

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
South Portal Working Group – Oct. 5, 2011
Meeting Summary

Working Group Attendees

- Linda Anderson, Amalgamated Transit Union
- Michael Beranbaum, Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28
- Don Newby, Burien
- John Odland, MacMillan-Piper
- Vlad Oustimovitch, West Seattle
- Mike Peringer, SODO Business Association
- Susan Ranf, Seattle Mariners
- Ed Shilley, Nucor Steel
- Pete Spalding, Delridge
- Herald Ugles, International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- Bill Weise, Silver Cloud Inn
- Cynthia Welti, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

- Bill/Robert Bloxom, Bloxom Company
- Jerome Cohen, West Seattle Chamber of Commerce
- Barbara Cole, International District
- Jan Drago, The Alliance for Pioneer Square
- John Huey, Viking Bank and Duwamish Transportation Management Association
- Ron Kieswether, Oak Harbor Freight Lines
- Adam Link, CenturyLink Field and Event Center
- Marty Oppenheimer, South Park
- Lisa Quinn, Feet First
- Brent Stavig, Starbucks

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Linea Laird, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Matt Preedy, WSDOT
- Kirk Wilcox, Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Mike Johnson, SDOT
- Eric Tweit, SDOT
- Ron Posthuma, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions

Bob Chandler, SDOT Project Manager, welcomed the working group members and the public to the meeting. He provided an update on staff changes within the program. Ron Paananen, the program's former WSDOT administrator, left in September. Linea Laird is now Program Administrator, and Matt Preedy serves as Deputy Program Administrator. Additionally, Bob

Powers left SDOT for a one-year sabbatical, and Bob Chandler, SDOT Project Manager, is filling his role on the viaduct program.

The meeting's focus was to provide updates on South Holgate to South King Street construction, including a review of the SR 99 nine-day closure and construction bypass. The meeting also included SR 99 tunnel updates and a review of the north portal construction staging simulation.

Linea discussed the future of the working groups. Moving forward, the working groups will focus on final design and construction of the SR 99 tunnel and construction of the South Holgate to South King Street project. Program staff will call individual working group members to inquire if they are interested in continuing their memberships on the working group. The next meeting will be held early next year.

Agenda Item #2 – General Program Updates

Bob Chandler provided updates on city-led projects; Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle Manager of Local Government Relations, provided an update on the East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project; Ron Posthuma, KCDOT Assistant Director, reviewed transit service; and Matt Preedy discussed the SR 99 Timber Bridge Replacement Project.

Third Avenue South Street Repairs (SDOT)

Crews completed repaving a section of Third Avenue South just south of South Walker Street in September.

South Spokane Street Improvements (SDOT)

The westbound First Avenue South on-ramp to the West Seattle Bridge will not be complete by the SR 99 nine-day closure. The First Avenue South off-ramp from the West Seattle Bridge, which was previously reduced to one lane, was reopened to two lanes in time for the SR 99 closure.

Vlad Oustimovitch: You mentioned that the South Spokane Street expansion won't be complete until next summer. What about the First Avenue South on-ramp to West Seattle?

Answer: We were unable to accelerate that portion of the project because we could not get the steel delivered in time.

Vlad Oustimovitch: What's the timeline for that on-ramp? That is important for West Seattle.

Answer: I will have to get back to you with an answer.

Pete Spalding: I thought that opening the First Avenue South on-ramp was part of the mitigation for the nine-day closure.

Answer: It wasn't something that was built into the contract originally, because we didn't know when the closure would occur. We tried to accelerate the work, but it wasn't feasible.

Ed Shilley: Who's the fabricator that is not supplying the steel trusses on time?

Answer: That is a detail I don't have but can look into it for you.

Mercer East Project (SDOT)

There have been periodic weekend closures of this street but none will occur during the SR 99 nine-day closure. Broad Street is closed eastbound because its connection at Ninth Avenue North no longer exists. This is due to utility work in the area.

Waterfront Seattle (SDOT)

On Oct. 27 Waterfront Seattle will host a public event on design concepts for the central waterfront.

East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project (Port)

The project is close to completion and on budget. The bridge structure is 95 percent complete. Southbound traffic will be able to use the roadway in time for the SR 99 closure. The Port is working with WSDOT on issues related to the crossing under SR 99.

Pete Spalding: Only southbound traffic will be allowed?

Answer: Yes.

Metro Transit (King County)

Metro opened the Burien Park and Ride garage, providing more than 160 additional parking spaces in the south end. The county has added an additional 51 bus trips to the SR 99 corridor in preparation for the nine-day closure, which brings the total additional seats to 5,000. Federal funding was received for the RapidRide line in West Seattle.

Pete Spalding: The funding is for the Fauntleroy RapidRide line, not the Delridge line?

Answer: Yes, we do have extra service on the Delridge line, but Fauntleroy is the new RapidRide line.

Don Newby: Good job on the Burien Park and Ride. How well is RapidRide working on SR 99, in terms of passenger counts?

Answer: It is up more than 40 percent from the service that was in place previously. We had hoped to get a 50 percent increase in three years, and we are up 40 percent in one year. Concentrating service and making it more reliable has drawn people.

Don Newby: I like the buses and their colors, but I suggest that you don't add advertisements to them. Without advertisements on the sides of buses, you have a good brand.

Susan Ranf: Are the recent changes to bus routes on First Avenue South permanent? Bus riders who normally board along First Avenue South are finding it more difficult to get to Fourth Avenue South.

Answer: If you are referring to the move from Edgar Martinez Way to South Lander Street, we had a difficult time getting buses through Edgar Martinez Way, so we're moving all local services in SODO onto South Lander Street. During the nine-day closure we'll move all services from SR 99 onto South Lander Street as well. Conflicts with truck traffic were an issue for the buses on Edgar Martinez Way.

SR 99 Timber Bridge Replacement Project (WSDOT)

The southern approach to the SR 99 bridge that crosses over South Spokane Street needs to be replaced. This timber bridge is 60 years old and is in poor condition. WSDOT is waiting until SR 99 re-opens after the closure to analyze how traffic patterns change in the south end, and will provide an update on the project schedule at the next working group meeting.

Agenda Item #3 – South Holgate Street to South King Street Project Update

Matt Preedy provided an update on south end viaduct replacement construction and the nine-day closure of SR 99.

Completed Multi-Use Path

The multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path was completed in July. This path, located on the west side of Alaskan Way South between South King and South Atlantic streets, is a heavily used commuter route leading into and out of south Seattle communities. The new path provides a safe route away from the construction zone and the railroad tracks.

Sign Bridge Installation

In August a new sign bridge was installed over the SR 99 construction bypass and First Avenue South to direct traffic to the ferry terminal, the waterfront and Pioneer Square. Crews will install additional signs on the sign bridge indicating exit locations and speed reductions when SR 99 re-opens after the closure.

New SR 99 Roadway

The approaches to the new southbound SR 99 bridge were built using Geofoam blocks. The soil is poor and soft in this area. Geofoam is a lightweight material that can be installed faster than fill soil or concrete, and it is not prone to settlement.

Temporary bridge supports have been installed as the first phase of the new South Atlantic Street overpass. Work on the overpass won't start until 2012, but driving the piles now helps limit future closures of southbound SR 99.

Pete Spalding: Will there be a barrier between the north and southbound lanes of the new SR 99 bridge?

Answer: Yes, there will be Jersey barriers the whole length of the structure.

SR 99 Nine-day Closure

The majority of the Alaskan Way Viaduct will be closed between the West Seattle Bridge and the Battery Street Tunnel starting at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 21 through 5 a.m. Monday, Oct. 31. Northbound SR 99 between South Royal Brougham Way and the Battery Street Tunnel will be open weekdays between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m., as well as during special events at the stadiums.

WSDOT has been working with project partners in preparation for the closure. There will not be a signed detour route, but recommended alternate routes are available on the project website.

One strategy to reduce congestion is to incentivize the public to shift modes of transportation or change their schedule. Measures such as uniformed traffic officers, driver information signs and

increased bus and water taxi service will be in place to mitigate increased traffic congestion. Many bus routes going into downtown will have increased service and reliability.

In order to help the evening commute to West Seattle, the Coast Guard will restrict openings of the South Spokane Street lower swing bridge on weekdays from 6 to 8 p.m. During the closure the bridge will only open to maritime traffic during emergencies.

Herald Ugles: Will you put a traffic light at East Frontage Road South for the southbound SR 99 off-ramp?

Answer: You will be able to turn left or right with no signal. If you turn left and drive toward South Royal Brougham Way, you will merge with northbound traffic. There will be a light at East Frontage Road and South Atlantic Street. South Royal Brougham Way from First Avenue South will be for westbound traffic only and will serve as an entry to northbound SR 99 or local access to businesses in that area. You will not be able to turn left onto East Frontage Road from South Royal Brougham Way. That will improve flow of traffic into the grid.

Pete Spalding: Why is the opening restriction for the South Spokane Street lower swing bridge only for the evening commute? Why are they not helping the morning traffic? The worst traffic occurs in the morning as people leave the peninsula.

Answer: Northbound and eastbound traffic in the morning can still utilize the high bridge and access the street grid via the First Avenue South and Fourth Avenue South off-ramps. Since the First Avenue South on-ramp is not yet complete, the only way to get to the high bridge southbound is to use I-5. We feel that options during the evening commute are worse. Maritime traffic needs daylight hours to operate, so we could only have one closure and we chose the nighttime option.

Pete Spalding: I was told there will be no closures of lower South Spokane Street during the SR 99 closure, is that true?

Answer: That is true, but we will double check that.

Susan Ranf: Did you consider creating a contra-lane on the south side of lower South Spokane Street for afternoon transit traffic, so cars wouldn't have to make two left turns?

Answer: We didn't consider that but we tried to find a balance between all modes of transportation. While we are doing things to incentivize transit travel, we do need to keep enough general purpose traffic space available. There is a lot of traffic here, and we wouldn't be able to serve places like Starbucks if we did that.

Vlad Oustimovitch: South Hanford Street becomes an important connector during the closure, but the quality of the roadway is not good. The railroad traffic is heavy there, and the connection with East Marginal Way is problematic. What are you doing to channel traffic onto East Marginal Way more effectively?

Answer: We are identifying key points of roadway conflict. We have six police officers on call and we are considering placing one at that intersection. Regarding trains, we are asking the railroads to restrict train movements across South Hanford and South Atlantic streets.

Herald Ugles: Isn't part of the problem that South Hanford Street is the access street to the Seattle International Gateway yard?

Answer: It is a problem with the trains blocking the roadway and trucks accessing the yard. Most of the freight traffic lessens around 3 or 4 p.m.

Linda Anderson: Some Metro drivers are concerned that additional traffic during the closure increases the possibility of buses getting struck at that location. Do automated trains go through that intersection? Is that a potential safety issue?

Answer: They do run some unmanned locomotives within the yard, but we will add that concern to our conversation with the railroads.

Linda Anderson: It might be a good spot to have police officers monitor traffic and train conditions. I'm not advocating sending transit to I-5, but this is already an issue for buses.

Answer: This is the primary transit diversion route, while the back-up plan is to use I-5 southbound if necessary. Safety is our number one priority, and we will look into this issue.

Vlad Oustimovitch: All the recommended routes show how to get to West Seattle. What about people wanting to head south to Burien or White Center? Your diagrams should explain how to navigate further south.

Answer: That will be part of our recommended route plan. Drivers heading to Burien should use Fourth or First avenues then cut over to the west when they are south of the construction area. We have a broader map that currently goes to South Lucile Street, and will expand it to South Michigan Street.

Vlad Oustimovitch: You may want to put "don't use your GPS" on electronic message signs.

Answer: We are working with GPS providers that are able to update their base information. Some don't have the capability, but if they do we are getting them the information about the closure.

Don Newby: Which GPS providers can update their information? The transportation industry relies on that service frequently.

Answer: We will email that information to you.

Pete Spalding: I'm assuming the SR 99 construction bypass has narrow shoulders. Will response trucks be stationed nearby?

Answer: WSDOT's incident response trucks are stationed nearby since we narrowed this section of SR 99 to two lanes. During the closure we will have additional response trucks on non-state routes like the West Seattle Bridge. After the closure the response trucks will continue to be parked near the SR 99 corridor.

Vlad Oustimovitch: Redirecting the traffic cameras, and possible supplementing them, would be very useful for people making decisions on discretionary trips.

Answer: That is a good idea. We will also put travel times from the electronic message signs on our website, so people can access this information from home.

Don Newby: Could you put an insert into the Sunday paper that outlines the recommended routes for the SR 99 nine-day closure?

SR 99 Closure Transit Routes

Metro will reroute 11 bus routes that currently operate on SR 99. Service will be rerouted through the SODO neighborhood. The RapidRide bus-only lane on Southwest Avalon Way will be in place before the closure. Buses traveling from West Seattle during the closure will be rerouted across lower South Spokane Street onto Fourth Avenue South. Transit will then use the Fourth Avenue corridor into downtown. Metro also has enhanced their travel time monitoring system.

We are working with the trucking community to explain routes during the closure, as trucks have less options than other vehicles. WSDOT and SDOT have placed electronic message signs at key decision points so that we can give drivers real-time information. The permanent signs will be supplemented with temporary signs.

Changes to SR 99 After the Closure

When SR 99 reopens, drivers will travel on a new bridge that connects to the viaduct's central waterfront section through a construction bypass. SR 99 speed limits between the Battery Street Tunnel and the West Seattle Bridge will be reduced to 40 mph, with a 25 mph advisory speed limit in the construction bypass. A simulation showing how drivers will navigate the construction bypass was shown to the working group.

Agenda Item #4 – SR 99 Tunnel Update

Linea Laird provided an update on the SR 99 Tunnel Project, and Bob Chandler provided an update on the Central Waterfront Transmission Line Relocation Project. Eric Tweit, Mercer West Project Manager, and Kirk Wilcox, AWV Project Engineer, reviewed the new north portal construction staging simulation.

SR 99 Tunnel Project

Seattle Tunnel Partners will begin tunnel construction activities, such as ordering the boring machine and mobilizing equipment near the stadiums, in October. At both the north and south portals, crews will build noise walls and begin utility relocation work. In the south end, crews will conduct settlement mitigation work on buildings and structures, and demolish a small portion of the viaduct's south end that extends into the tunnel staging area.

To accommodate this work, traffic will be detoured under the viaduct between South King and South Jackson streets, starting in December. Traffic will be maintained but will operate differently. The more significant impact is the loss of parking in the area. We have a team looking at short- and long-term parking mitigation strategies.

The Alaskan Way widening work between Spring Street and Yesler Way is still being planned, but the cross section may look slightly different. We will accommodate transit, ferry holding lanes, rerouted traffic and construction staging. More details will be provided soon.

Herald Ugles: Have you issued a request for proposals for handling the tunnel spoils?

Answer: No, Seattle Tunnel Partners is talking to contractors now.

Herald Ugles: I know that several unions haven't been approached about this work. What is being done to ensure everyone is involved in the process?

Answer: Chris Dixon with Seattle Tunnel Partners will discuss this matter further at a later date.

Central Waterfront Transmission Line Relocation

Seattle City Light needs to relocate transmission lines attached to the viaduct to a permanent underground location prior to viaduct demolition and waterfront construction projects. The relocation work will begin this winter and be complete by spring 2012. It will affect parking under the viaduct. The City has been conducting outreach with businesses and properties along the project area to provide additional parking and information signs during the holiday season.

North Portal Construction Staging Simulation

The simulation shows how the SR 99 tunnel and Mercer corridor projects interface. Coordination between WSDOT, SDOT and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is critical for these projects. The simulation, available at www.alaskanwayviaduct.org, shows high-level construction activities and traffic changes between 2011 and 2017.

Vlad Oustimovitch: The shadows are coming from the north, which makes the directions confusing. It is difficult to see the Battery Street Tunnel and the future tunnel portal.

Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management

Don Newby: I am concerned about the Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management because suburban communities are not represented.

Answer: This committee is part of an agreement between WSDOT and the City of Seattle. This is why it includes a number of Seattle representatives. Our goal is to get as many drivers to use the tunnel as possible, so we will look at all of the diversion points to make sure that the tolling is successful.

Don Newby: The people who will use the tunnel are not represented on the committee. I would include people from Shoreline, Kenmore and Bothell, as well as people from the distribution centers in Auburn and Kent. Completion of SR 509 will also impact tolling greatly.

Answer: There are several venues, in addition to this committee, for discussing tolling in this region. The committee will not set SR 99 tunnel toll rates, but will simply make recommendations. The Transportation Commission will look at other tools to determine toll rates. It is a great point to talk about interfacing and how this will all go together.

Vlad Oustimovitch: I assumed the tolling committee would be technical, examining how to optimize tunnel usage and maximize revenue to the state. If you're going to make it a political committee, then you should expand it to include people from the north and south.

Agenda Item #5 – Action Items and Adjourn

Bob Chandler thanked everyone for coming and reminded the group that staff will contact members regarding continuing their memberships on the south portal working group.

Action Items:

- Program staff will contact working group members with the names of GPS carriers who will display our closure information.
- SDOT will confirm that the South Spokane Street Bridge will not close during the SR 99 closure.
- SDOT will follow up with Ed Shilley about the fabricator of steel trusses for the South Spokane Street Widening Project.
- SDOT will follow up about the timeline for opening the First Avenue South on-ramp to the South Spokane Street Bridge.