



## Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

WSDOT

City of Seattle

# 2010 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Public Comment Summary

## Overview

The environmental review for the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project, which will replace the viaduct's central waterfront section, is led by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the City of Seattle. On Oct. 29, 2010, the agencies released a second Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that builds on previous environmental analysis and brings the bored tunnel alternative to the same level of analysis as alternatives studied in the 2004 Draft EIS and the 2006 Supplemental Draft EIS reports. The bored tunnel alternative, which is the preferred replacement alternative, would move SR 99 into a tunnel beneath downtown Seattle, reconnect the street grid at the ends of the tunnel, remove the viaduct along the waterfront and decommission the Battery Street Tunnel.

The 45-day comment period for the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS ended on Dec. 13, 2010. The lead agencies received a total of 210 comments. All comments from the 2004, 2006 and 2010 environmental documents will be included and responded to in the Final EIS, which will be published in mid-2011.

## Notification

A variety of outreach tools were used to inform agencies and the public about the availability of the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS and opportunities to provide comments:

- Legal notices published on Oct. 29, 2010 (*Daily Journal of Commerce, Seattle Times and the Federal Register*).
- Print and online advertisements for the Nov. 16-18, 2010, public hearings (*Seattle Times, Ballard News-Tribune, West Seattle Herald, My Ballard, Magnolia Voice, West Seattle Blog, SeattlePI.com blog*).
- Letters to more than 200 social service providers.
- Postcards about the public hearings displayed at Seattle-area libraries, neighborhood service centers, WSDOT and Seattle Department of Transportation offices.
- Information on a dedicated page on the Alaskan Way Viaduct web page ([www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Viaduct/2010sdeis.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Viaduct/2010sdeis.htm)).
- Program e-mail update sent to approximately 6,000 subscribers (Oct. 19 and Nov. 30).
- Two news releases (Oct. 28 and Nov. 12).
- Notice on the program hotline (1-888-AWV-LINE).
- Media preview event on Nov. 4 and subsequent media coverage.
- Briefings to 18 neighborhood and community groups and to the program's south and north portal working groups.

Comments on the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS were accepted by e-mail ([awv2010SDEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:awv2010SDEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov)) or in writing. Copies of the official comment form were available at libraries and neighborhood service centers, provided at community briefings during the comment period and included in the 2010 Supplemental Draft EIS. The program team also provided a court reporter at the public hearings to accept verbal comments.

## **Comment format and origin**

### **Tally of comments by method:**

- Comments received via e-mail - 171
- Comments received via comment forms - 21
- Comments received via hard copy letter - 10
- Comments received via court reporter - 8

### **Tally of comments by sender:**

- Individuals - 169
- Community organizations - 24
- Businesses - 5
- Federal agencies - 4
- Local agencies - 6
- State agencies - 2

## **Comment category summary**

Comments were analyzed and categorized into themes. A comment may fit into more than one category. The categories chosen for this summary are those that had 10 or more comments. To view all of the comments received, please see the Final EIS.

### **Agency and public coordination**

This category includes comments addressing the partnership between WSDOT, the City of Seattle and FHWA and outreach to the public. There were 18 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The public should have had greater involvement in choosing the bored tunnel alternative and should be able to vote on the option.
- Close coordination should occur with public agencies and private businesses in the project area.

### **Air quality**

This category includes comments discussing construction or traffic air quality issues. There were 15 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The project team should do more to quantify the environmental impacts of the rise in Particulate Matter and CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and compare these impacts between the various alternatives.

- The bored tunnel alternative may not adequately address current city and state emission reduction goals, nor does it have the ability to meet upcoming more stringent federal air quality standards.
- Special attention should be given to the potential health effects of airborne pollutants during the construction phase, especially in regards to low-income individuals living in the affected areas.
- The alternative chosen to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct should maximize emission reduction.

### **Alternatives**

This category includes comments pertaining to the various viaduct replacement options, including the bored tunnel, the cut-and-cover tunnel and the rebuild alternatives. There were 204 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Why was the bored tunnel chosen as the preferred alternative, and didn't the stakeholder process yield other viable alternatives?
- The local business sector and numerous individuals support the bored tunnel alternative because of its ability to maintain important north-south transportation in the region and to revitalize the Seattle waterfront.
- The bored tunnel alternative could result in a scenario similar to either San Francisco's Embarcadero project, which would be positive, or Boston's Big Dig, which would be a problem for Seattle.

### **Construction**

This category includes comments addressing the potential effects on structures, people and traffic due to the construction of the bored tunnel. There were 26 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Potential damage to historic structures as a result of the tunnel boring process is a significant concern.
- Tunnel and tunnel portal construction could have negative effects on transit and freight mobility.
- Of particular concern is disruption during the demolition of the viaduct and the construction of the new Alaskan Way. More analysis of mitigation strategies for this should be developed.
- What will happen if the tunnel boring machine gets stuck while drilling?

### **EIS General**

This category includes any comments pertaining to the EIS document as a whole, the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project, or the development of the bored tunnel alternative. There were 60 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The bored tunnel alternative was unduly chosen before the EIS process was complete.
- The purpose and need statement should be revised to de-emphasize vehicle access and return to the original statement.
- Lead agencies should offer an early viaduct closure plan in the case of an emergency.
- Review of tolling impacts should occur in another Supplemental Draft EIS.

- Mitigation strategies outlined in this Supplemental Draft EIS should be reorganized by priority.

### **Engineering Design**

This category includes comments pertaining to the technical design of the bored tunnel. There were 18 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The tunnel design may not be able to withstand either a severe earthquake or a tsunami.
- Shoulder widths in the current design do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements or standard engineering practice.
- The tunnel design does not adequately provide for the safety of people with limited mobility during an emergency.

### **Financial**

This category includes comments discussing the funding mechanisms for the bored tunnel project. There were 46 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Cost overruns are of great concern. Does the project have the ability to fund any excess costs, which are probably inevitable?
- How and why will the Port of Seattle be contributing to the project's budget?
- How will the mitigation measures outlined in the Supplemental Draft EIS be funded?
- Building an expensive tunnel during the current economic crisis is a source of concern.
- A project budget including mitigation for historic preservation should be produced.

### **Geology and soils**

This category includes comments regarding the placement of the bored tunnel near the shoreline, the composition of the soil in the bored tunnel alignment, and the potential for future earthquakes. There were 13 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Tunnel construction where there is a high water table and unstable soils will lead to damage of historic buildings and the flooding of subsurface structures, including the historic Underground Tour.
- Geologic occurrences such as earthquakes and tsunamis are a real danger and could potentially harm the bored tunnel.

### **Greenhouse gases**

This category includes comments discussing levels of greenhouse gas emissions during construction and use of the bored tunnel alternative, as well as the other alternatives previously explored. There were 16 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The bored tunnel alternative does not provide a means of reducing greenhouse gases in line with measures and regulations adopted at the city, county, state and federal levels.
- The Final EIS should analyze how this alternative could reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing vehicle miles travelled and including more transportation options in the concept of mobility.
- Emissions from construction activities should be compared across the three alternatives.

## **Historic**

This category includes comments addressing historic buildings and districts along the bored tunnel alignment. There were 39 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Historic structures in downtown Seattle, particularly in the Pioneer Square district, should be preserved, especially against damage from the tunnel boring process.
- Diversions resulting from the tunnel project would increase congestion in the historic district of Pioneer Square.
- The bored tunnel project may be the best alternative to preserve the Pioneer Square district.

## **Land use**

This category includes comments regarding land redevelopment during bored tunnel construction and after viaduct demolition. There were 25 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The historic character and access to Pioneer Square must be maintained.
- The bored tunnel will encourage poor land use designs in other areas of the city.
- The project should encourage redevelopment with a focus on mixed use spaces near the tunnel operation building and in the footprint of the current viaduct.
- Property owners along the waterfront will unduly benefit from the bored tunnel alternative.
- Land use changes in the south end should still accommodate container terminal and marine industrial uses.

## **Public services and utilities**

This category includes comments discussing utilities relocation and mitigation procedures. There were 17 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- There needs to be cohesive utilities relocation and mitigation procedures.
- Will there be trained tunnel response staff on hand after the tunnel is operational, in case of emergencies?

## **Tolling**

This category includes comments regarding the proposed toll on the bored tunnel. There were 73 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- There need to be mitigation strategies for adverse impacts to environmental justice groups as a result of tolling.
- Tolling should be incorporated into a comprehensive regional strategy including additional transit service.
- How will tolling impact surface street traffic? There needs to be more analysis of tolling impacts.
- \$4 tolls are too expensive.

## **Transportation - capacity/access**

This category includes comments about the levels of capacity the different alternatives would provide, their ability to provide access to the downtown core and the potential impacts to the areas near the tunnel portals. There were 58 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- It is very concerning that the tunnel will result in a loss of access to the downtown core because of the lack of exits from the tunnel other than on the north and south ends.
- There will be cultural and economical damage to the historic districts of Pioneer Square and Pike Place Market due to increased vehicle traffic.
- Increased transit and provisions for bicycles and pedestrians are needed in order to mitigate the effects of increased traffic on city surface streets.
- The bored tunnel alternative's ability to keep traffic flowing during construction is a positive thing.

### **Transportation - other**

This category includes comments addressing regional transportation issues as they relate to the viaduct replacement project and construction-related impacts to transportation. There were 57 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The bored tunnel alternative should be analyzed by its impact on mobility and connectivity to other forms of transportation.
- How will planned street revisions affect the pedestrian character and access in Pioneer Square?
- We need more description of the construction related-impacts to freight, transit and automobile movements, as well as a clear detour plan for the period of the viaduct demolition and surface street construction.
- Safety for pedestrians is a concern in the new portal areas and along the new Alaskan Way surface street.

### **Transportation - parking**

This category includes comments regarding the probable loss of parking spaces due to the construction of the bored tunnel and the demolition of the viaduct. There were 18 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Impacts from parking loss need to be further reviewed and presented, as do the corresponding mitigation strategies.
- Permanent loss of event parking and access around the stadiums will be a problem.
- Construction workers should not be allowed to fill all of the public parking spaces. Remote parking and shuttle services should be provided for these workers to mitigate this problem.

### **Transportation - transit**

This category includes comments discussing the mitigation policies for increased transit demand as well as the potential for increased transit times. There were 18 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- Added transit will be required to mitigate the loss of capacity with the bored tunnel alternative, and this transit is not adequately funded at this time.
- It is concerning that transit will be adversely affected by both the construction of the tunnel and new Alaskan Way, as well as the expected diversion related to tolling.
- Additional transit service should be included and provided by the bored tunnel project as well as additional vanpools for ferry passengers to minimize back-ups along Alaskan Way.

- The tunnel project should create a transit mitigation plan for the central business district.

### **Visual quality**

This category includes comments about the change in vantage points with the removal of the viaduct and the change in the visual quality of the shoreline after demolition. There were 12 comments in this category. Below is a sampling.

- The view from the viaduct is great and shouldn't be lost.
- Only property and condo owners along the waterfront will have access to views of the Puget Sound and the Olympics once the viaduct is demolished.
- The tunnel operations building in the south end will disrupt the skyline.
- Construction and demolition of the viaduct could disrupt views from the Pike Place Market during construction.