR 167 and SR 509, linkage between projects would be recognized. This option would ensure all projects get cleared and the tolling revenue that is necessary to complete construction is funded. However, if one or more projects are found to have significant adverse effects, all three projects may be delayed due to the single environmental documentation.

**Pro/Con - There are also advantages and disadvantages to completing separate and distinct NEPA documents**

- **Pros**

- By linking the projects together through a single NEPA document, project elements that complement each other are easier to adjust based on study or public input.
- Tolling analysis and justification reports may be easier to analyze

- **Cons**

- Construction timing could be a disadvantage with linked NEPA documents. If one or both project were delayed due to identification of impacts that need further analysis, all the projects would have a delayed construction start.
- Construction delay for the SR 167 and SR 509 elements may lead to those construction dollars going to another WSDOT project which is prepared to go to construction.
- Overall delay in SR 167 and SR 509 if the I-5 component is delayed. If it is decided later to go with separate documents for the SR 167, SR 509 and I-5 elements, starting over as separate documents would take overall a much longer time that starting separately in the first place.