

Alaskan Way Viaduct
North Portal Working Group – May 7, 2009
Meeting Summary

Working Group attendees

- Linda Anderson, Amalgamated Transit Union
- David Brown, Pacific Northwest Ballet
- Diane Carlson (substitute for Kevin Hughes), Pacific Science Center
- Sharon Coleman, Vulcan
- John Coney, Uptown Alliance
- Tom Graff, Belltown Business Association
- Bob Grossman, South Lake Union Friends & Neighbors
- Ron Hildebrandt, Trident Seafoods
- John Kane, Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing & Industrial Center (BINMIC)
- Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition
- Jose D. Montaña, Magnolia Community Club
- Robert Nellams, Seattle Center
- Lee Newgent, Seattle/King County Building & Construction Trades Council
- Vince O'Halloran, Puget Sound Ports Council & Sailors Union of the Pacific
- Kim Suelze, CityIce Cold Storage
- Lisa Verhovek, Gates Foundation
- Bob Viggers, Charlie's Produce
- Elaine Wine, Ballard Neighborhood

Working Group members not in attendance

- Jill Arnow, Greater Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce
- David Hiller, Cascade Bicycle Club
- Mary McCumber, Futurewise
- Marko Tubic, Fremont Chamber of Commerce

Agencies and staff in attendance

- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle
- Ron Paananen, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Ron Posthuma, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
- Eric Tweit, SDOT
- John White, WSDOT

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office Deputy Director Ron Paananen welcomed the working group members and the public to the meeting.

Agenda Item #2 – Review Purpose and Operating Guidelines

Bob Chandler, SDOT AWV Program Manager, reviewed the purpose, responsibilities and ground rules for the working groups. This [presentation](#) is available on the program Web site.

Next, Ron Paananen provided a brief history of viaduct program. This brought working group members up to speed on the bored tunnel selection. The [presentation](#) for this portion of the meeting is also available on the Web site.

Agenda Item #3 – 2009 Milestones and Environmental Process

Next, Ron Paananen and Bob Chandler reviewed the 2009 milestones for the project and the timeline for the environmental process. This information is in the [presentation](#) posted on the Web site.

Agenda Item #4 – Context and Issues to Consider for the North Portal Design

John White, WSDOT AWV Program Director and Eric Tweit, SDOT Transportation Planner, reviewed the goals and objectives for the north portal design. Their presentation can be found on the Web site [here](#).

Agenda Item #5 – Feedback from the Working Group Members

Ron Paananen asked each of the members to comment on the goals, environmental process and other material presented at the meeting. A summary of their comments are as follows:

Jose D. Montaña, Magnolia Community Club:

The main concern of the community in Magnolia is the access to the bored tunnel and the connection at Elliott and Western avenues. Traffic gets backed up there, so they're concerned about what this project will do to that area in the future.

David Brown, Pacific Northwest Ballet:

As a resident of Seattle Center, they are concerned about access and the movement of traffic through the Mercer Street and north portal area.

Bob Viggers, Charlie's Produce:

All of the transportation aspects seem to have been thought about for trucks and big trucks. The freight community would like to ensure that there are relaxed corners to the right, long entrances to freeways, room to merge, and a lot of access to the downtown and ramps. It's very important to maintain access to downtown night and day.

Vince O'Halloran, Puget Sound Ports Council & Sailors Union of the Pacific:

There are concerns about the timing of construction and ensuring that the fishing industry fuel trucks can get back and forth from the south end to the Ballard/Interbay area. What is the timeline like for construction of the new Alaskan Way on the waterfront?

Ron Paananen responded that construction on the waterfront would begin after 2015 when the bored tunnel is finished. He noted that the waterfront construction would be a two season project.

Kim Suelze, CityIce Cold Storage:

As a Pier 91 resident the important issue is the integration of pathways to get in and out of Interbay. This includes Mercer Street, Alaskan Way, and the bored tunnel. When the viaduct comes down you'll have 30,000 vehicles that can't use the tunnel and need to find an alternate path.

Lisa Verhovek, Gates Foundation:

The Gates Foundation expressed anxiety about the two-way Mercer Street project and the proposed new connection at Sixth Avenue. These are projects that have a big impact on possible future development for the foundation and the character of the surrounding area.

John Kane, BINMIC:

Mr. Kane noted that he has been a part of programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) in the past and doing an EIS at the program level tends to take a broad look at projects. He questioned if a programmatic EIS should be done on this project. It is not very detailed, and this project is so important.

John White from WSDOT clarified that the tunnel and all the new access points will be evaluated in the EIS at the project level.

Ron Hildebrandt, Trident Seafoods:

Without the Mercer West project, the east Mercer Project will fail. Mr. Hildebrandt expressed the need to make sure that the entire Mercer Street corridor is two-way when the viaduct comes down. This will be the major connector for Ballard/Interbay.

Sharon Coleman, Vulcan:

Vulcan commented that they are very supportive of re-connecting the city street grid. She noted that they will definitely encourage study of how circulation is mapped in the area.

Diane Carlson (substitute for Kevin Hughes), Pacific Science Center:

The event centers in the north end are very different than the southern stadium areas and the Pacific Science Center urges you to take that into consideration when planning the north portal area. The other difference from the south end is that the north end is a beautiful environment and the traffic flow is very different.

Elaine Wine, Ballard:

Ms. Wine noted that she would like more details, and to know how Aurora Avenue can function better for some of the northern communities. These new plans change how Ballard will access the core of downtown. She was looking forward to seeing how on and off ramps will change access to downtown.

Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition:

Transportation Choices Coalition expressed the need to maintain transit service and reliability. Aurora Avenue is worse than the viaduct in terms of separating South Lake Union and the Science Center, it creates a wall. The three new streets you propose to cross over SR 99 are going to be great and completely change that part of the city.

Tom Graff, Belltown Business Association:

The First Avenue Streetcar is very controversial. It is not part of the north portal, but it's something that needs to be discussed further.

Bob Grossman, South Lake Union Friends & Neighbors:

From the South Lake Union standpoint the connections across Aurora Avenue and the Mercer Street are very important. The group is very interested in how the ramps work and what the impacts will be on the neighborhoods. There's tremendous potential here.

Robert Nellams, Seattle Center:

Seattle Center expressed confidence in the process and appreciated the information presented. Mr. Nellams stated that he felt confident that through collaboration the group could make sure the project can work as well as it can. There is a balance and it makes us want to come back to the next meeting and continue to participate in this process.

John Coney, Uptown Alliance:

Mr. Coney stated that he understands the importance of this project to the uptown and South Lake Union urban centers. Those two centers are going to experience a 20 percent residential growth. This project needs to enable transit movements both east/west and north/south.

Linda Anderson, Amalgamated Transit Union:

Ms. Anderson noted that she was glad there's a goal of transit enhancement included in this project. Transit and traffic alleviation has been one of the number one issues in this area for a while. She expressed concern that the details about transit were not closer in on the timeline.

Lee Newgent, Seattle/KC Building & Construction Trades Council:

Mr. Newgent stated that he thought the program team had done a good job identifying potential hazards to the success of the project. There will always be impacts in a project of this magnitude. The focus of those impacts will fall on the areas represented in this room. This is a big project and it's a promising type of construction process, although there are a lot of un-anticipated issues that will come up. He noted that he was a lot more comfortable knowing that there's a relationship between the city and state.

Agenda Item #6 – Action Items and Adjournment

Ron Paananen reviewed the action item from the meeting as:

- Release information to working group participants in advance.

He thanked everyone for coming to the first of the north portal working group meetings. The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

Next meeting: May 21, 2009

4 to 6 p.m.

King County Labor Temple, Hall 8