

Alaskan Way Viaduct  
South Portal Working Group – June 3, 2009  
Meeting Summary

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**Working Group attendees**

- Jerome Cohen, West Seattle Chamber of Commerce
- Jean-Paul Page (substitute for Barbara Cole), Frye Apartments
- John Huey, Viking Bank, Duwamish Transportation Management Association (TMA)
- Richard Huie (substitute for Joyce Pisanant), International District
- Don Newby, Burien
- John Odland, MacMillan-Piper
- Marty Oppenheimer, South Park
- Vlad Oustimovitch, West Seattle
- Lisa Quinn, Feet First
- Susan Ranf, Seattle Mariners
- Paul Schieck, Qwest Field
- Ed Shilley, Nucor Steel
- Herald Ugles, International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- Nick Wells, Pioneer Square Community Association
- Cynthia Welti, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

**Working Group members not in attendance**

- Bill Bloxom, Bloxom Company
- Al Hobart, Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28
- Ron Kieswether, Oak Harbor Freight Lines
- Mike Peringer, SODO Business Association
- Pete Spalding, Delridge
- Brent Stavig, Starbucks
- Bill Weise, Silver Cloud Inn

**Agencies and staff in attendance**

- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Mike Johnson, SDOT
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle
- Ron Paananen, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Steve Pearce, SDOT
- Geri Poor, Port of Seattle
- Ron Posthuma, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
- Bob Powers, SDOT
- John White, WSDOT

**Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions**

WSDOT Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program Administrator Ron Paananen welcomed everyone to the meeting. Based on feedback from the May 20 meeting, the project team looked at options for a local street connection between Alaskan Way and East Marginal Way. This local street connection is independent of the bored tunnel, which is an important

distinction in how agencies deliver projects. Part of the meeting agenda is dedicated to talking more about the S. Holgate Street to S. King Street Viaduct Replacement Project and some preliminary concepts for connections to East Marginal Way. More analysis needs to be completed, including looking at ways to reduce impacts to adjacent properties.

### **Agenda Item #2 – Overview of Other Working Groups**

Steve Pearce, SDOT Project Manager, provided an update on the central waterfront working group. The group has met two times to discuss the design of the waterfront street and the seawall. The design process has not started for the public areas along the waterfront.

Bob Chandler, SDOT Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Manager, provided an update on the north portal working group. He explained the preferred north portal design concept and where connections and access points would be located. Presentation materials and design concepts for the north and central waterfront working groups are available on the program Web site at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct/workinggroupmaterials.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct/workinggroupmaterials.htm).

The program team presented two draft videos – one showing the design concept for the bored tunnel with the proposed north and south portals and one showing the design concept for the new waterfront surface street and its connections to Elliott Avenue and Western Avenue. The videos are still being finalized and will be available on the program Web site at a later date.

### **Working Group Members' Questions / Comments**

Herald Ugles: Is a waterfront trolley in the design? Is the roadway in front of Pier 66 two or four lanes? Will the ferry dock have north and south access or will it be one direction?

*Answer: Instead of a waterfront trolley, the bored tunnel decision prioritized investment on a First Avenue streetcar. There would be two lanes in front of the aquarium and four lanes near the cruise ship terminal. We haven't planned to that level of detail for the ferry dock.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Is that a final decision to not have the waterfront trolley? It's a nice waterfront amenity, and there have been some objections from businesses on First Avenue.

*Answer: The plan moving forward is to include the streetcar along First Avenue and not along the waterfront.*

John Odland: Are there traffic studies showing volumes coming from northwest Seattle? What about specific numbers of vehicles coming down 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. and Elliott Avenue and either going up to Mercer Street or going down the waterfront? It would be good to have a view of the holistic movement of goods and people.

*Answer: There was a truck analysis done last fall as part of our central waterfront scenario evaluation. Further analysis will be completed as part of the environmental process. We'll work on showing the big corridor picture. To provide some context, today there are 33,000 vehicles that get on and off SR 99 at Elliott and Western avenues.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Won't you have to rebuild the two-lane curved road that connects Mercer Street to Elliott Avenue to accommodate the higher levels of traffic expected to use two-way Mercer Street?

*Answer: Our traffic analysis does not show high numbers of additional traffic in this area. We think one lane in each direction can handle the traffic.*

John Odland: Will bike lanes be reconsidered for the full length of the waterfront street? Won't it pose a safety conflict for drivers turning right through a bike lane?

*Answer: We're looking at different ways of accommodating bicycles on the new waterfront street. The other option is to have a dedicated facility though there are trade-offs with that option as well, such as increased interaction between bikes and pedestrians crossing a separate bicycle facility.*

Lisa Quinn: What about pedestrian refuge on the waterfront street, so people have a place to stop if they don't make it across in time?

*Answer: We may consider a larger median in the center so there could be refuge.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Who owns the land near the stadiums where the videos show potential development? What's the thought process for extending waterfront access further south to these developments?

*Answer: WSDOT has acquired some properties for the project. When the project is done, some of these properties will be surplus. We haven't sorted out how many or what the process will be for disposing of them, but some could be turned over for development. In terms of access, these properties are located well south of King Street, so there isn't waterfront access at these locations. Waterfront access doesn't begin until Pier 48 near Jackson Street.*

### **Agenda Item 3 – Overview of Port Operations**

Geri Poor, Port of Seattle Regional Transportation Manager, provided an overview of port operations in the area, which played a major role in shaping the project's design. There are major terminals, such as Terminal 46 that need access to I-5 and I-90, as well as the Seattle International Gateway (SIG) and Argo rail yards. The Port of Seattle is working with the project team to ensure connectivity between industrial centers and the maintenance of operations during construction.

### **Agenda Item 4 – Overview of S. Holgate to S. King Street Viaduct Replacement Project and New Ideas for Local Street Connections**

John White, WSDOT Program Director, Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program, presented an overview of the S. Holgate Street to S. King Street Viaduct Replacement Project. He noted that the environmental review for this project occurred last year at the same time the program team was evaluating central waterfront solutions. New local street connections near this south end replacement will need to be assessed in relation to the overall project.

Mike Johnson, SDOT Project Manager, explained the bicycle and pedestrian movements in the south portal area, including connections to two major trails, Mountains to Sound and the waterfront trail. He also described three preliminary concepts, options one through three, for connecting the new waterfront surface street to East Marginal Way. The design team needs to take a closer look at the operations of these streets.

### **Agenda Item 5 – Feedback from Working Group Members**

Herald Ugles: What would East Marginal Way south of Atlantic Street look like?

*Answer: There would be one lane in each direction with a turn lane. The roadway turns into four lanes to accommodate right turn movements. Lots of freight moves from Terminal 46 to the SIG yard.*

Ed Shilley: Is it true that the railroad tail track will be occupied 22 hours a day?

*Answer: In early analysis, the tail track was occupied 12 to 14 hours a day. The worst case scenario had it occupied 30 minutes each hour.*

Herald Ugles: What is the purpose of having Charles and Dearborn streets between Alaskan Way and First Avenue if you're not going to use them? Why not take them out and increase flow?

*Answer: The streets provide connectivity and better traffic distribution Alaskan Way and First Avenue.*

John Odland: In option 1, could a driver loop into the Atlantic Street underpass if the tail track was blocked?

*Answer: There would be a series of columns in that area. We would need to create a way through those columns. It's something we would need to look at more.*

Susan Ranf: Please further explain the new east-west streets. First Avenue is still two lanes in each direction, which is going to be a restriction. Drivers can't go any faster on First Avenue and it seems six lanes are forced down into two lanes on the new waterfront street.

*Answer: For the section of First Avenue between Atlantic Street and Pioneer Square, two-thirds of the volume is currently getting on or off SR 99 at the Railroad Way ramps. That volume will be shifted off of First Avenue into the bored tunnel, therefore greatly reducing First Avenue volumes. The traffic using Alaskan Way in the future will have access to SR 99 or destinations further south.*

Nick Wells: Do you know how many days there are events at the stadiums? Susan Ranf responded and said they haven't done a recent count, but there are 81 baseball games, 12 football games, at least 18 soccer games and other events such as super cross and concerts. There are also many small events.

*Answer: We will evaluate conditions during an event, focusing on critical points and areas where travel patterns will change due to the bored tunnel.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Does the bridge in option 3 need to be that long?

*Answer: The bridge has to have enough clearance over the railroad tail track. The team needs to look into ways to minimize impacts and reduce costs, which could be related to minimizing the length of the bridge. The program has to fit within a constrained budget.*

Jerome Cohen: Option 3 is more of a direct connection.

Marty Oppenheimer: Option 3 speaks to a continuous East Marginal Way and keeps traffic off First Avenue.

Vlad Oustimovitch: Thank you for opening this discussion up and giving us background for the portal concept. Option 3 makes the most sense from a user's perspective. It's built around the driver.

Don Newby: Thank you for the detailed drawings, which help show where people are going. It would be helpful to have more information about volumes coming and going from Terminal 46. What if trucks could use the transit lanes or have designated truck routes like they do in Europe?

Nick Wells: It would be good to see traffic based on time of day and to make plans based on future numbers and projected growth.

*Answer: Part of the environmental process will include traffic modeling. We will include modeling with projected or future numbers.*

Herald Ugles: Can you answer the question about queuing volumes at the end of current ramps on the viaduct and the future ramps as part of the portal design? What about coming southbound for people coming to games? The southbound lanes back up onto SR 99.

*Answer: The Seneca Street ramp is 500 feet long and stores about 30 vehicles. The new ramp at King Street to Alaskan Way will be about double the size with multiple lanes that can store about double what the Seneca Street ramp does today. The new intersection will help the off-ramp operate more efficiently. We'll get back to you with information regarding the southbound direction.*

Ed Shilley: Option 1 creates problems for the Whatcom train and option 3 gets you over the track.

Herald Ugles: Will we discuss removing soil and debris and potential water issues during tunnel construction?

*Answer: Yes, we'll discuss those topics at the next meeting as we begin discussing construction staging.*

### **Agenda Item 6 – Action Items**

Ron Paananen and Bob Powers reviewed the action items from the meeting:

- Discuss port freight and container volumes.
- Provide information about ramp storage capacity for southbound SR 99.
- Discuss traffic volumes related to the Railroad Way ramps and First Avenue.
- Working group members are also interested in the following topics: ferry queuing, vertical clearance at Mercer Street, oversized routes, truck-use transit lanes and deceleration / acceleration at intersections.

**Next meeting:** June 24, 2009

4 to 6 p.m.

Ruth Fisher Board Room at Union Station

401 S. Jackson Street