Peter Steinbrueck
Seattle City Councilmember

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AWVSP Team Office

May 31, 2004

Ms. Allison Ray
Alaskan Way Viaduct and
Seawall Replacement Project Office
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Response

Dear Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the project's Leadership Group, I am excited to see this project moving forward.

As such, I urge you to include a "Sixth Alternative" in your EIS process. This sixth alternative would study whether a "no highway/improved transportation grid" option would be viable for our region in terms of this project. Below are some reasons as to why studying this option is important:

The Viaduct and Seawall Draft EIS is insufficient.

While there are currently five options included in the Draft EIS, the scope of the transportation project is remains narrowly defined. The Draft EIS only analyzes solutions that replace current capacity with a new highway in the same corridor. This limited scope precludes study of an alternative that may be considerably less expensive, simpler, and less disruptive, and that offers Seattle the opportunity to reconnect to the waterfront. An alternative that makes improvements to the larger transportation system -- arterial connections, transit, the express lanes and entrances and exits on I-5, freight corridors, and the downtown grid – while keeping Alaskan Way as a typical 4 lane surface street should be analyzed concurrently in a supplemental EIS.

This alternative would define the optimal set of improvements to existing resources so they can accommodate Viaduct freight and vehicle traffic, away from the waterfront. It would also include fixes to the street grid north of the Battery Street tunnel to redistribute traffic, both north/south and east/west. The Seattle Department of Transportation's Central City Access Strategy and the People's Waterfront Coalition

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Proposal (www.peopleswaterfront.org) offer a beginning framework that should then be developed into a comparable alternative.

The Draft EIS is premature because Seattle has not yet decided to replace the Viaduct.

A waterfront planning process is currently underway, guiding the citizens and the City of Seattle in defining the long-term future for Seattle's newly freed waterfront. Citizens have begun to recognize the scale of this opportunity for Seattle to reconnect to the water, and are envisioning parks, beaches, water-based recreation, and pedestrian primacy. The citizens of Seattle have not yet concluded that a new highway is the most appropriate use of precious waterfront lands.

For these reasons, I urge you to study this alternative, otherwise we will not know the pros and cons of such an alternative that could very well have positive impacts on our city.

Thank you for your consideration of including a "no highway/improved transportation grid" option to be studied in the EIS. Feel free to contact me with any questions or comments at peter.steinbrueck@seattle.gov or via phone at (206) 684-8572.

Sincerely,

Peter Steinbrueck

Peter Steinbrueck AIA
Seattle City Council