

Chapter 2 Purpose and Need

What and where is the SR 519 Phase 2 project?

SR 519 is an important corridor connecting cars and trucks from the interstates to the waterfront through Seattle's South Downtown (SODO) district. Exhibit 2-1 shows the project vicinity. The project includes three components:

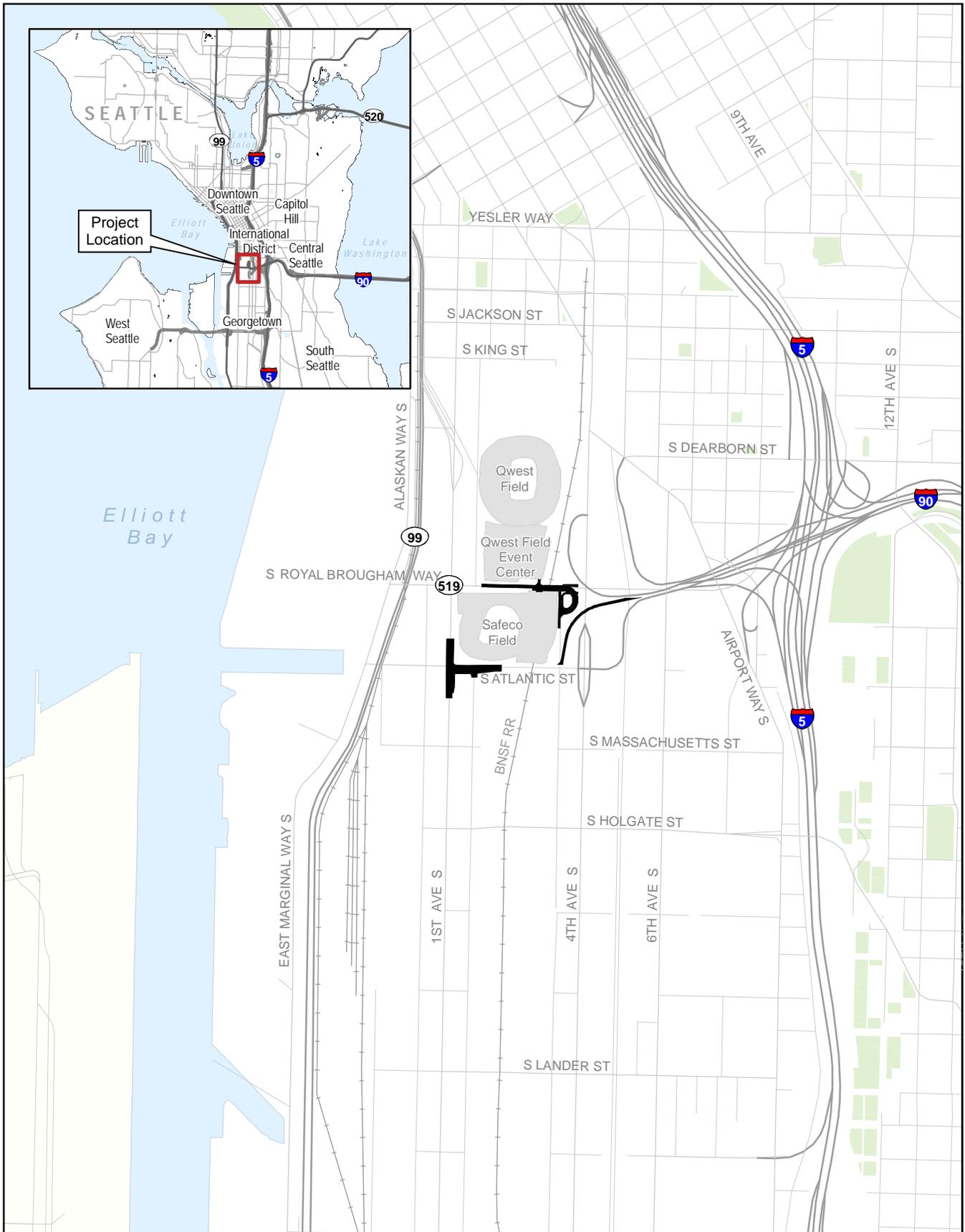
- A new I-90 off-ramp to South Atlantic Street
- A new South Royal Brougham Way overpass above the BNSF Railway tracks just west of Third Avenue South
- Roadway widening along South Atlantic Street east of First Avenue South, and improvements to the intersection of First Avenue South and South Atlantic Street

In 2004, WSDOT opened Phase 1 of the SR 519 project, consisting of the South Atlantic Street overpass (Edgar Martinez Drive South) and a new eastbound on-ramp from South Atlantic Street to I-5 and I-90. SR 519 Phase 2 will provide a direct westbound connection for regional traffic from the I-5/I-90 freeway system to the Seattle waterfront, including the Port of Seattle terminals, the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center, and the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock.

Currently, westbound traffic from the freeway exits at Fourth Avenue South and follows a circuitous route to the South Atlantic Street overpass to cross safely above the BNSF Railway tracks located just east of Safeco Field and Qwest Field. Vehicle traffic and pedestrians on South Royal Brougham Way use the street-level railroad crossing.



Safeco Field at the Intersection of First Avenue South and South Royal Brougham Way



Source: City of Seattle (2007) and King County (2006)

- Stadiums
- Project



**Exhibit 2-1
Vicinity Map**

The new I-90 off-ramp to the South Atlantic Street overpass will leave South Royal Brougham Way for use as a key east-west local connection for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles, with a bridge over the BNSF Railway mainline replacing the current street-level railroad crossing.

Why do we need this project, and what is its purpose?

In its current form, SR 519 does not assist in the efficient westbound movement of cars, trucks, and pedestrians through Seattle's SODO district. The route passes through an area that has changed so much in recent years that the roadway arrangement is not well suited to present conditions. A new design and new roadway structures are needed to allow vehicles and pedestrians to reach their destinations safely, quickly, and more directly.

This project will help to resolve several issues:

- Safety concerns from traffic and people crossing surface-level railroad tracks in the stadium area
- The expected increase in pedestrian crossings at South Royal Brougham Way when Sound Transit Central Link light rail service begins in 2009
- Poor westbound access between I-5/I-90 and the Seattle waterfront, especially the Port of Seattle terminals and the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock
- Delays in moving products between Port of Seattle terminals and local, regional, and national markets

The project will increase traffic mobility and safety by improving regional connections between I-5/I-90 and Port of Seattle container terminals, the Washington State Ferries terminal at Colman Dock, waterfront commercial interests, and the stadium area. The project will also allow people to walk more safely to and from the stadium area.

The purpose of the project is to:

- Provide a more direct westbound route between I-5/I-90 and the Seattle waterfront, so that commuters and local traffic can move more safely and efficiently through the stadium area
- Improve safety and reduce railroad and vehicle delays at the street-level rail crossing on South Royal Brougham Way near Fourth Avenue South
- Improve safety for people walking to events, work, and neighborhood destinations
- Reduce truck and rail traffic conflicts so that freight transporters can move products more efficiently

What will happen if the project is not built?

At present, westbound trucks and commuter traffic follow indirect routes from the I-5/I-90 freeway system to reach their waterfront destinations, using intersections that were not designed for current or future traffic volumes. If the SR 519 Phase 2 improvements are not built, poor levels of service at intersections, along with the existing circuitous routes, will continue to prevent waterfront-bound vehicles from efficiently reaching their destinations. With population growth and continuing development, key freight routes and delivery schedules will be further impaired by traffic delays and congestion. As a result, physical and economic growth in the SODO district and Port of Seattle between now and 2030 will be affected by increasing travel times from the freeway system to the Port of Seattle terminals, central waterfront, and stadium area. Local air quality will worsen as engine idling times lengthen with increasing traffic congestion.