



## **Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program 2011 Communication and Public Involvement Plan**

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### **Background**

The Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program is led by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), King County, Port of Seattle and the City of Seattle. The program's goal is to replace a critical element of Seattle's infrastructure – the viaduct section of SR 99.

Constructed in the 1950s, the double-tiered viaduct is nearly two miles long and parallels Alaskan Way. The viaduct is a vital local and regional transportation link and carries about 110,000 vehicles each day.

Studies in the 1990s showed that the viaduct was nearing the end of its useful life, apparent by its exposed rebar and weakened columns. The 2001 Nisqually earthquake further damaged the viaduct, forcing WSDOT to temporarily close it for inspection and limited repairs. The viaduct is vulnerable in another earthquake and continues to show signs of age and deterioration.

On Jan. 13, 2009, Governor Christine Gregoire, then-King County Executive Ron Sims and then-Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels endorsed a plan replacing the central waterfront portion of the Alaskan Way Viaduct with a bored tunnel beneath downtown. As part of this recommendation, the City would build a new surface street and new public open spaces along the waterfront, improve other city streets and replace the seawall between Colman Dock and Pine Street, and the County would invest in expanded transit service. The recommendation was based on collaboration with a 29-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee representing communities, economic interests and cause-driven organizations; eight public meetings and hundreds of public comments. During its 2009 session, the Washington State Legislature passed a bill that endorses the tunnel recommendation and provides funding for the state's projects. Governor Gregoire signed this legislation into law on May 12, 2009.

FHWA, WSDOT and the City of Seattle led the environmental review process for the viaduct's central replacement. The Final Environmental Impact Statement was published in 2011 and the Program received federal approval of the preferred alternative – the tolled bored tunnel alternative – in August 2011.

The state's cost for the viaduct replacement, including the bored tunnel and the south end viaduct replacement near the stadiums, is estimated at \$3.1 billion. These projects have \$2.4 billion in committed funding from the state gas tax and federal sources. An additional \$300 million is expected to be contributed by the Port of Seattle. We also studied the feasibility of tolling the bored tunnel and found we could raise the remaining

\$400 million. The City and State are convening an advisory committee to continue analyzing tolling the tunnel and potential mitigation measures for diversion.

This plan outlines the communications and public involvement program for the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program. Consistent and clear messages will be combined with widespread outreach to ensure that WSDOT and its partner agencies are meeting their commitments to program delivery, accountability, and transparent communications. This plan outlines anticipated milestones, key messages, and target audiences for the program.

Priority implementation strategies consistent throughout this plan are:

- Distribute accurate information about program developments.
- Engage people living and working in the program area during multiple face-to-face interactions.
- Respond to information requests promptly.

Individual communication plans are developed for key milestones or efforts (e.g., demolition of the southern mile of the viaduct, overall documentation of construction), neighborhoods (e.g., Pioneer Square, Ballard), and projects (e.g., Holgate to King), as needed. These plans reference the overall communication goals and objectives while providing more detail about implementation and timing.

## Key Milestones

	<b>Environmental and Other</b>	<b>Contracting</b>	<b>Construction</b>
2011	Release Final EIS, Record of Decision for central viaduct replacement	Second Notice to Proceed – final design and construction to Seattle Tunnel Partners (tied to ROD)	Begin construction of central viaduct replacement; October closure for south end viaduct replacement
2013			New SR 99 segment between S. Holgate and S. King streets opens to drivers; TBM arrives and begins boring
2015			New SR 99 segment in downtown Seattle opens to drivers
2016			Demolish viaduct along waterfront

## **Communications Goal**

The goal of the communications program is to support WSDOT and its partner agencies by proactively engaging and educating the public and elected officials about the replacement program.

## **Communication Strategies**

To achieve the communications goal, WSDOT will implement the following strategies:

- Communicate proactively with elected officials, at the local and state level, about program milestones, construction activities, public comments, and cost and funding.
- Build strong relationships within the community.
- Cultivate relationships with multiple media sources in order to make sure a broad mix of media coverage reflects program messages.

## **Communications Tactics**

- Engage members of the public through the program website, email updates, presentations, one-on-one meetings, and open houses to keep them up-to-date regarding program developments.
- Brief community associations and interest groups in the program area at key milestones or when new information becomes available.
- Gather input and feedback from members of the north portal and south portal working groups for the bored tunnel, as well as other stakeholder groups such as the maintenance of traffic team.
- Brief local, regional and state elected officials as new information becomes available and prior to key program milestones or new program developments.
- Provide current and relevant program and construction information to thousands of SR 99 users via email and the program website ([www.alaskanwayviaduct.org](http://www.alaskanwayviaduct.org)).
- Present clear and timely information to the media in order to tell WSDOT's story and achieve accurate coverage in local and regional news.

## **Significant Communications Risks**

- Public confusion about which agency is responsible for funding and building the various elements of the overall program.

- Public confusion about who is responsible for potential cost overruns – the State or “Seattle area property owners benefitting from the project.”
- Construction fatigue, particularly in the south of downtown area.

## Significant Communications Opportunities

- Demonstrate the state’s commitment to design and deliver a replacement for the Alaskan Way Viaduct that is seismically sound and improves mobility into and through downtown Seattle.
- Showcase WSDOT’s ability to deliver a \$3.1 billion program, the largest in the agency’s history, which will also benefit other large projects in development.
- Build trust in WSDOT’s ability to address community concerns about design or construction plans.
- Increase public confidence by clearly and openly sharing information in a timely manner.
- Build upon relationships already established as well as develop new ones with resource agencies, elected officials and community groups.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- **Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program team, led by WSDOT**  
The program team is responsible for design and delivery of the state’s viaduct replacement projects, which include the south end viaduct replacement and the central viaduct replacement. The program communications team coordinates and implements communications and outreach activities to ensure clear and consistent messaging.
- **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**  
This is the federal lead agency for the program. FHWA is responsible for ensuring that federal regulations and standards are followed, and they are primarily responsible for the content and accuracy of National Environmental Policy Act documents. Agency representatives assist with program outreach and communications activities related to the Environmental Impact Statement.
- **Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)**  
This agency provides technical assistance to the program and is responsible for design and delivery of city projects that are part of the program. These projects include the Mercer Corridor Project, Spokane Street Viaduct widening, the new waterfront surface street and open space, and the central waterfront seawall replacement. SDOT’s communications team assists with program outreach and

communications activities as appropriate.

- **King County Department of Transportation**  
This agency provides technical assistance and feedback on transit-related elements of the program and assists with outreach and communications activities as appropriate.
- **Port of Seattle**  
This agency provides feedback on freight-related elements of the program and assists with outreach and communications activities as appropriate.
- **Contractors**  
Currently, there are two primary contractors working to replace the viaduct. Skanska USA Civil is rebuilding the south mile of the viaduct and Seattle Tunnel Partners (STP) was hired to design and build the bored tunnel. STP's public information specialist lead assists the program communications team as appropriate and is responsible for the implementation of the bored tunnel project public involvement plan. Other contractors will be hired for the several design-bid-build contracts in the north and south portal areas.

## Key Messages

Close coordination among program partners will be important in sharing a single “story” with the public that translates technical information into terms the community can understand and use. The communications team will continue to consult with partner agencies and technical teams in this effort. The following key messages will be the foundation of communication and outreach activities.

- **SAFETY.** The Alaskan Way Viaduct and adjacent seawall continue to show signs of age and deterioration and are vulnerable in another earthquake. They must be replaced.
- **MOVING FORWARD.** We are moving forward to replace the viaduct. Construction is under way to replace the southern mile with a new side-by-side roadway that has wider lanes, meets current earthquake standards and improves mobility for people and goods. The new roadway is slated to be open to drivers in late 2013.

Construction to replace the central section of the viaduct with a bored tunnel will begin in fall 2011.

- **TUNNEL BENEFITS.** A major advantage of the bored tunnel is that construction impacts to businesses and the travelling public would be minimized. Using a tunnel boring machine would allow us to build the new corridor while SR 99 remains open to traffic.

The bored tunnel would maintain an efficient route through the city for people and

goods that would otherwise congest city streets or I-5. To accommodate future growth in and around downtown, the County and City plan to invest in expanded transit and improved city streets.

Moving SR 99 traffic underground would have several environmental benefits. New stormwater treatment would improve water quality in Elliott Bay, and traffic noise would be contained within the tunnel. New open space and public access would also be created on the waterfront once the viaduct is removed.

## Target Audiences

Within the program area:

- Policy makers and key stakeholders
  - Elected officials from the State, County, Port and City, as well as federal representatives including the Program Oversight Committee
  - Working groups (north portal, south portal and the city's Central Waterfront Committee)
  - Coalitions or interest groups that have stated positions or objectives for the program
- People who will benefit from the program
  - Businesses, freight, and consumers who rely on SR 99 for movement of goods and services
  - Commuters and other SR 99 users
  - Metro bus riders
  - Bicyclists and pedestrians
  - Colman Dock users
- People who live or work in the program area
  - Neighborhood and community associations
  - Business associations and owners
  - Property owners potentially impacted
  - Minority populations
  - Low-income populations
  - Limited English proficiency populations
  - Social service providers
- Sports and special event centers
  - Safeco Field
  - CenturyLink Field and Event Center
  - Key Arena
  - Seattle Center
- Regional attractions
  - Seattle Aquarium

- Seattle Art Museum
  - Olympic Sculpture Park
  - Pike Place Market
  - Experience Music Project
  - Space Needle
- Large employers in the industrial neighborhoods of Interbay, Ballard, SODO and the Duwamish
  - Advocacy groups for issues related to pedestrian/bicycle access, transportation, environmental protection, and others
  - Labor unions
  - Media
  - Regulatory agencies (via program environmental team)
  - Tribal governments (via program tribal liaison)

#### Outside program area

- Elected officials and their staffs who are members of transportation and appropriations committees, and those at the leadership level, at the state and federal level
- The cities of Des Moines, Seatac, Burien, Normandy Park, Vashon, and Shoreline and the Seattle neighborhoods of Green Lake, Greenwood, Phinney, Georgetown, and South Park whose residents use the SR 99 corridor
- Commuters who use the I-5 and I-405 corridors, who may be affected during construction
- Freight haulers that access the Port of Seattle
- Tourists visiting waterfront attractions
- Cruise ship passengers headed to Pier 91

## Public Involvement Tools

The following outreach tools will be used to support program planning and decision-making. Tools are separated into three categories: techniques to provide information, techniques to obtain feedback, and techniques to bring people together.<sup>1</sup>

### *Guiding Principles*

- Ensure early, continuous, and meaningful involvement of the public
  - Build and maintain long-term relationships
  - Demonstrate how public input was incorporated into program decisions
  - Be upfront and proactive about design, schedule changes and cost; discuss challenges as they are known
  - Ensure that the public is involved in time to inform decisions
- Collect information and input from members of the public on an ongoing basis

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<sup>1</sup> Categories based on the IAP2 Student Manual, Planning for Effective Public Participation, 2006.

- Provide active and passive public engagement tools
- Provide quantitative and qualitative summaries of input gathered
- Ensure that program constraints are clearly expressed to manage expectations
- Look for opportunities that maximize results and minimize costs/resources for the public to engage and share input
  - Begin to use innovative technology to engage members of the public
  - Offer opportunities other than attending a large open house or public meeting
  - Use existing events and meetings to provide updates and collect input
- Use speaking or talking points that are technically accurate, consistent with program status and tailored to different audiences based on geography, needs and interests

## **Techniques to provide information**

### Elected official briefings

The communications team will support the program leadership team in providing presentations to the legislature, city and county councils, and the port commission at key milestones, when program information changes, or as requested.

### Agency communications staff meetings

The communications team will meet with partner agency communications staff to update and develop strategies for disseminating information through agency channels.

### Door-to-door

Prior to events, major program changes, and/or disruptive construction activities, communications staff will conduct in-person outreach to businesses and residences in the program area.

### Fairs, festivals and farmers markets

The communications team will focus on engaging various communities, including minority, low income and limited English proficient, at neighborhood fairs, festivals and farmers markets to ensure a wide range of the community is reached. Comments and questions from the public are recorded and summarized.

### Printed and electronic materials

A range of informational materials will be developed and updated to use during the above efforts. These materials are described in detail in the next section.

### Hotline

The program hotline is a telephone messaging system that is regularly updated to provide information about upcoming events, construction and detours. The

telephone number is heavily advertised on all communication materials, including magnets and pens that are distributed at public events. In addition to listening to recorded information, callers can speak to a communications staff member during regular business hours.

### **Techniques to obtain feedback**

#### Surveys and comment forms (electronic, phone, printed)

Public comments are accepted at any time via email, fax, phone, mail and the website. Issue-specific comment forms and web-based surveys will be developed for open houses and certain outreach efforts like building surveys. Comments will be tracked and summarized on a monthly basis and reports will be available online.

#### Advisory groups

Portal-area working groups were established to help inform the design and environmental review process for the viaduct's central waterfront replacement. The working groups include the north portal and south portal. All meetings are open to the public and written comments are encouraged and collected. Materials presented at the working group meetings are posted on the program website.

In addition to the above mentioned groups, the City established a Central Waterfront Committee to advise the City on issues relating to the design and development of the open spaces on the central waterfront.

#### One-on-one interviews

Many social service providers, low income housing groups, and environmental justice organizations are located in the downtown Seattle area. These organizations represent and serve the low income and/or minority populations that live, work and travel through the area. One-on-one interviews are held with the organizations to ensure these groups are engaged in the decision-making process, and to discuss their concerns.

### **Techniques to bring people together**

### Community and interest group presentations

The viaduct program team will continue to meet with community, civic, advocacy, labor unions, and business groups in the program area, with an emphasis on groups affected by construction. Key neighborhoods include West Seattle, SODO, International District, Pioneer Square, Downtown, Belltown, South Lake Union, Queen Anne, Interbay, Magnolia and Ballard. Less engaged communities adjacent to our outside of the program area are also important, such as Greenwood, Green Lake, Wallingford, Fremont, Phinney Ridge, Georgetown, South Park and White Center. The viaduct program team will continue to meet with these groups at key milestones, when program information changes, and as requested.

### Open houses and hearings

The communications team will continue to plan and host open houses to proactively engage and involve the public in the program. All open house materials will be posted on the program website. Public comments will be encouraged as a way to refine program decisions.

### Tours

Program area tours will be conducted with members of the public as well as elected officials and the media. Tours help the participants better understand how the program will function once it's complete.

### Social networking / Online media

The program communications manager and state communication director will consider if, and how, to best use social networking tools. This could include blogs, Facebook, Twitter, or others.

## Public Information Materials

### *Guiding Principles:*

- Prepare and distribute materials that are easy to understand to a wide range of people
  - Comply with Governor Gregoire's "Plain Talk" executive order; work with stakeholders and community groups to ensure that the information we are sharing meets the communications needs of Seattle residents and surrounding communities
  - Incorporate new images wherever possible to make program concepts clearer
  - Translate materials
  - Use existing community channels to distribute materials (social service organizations, neighborhood associations, business alliances, etc.)

- Be consistent with WSDOT and program standards in order to be easily identifiable and understood
- All materials will be accessible in print form and/or electronically

The following public information and outreach materials will be distributed widely at public meetings, briefings, fairs and festivals, and via the program website. Other materials could be developed when necessary to meet a communications objective.

#### Program website

The program website will continue to be a key information channel for the public. The site will provide information on program goals, benefits, cost, schedule and construction. Existing pages will be updated promptly as information changes. Traffic to the site will be monitored to continuously improve its effectiveness in delivering program information.

#### Photography and videography

The communications team will continue to use photographs and video as a way to highlight program events, news, accomplishments and construction activities. Photos and other images will be added to WSDOT's Flickr account.

#### Folios and fact sheets

The communications team will develop and update folios and fact sheets to describe various elements of the program, including individual projects, construction sequencing, cost and funding, emerging issues and common questions. These materials will be developed as needed to support program messages and public participation efforts. They will continue to be distributed at program events including fairs/festivals, briefings, public meetings and tours. All folios and fact sheets will be posted on the program website.

#### Translated materials

In order to provide information to individuals with limited English proficiency, informational materials will be translated into other common languages found within the program area.

#### Email updates

The communications team will coordinate the development and distribution of monthly email updates to alert the public and interested groups about new program developments and milestones, as well as upcoming events and opportunities for input. Emails are sent to the Alaskan Way Viaduct program listserv which includes more than 6,500 email addresses. Weekly emails about viaduct replacement construction-related activities are also sent to neighbors and interested parties.

### Traveling informational display

A stand-alone display providing an overview of the program will be housed in high-traffic areas, such as libraries and community centers throughout the program area. The displays will reflect current program information and will be used to increase the visibility of the program. They will be rotated regularly and updated as needed.

### Mailings

Mailed pieces such as letters or postcards may be used to convey program information to the public and announce upcoming events and opportunities for public input. Topics could include information about program changes, design refinements, tolling, the environmental process, and dates for upcoming open houses and public events.

### Display and online ads

Display and online ads will be placed in a variety of print and online publications prior to large public events/open houses and to announce major milestones such as the nine-day SR 99 closure in October 2011.

### PowerPoint presentations

A master program PowerPoint will be updated regularly. Presentations to neighborhood, business, and agencies will be tailored to specific interests and slides will be added as needed. Specific talking points will be developed for each presentation. Presentations could also be shared on the program website or via YouTube with narration from a program team member.

### Visual simulations

Visual simulations are a great way to help the public visualize construction and/or the completed program from various locations and perspectives. The communications team will continue to work with the engineering team to update existing video simulations as well as release new ones. All simulations will be posted on YouTube or the program website and shared with the media. Still images will be extracted from the visual simulations to be used in presentations, informational materials and on display boards.

### Display boards

Informational posters mounted on display boards will be developed for open houses, tours and community presentations. Information presented will be consistent with the program status and provide a public-friendly introduction to the technical information currently under consideration or recently finalized. All boards used at open houses or community presentations are posted on the program website.

## **Media**

Media relations is led by the program owners and supported by the communications team. It includes communication with reporters from print, television and radio news outlets as well as reporters and blog writers for electronic information dissemination. The program will continue to be responsive to media requests for information, will be watchful that accurate information is being disseminated, will use both paid and earned media coverage to gain greater turnout at the program's public events, and will have designated staff available to respond to media inquiries from the viaduct office and at

public events. Additionally, the program will look for opportunities to proactively develop stories for the media reflecting and reinforcing program successes and messages.

Ongoing media activities will include press releases, media events, interviews, op-ed submissions and editorial board briefings depending on the significance of the event or program decision. In addition, media serving minority, ethnic and low-income neighborhoods will be kept informed via distribution of press materials, including translated materials if needed.

The program's media strategy is typically more active leading up to key program milestones and when a particular issue attracts interest.

## **Key Contacts**

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