Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Program

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration | WSDOT | King County | City of Seattle

Fairs, Festivals and Farmers Markets Summary
Summer 2008

Overview

The Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program hosted an informational booth at 28 fairs, festivals and farmers markets throughout the Seattle area during the summer of 2008. Approximately 5,250 festival attendees visited the program's booths to ask questions, make comments or read materials.

The team participated in these events with the objective of engaging members of the public, especially those who may not attend formal informational briefings or public meetings. The team also sought to raise awareness of the program, answer questions and collect feedback.

The informational booth featured a freestanding tri-fold display, which provided an overview of the six Moving Forward projects and showed their locations along SR 99. It also briefly described how we were working toward a solution for the viaduct's central waterfront section. A folio describing the Moving Forward projects and fact sheets highlighting each project in detail were also displayed at the program table. Translated copies of the tri-fold display were available in Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Tagalog and Spanish.

A sign-up sheet was available for visitors who wished to receive monthly program updates via e-mail. Throughout the summer, 300 festival attendees signed up for the program mailing list.

To attract more visitors to the booth, team members offered tote bags with the program name and Web site, and magnets and pens that promoted the program and the program hotline.

Themes and commonly asked questions

Most festival attendees had limited knowledge about the program. Once informed about the Moving Forward projects, visitors were often enthusiastic about the the start of construction. Throughout the summer, booth visitors were also concerned about the viaduct's safety.

The majority of visitors asked about the program's current status and the decision-making process for the viaduct's central waterfront section. Many festival attendees were curious about the program's decision makers, the timeline for a decision and the options being considered. People also asked about program costs and funding. Community members wanted to know when construction would begin, whether this would cause traffic delays, and what actions would be taken to minimize disruptions.

Questions we heard
Below is a sample of the most commonly asked questions:

- What is the current status of the project?
- Has anything been decided yet?
- Will there be another vote?
- What are the options for the central waterfront section?
- How am I going to get around during construction?
- What will traffic be like during construction?
- When are they taking down the viaduct?
- How do you estimate your costs?
- What are your funding sources?
- How much of the budget is going to transit?
- How are you involving the public in this process?
- Will the S. Holgate Street to S. King Street project improve bike and pedestrian access?
- How will S. Holgate Street to S. King Street construction affect traffic and congestion?
- How many jobs will the viaduct replacement create?
- Why did you take the Elliott Bay bridge idea off the table?
- What is the process for making a decision about the central waterfront?
- What are you going to do to avoid traffic backups on SR 99 after Mariners and Seahawks games?
- Who ultimately makes the decision for the central waterfront section?
- Will the viaduct be closed during construction?
- Why don't they just retrofit the existing viaduct?
- Have you thought about adding a Sound Transit rail option to your project?
- What are you going to do to the seawall and why is it included in the viaduct project?
- Would a tunnel be safe in the event of an earthquake?
- How many lanes will be closed during electrical line relocation and how will the project affect bus routes?
- Why is WSDOT still studying the retrofit when they know it is not a viable option?
- Why can't we just keep the current viaduct?
- Why has a billion dollars already been spent?
- Who is on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the central waterfront?
- Do we have the funding for a tunnel?
- Is the viaduct still sinking?
- Who is actually building the project? Who is the contractor?
- Have they examined whether there are Native American burial grounds on the waterfront?
- Why don't you have to replace capacity? How will you keep people moving if the replacement has fewer lanes than the viaduct?
- How much public open space would each of the central waterfront scenarios provide?
- How is the viaduct program coordinating with Sound Transit?
- How will my bus get into downtown during and after construction?

- Have you considered tolling as a funding source?
- Is the viaduct on the national historic register? Can it be torn down?
- What will happen to West Seattle during S. Holgate Street to S. King Street construction?

Comments we heard

The team received a wide variety of comments from booth visitors throughout the summer. A representative sample of the most commonly received comments is provided below, grouped by topic.

Central waterfront

Comments pertaining to tunnel alternatives:

- The viaduct has to come down, so you are effectively starting with a clean slate. It would be foolish to build another highway on Seattle's waterfront. Nobody would ever consider building an elevated highway on Alki or Lake Washington, so why would they ruin downtown's waterfront?
- If Seattle wants to be a modern world-class city, we shouldn't have a big ugly elevated highway on our waterfront.
- The waterfront could be the best real estate in the city if we just got rid of that viaduct.
- The waterfront should be a place for people.
- We should have a tunnel on our waterfront - no matter what it costs.
- The surface option is crazy and it will never work! Just build a tunnel.
- The Boston waterfront is lovely as a result of the Big Dig.
- I want the trench/tunnel option.
- Property owners on the waterfront should help pay for a tunnel.
- A tunnel would benefit condo developers, not drivers.
- Get rid of the road on the waterfront. We should have parks and piers.
- Building a tunnel would give Seattle a world-class waterfront, like Lake Shore Drive in Chicago.
- We need more visionary thought here in Seattle. Build a tunnel.
- A tunnel might be problematic because the waterfront is made of fill soil.
- A tunnel would be best from an urban design perspective, because it would be less noisy and would allow for a more pedestrian-friendly waterfront.
- Tunnels are dangerous because they can fill with water in the event of an earthquake.
- You should study the Embarcadero in San Francisco for an example of removing a highway to open up a city's waterfront.
- The tunnel would be ideal, but I think it is too expensive.
- A tunnel is the best idea because it could double as the seawall.
- A tunnel would be a great long-term investment for the City of Seattle.
- I would like to see a lidded trench with parks and a beautiful boulevard above it.

Comments pertaining to surface alternatives:

- You should build a surface street - who cares if people have to slow down for a mile while driving through downtown?
- Tear down the viaduct! The surface street option is the best.

- I can't believe they are even considering a surface boulevard. I thought they already ruled that out.
- You should build a surface boulevard or a tunnel. Building another monstrosity on Seattle's waterfront would be a huge mistake.
- A surface level solution would be cost-effective.
- Seattle has a beautiful waterfront that should be appreciated, which is why we should have a surface or tunnel solution.
- The surface street idea would never work. We would have constant traffic jams throughout the city.
- We should use San Francisco's Embarcadero as a model for Seattle's waterfront.
- I don't think a surface street would work. We already have too much traffic downtown.

Comments pertaining to elevated alternatives:

- The viaduct gives the city character.
- I don't see the viaduct as a barrier to the waterfront. It's the best view in town.
- I don't spend time downtown. I want to go through downtown.
- The viaduct is critical to our ability to move traffic and conduct business in Seattle.
- We love our viaduct! The viaduct is our lifeline.
- The viaduct is the fastest way to get to the airport.
- Don't tear down the viaduct. Retrofitting it is the only option.
- I live in West Seattle, and I hope they keep the viaduct just the way it is.
- I want an elevated structure because tunnels are dangerous.
- It would be a shame to spend two billion dollars and have the waterfront end up with what we have today - a noisy, ugly elevated structure.
- I adamantly oppose another viaduct on our waterfront.
- The viaduct is noisy and obtrusive and makes it impossible to enjoy the waterfront.
- The viaduct is an eyesore and is unsafe. Seattle should showcase its best asset - the waterfront.
- The integrated elevated option is ridiculous.

<u>S. Holgate Street to S. King Street Viaduct Replacement (a.k.a. south end project)</u>

- I am glad they are getting started with the south end project.
- You should increase water taxi service as part of the south end project.
- The design renderings for the south end look nice.
- I hope the south end project improves the bike routes in the area.
- You should work with Sound Transit to put light rail on the south end.

<u>Freight</u>

- You should take the Port of Seattle into consideration.
- Freight movement should be a high priority.
- I am glad that you are planning to get freight and Port of Seattle traffic out of normal traffic.
- Freight needs more consideration; don't make Hanjin relocate.

<u>Bicyclists and pedestrians</u>

- I would like to see better bike lanes on the central waterfront.
- There should be bike lanes on every new road built.
- Please allow for safe bike and pedestrian routes during construction.

Safety

- I am terrified to drive on the viaduct.
- The Governor should take the viaduct down now so it doesn't fall down while she's in office.
- Safety should be the main concern, regardless of cost.
- The viaduct is a safety hazard, and I hope they take it down soon.
- Safety is my main concern; any replacement should be built to the highest earthquake standards.
- You should get rid of the Seneca Street off-ramp because it's dangerous.

Capacity

- You should build a bigger and wider viaduct with more lanes.
- Don't reduce capacity on SR 99.
- You should increase capacity on SR 99 because the region is growing.
- I am glad you are looking at the whole network of city streets to maintain capacity.

Transit

- A streetcar would not be a cost-effective way to move people around.
- Transit improvements are my main concern; Seattle should do better on public transportation.
- WSDOT should not continue 1950s-era highway-based urban planning. We should plan for transit.
- The West Seattle water taxi should run early in the morning so people can take it to work.
- You should work closely with Sound Transit so as not to duplicate efforts and to come up with a comprehensive transit plan to reshape the city.
- I wanted the monorail. Seattleites are cheap and not forward thinking. We need to plan for the future.
- I want a solution that gets cars off the road.
- I want an environmentally responsible solution based on transit. We need to take action to prevent global climate change.
- Gas prices are only going to rise. We need to get people out of their cars.
- We should include light rail in any new infrastructure we build.

Program decision-making

- This indecision is wasting taxpayer dollars.
- This project is taking way too long.
- I don't believe that we will actually have a central waterfront decision in December.
- I'm glad there won't be another public vote. Just make a decision and get it done.
- WSDOT should get started with construction as soon as possible, because the longer we wait the more it will cost.
- Our elected officials need to do what they were elected to do - make a decision.

- Make a decision already and get started with construction.
- Too much money has been spent studying the options.
- The public should come first. The viaduct replacement should go to another vote.
- I hope the viaduct doesn't collapse while they are still talking about making a decision.

Traffic and construction

- Traffic is going to be terrible during construction, especially near the stadiums.
- There is no way they can divert the viaduct's traffic onto city streets without major ramifications.
- I am glad you are getting started with construction. It is a good idea to divide the program into smaller projects.
- WSDOT should close the viaduct during construction and just get it over with - fast.
- Closing the viaduct would be a traffic disaster for Seattle.
- Traffic will be a nightmare for West Seattle during viaduct construction.

Appreciation

- Thank you for coming out to our community to update us on the program.
- I'm glad your booth is here. Before talking to you, I thought the viaduct replacement was dead in the water.
- It is great you are involving the public in the decision-making process.
- Thanks for being out here. I didn't realize the viaduct replacement was so complex.

Other

- We need to make replacing critical infrastructure more of a priority.
- The project should be privatized because the Department of Transportation is inefficient.
- WSDOT should take tsunamis and the rise in sea level into consideration when rebuilding the seawall.
- There should be more parking for the West Seattle water taxi. Currently, parking is only for two hours.
- Closing the "suicide ramps" on Western Avenue into the Battery Street Tunnel is a great idea.
- Improvements to I-5 won't be sufficient.
- The waterfront should be kept public and not handed over to condo developers.

Environmental justice

As part of the program's commitment to environmental justice, the program team attended several fairs and festivals targeted toward traditionally underrepresented communities. The program team offered translated folios in Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Tagalog and Spanish during every fair, festival or farmers market.

At the Chinatown-International District Festival, three youth interpreters from the Wilderness Inner-city Leadership Development (WILD) program were also hired to assist the team at the booth. The interpreters, who were bilingual and fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese, provided verbal translations for 32 booth visitors.

Environmental Justice Events	Visitors
Tet Festival	140
Georgetown Artopia	100
Burien Strawberry Festival	175
Chinatown-International District Summer Festival	375
White Center Jubilee Days	188
Central Area Community Festival	154
Duwamish River Festival	92
Columbia City Farmers Market	99
Total	**1,323**

2008 Fairs and Festival Summary			
Event	**Date**	**Visitors**	**Newsletter sign-ups**
Tet Festival	February 2 & 3	140	5
University District Street Fair	May 17 & 18	270	22
Wallingford Farmers Market	May 28	30	1
Magnolia Farmers Market	June 7	77	13
West Seattle Farmers Market	June 8	50	13
Fremont Fair	June 21 & 22	725	49
Phinney Farmers Market	June 27	101	10
Georgetown Artopia	June 28	100	14
Burien Strawberry Festival	June 28 & 29	175	24
Broadway Farmers Market	July 6	80	10
West Seattle Summer Fest	July 11-13	592	29
Chinatown-International District Summer Festival	July 12 & 13	375	11
Boeing Safety & Wellness Fair	July 17	196	3
White Center Jubilee Days	July 19 & 20	188	10
Wallingford Farmers Market	July 23	37	1
Queen Anne Farmers Market	July 24	61	1
Ballard Seafood Fest	July 26 & 27	586	23
Maple Leaf Summer Social	July 30	101	2
Boeing Safety & Wellness Fair	August 1	105	6
Magnolia Summer Festival	August 1 & 2	205	11
South Lake Union Block Party	August 8	232	9
Pinehurst Summer Social	August 9	5	0
University District Farmers Market	August 9	160	5
West Seattle Farmers Market	August 10	37	0
Central Area Community Festival	August 16 & 17	154	3
Duwamish River Festival	August 23	92	17
Columbia City Farmers Market	August 27	99	2
Magnolia Farmers Market	September 6	50	6
Wallingford Wurst Festival	September 12 & 13	140	0
Fisherman's Fall Festival	September 20	101	0
Total		**5,264**	**300**