

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program  
South Portal Working Group – Feb. 6, 2013  
Meeting Summary

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**Working Group Attendees**

- Linda Anderson, Amalgamated Transit Union
- Alan Cornell, Nitze-Stagen
- Don Newby, Burien
- John Odland, MacMillan-Piper
- Marty Oppenheimer, South Park
- Vlad Oustimovitch, West Seattle
- Susan Ranf, Seattle Mariners
- Pete Spalding, Delridge
- Herald Ugles, International Longshore and Warehouse Union and Pacific Maritime Association

**Working Group Members Not in Attendance**

- Michael Beranbaum, Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28
- Kris Breton, Compass Housing Alliance
- Barb Chamberlain, Bicycle Alliance of Washington
- Jerome Cohen, West Seattle Chamber of Commerce
- Jan Drago, The Alliance for Pioneer Square
- Jason Handaly, Sound Produce
- John Huey, American West Bank and Duwamish Transportation Management Association
- Ron Kieswether, Oak Harbor Freight Lines
- Adam Link, CenturyLink Field and Event Center
- Lisa Quinn, Feet First
- Ed Shilley, Nucor Steel

**Agencies and Staff in Attendance**

- Matt Preedy, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Amir Rasaie, WSDOT
- Ron Posthuma, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
- David Hull, King County Metro
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle
- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Mike Johnson, SDOT
- Eric Tweit, SDOT

**Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Program Updates**

SDOT Assistant Director of Strategic Projects Bob Chandler welcomed everyone to the meeting and led introductions. He explained the purpose of the SR 99 tunnel Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT), the committee's work to-date, and the recent progress report the committee produced.

John Odland: Who is representing the freight community on the ACTT?

*Answer: Kurt Beckett and Rick Bender. There is also a vacancy currently on the committee.*

Vlad Oustimovitch: What is the capacity of the tunnel?

*Answer: We estimate 85,800 daily users in the tunnel under a no-toll scenario.*

Vlad Oustimovitch: Assuming the number of users in the tunnel will increase over time, is there a plan for increasing toll rates over several decades?

*Answer: The first three scenarios the ACTT examined assumed a flat toll rate, according to guidelines set by the state treasurer. Some of the new scenarios the ACTT will examine assume toll rate escalation over time. We will continue to discuss this idea with the ACTT moving forward.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Have you thought of looking for more state or federal funding for the tunnel, rather than using toll funds since diversion seems to be such a large issue?

*Answer: The ACTT will continue with the process of examining toll scenarios. The Washington State House and Senate transportation committees will see the results of that analysis and will address the financial implications of the committee's recommendations.*

Don Newby: Do the models the ACTT is using for its analysis reflect where drivers are traveling to and from and future variables like the completion of SR 509?

*Answer: The model being used assumes information for the years 2017 and 2030, which reflect fairly aggressive urban growth. We can bring more information about this to a future meeting.*

### **Agenda Item #2 – King County Metro Update**

King County Metro Supervisor of Service Planning David Hull gave an update on Metro's September 2012 service changes. He noted that these went relatively well, although the RapidRide C and D lines had issues with crowding and reliability. Other routes experienced increased travel times through downtown, crowding and pass-ups on I-90, and reductions in coverage and/or span. He discussed corrective actions taken by Metro.

King County Department of Transportation Assistant Director Ron Posthuma spoke about the construction mitigation fund for the South Holgate Street to South King Street project, explaining that WSDOT has extended that service through mid-2014. He noted that there is not mitigation funding for the remaining period of SR 99 replacement construction, and Metro is facing an overall funding shortfall as well. A proposal will go before the state Legislature this year to address these issues.

Pete Spalding: How many fewer seats are now available from West Seattle compared to before the service change?

*Answer: A regular Metro bus has 58 seats whereas a RapidRide bus has 49, so there is reduction of seats in that service. However, those buses are designed to accommodate more standing room and overall West Seattle has about the same number of trips during the peak periods.*

Pete Spalding: I'm still hearing that service levels beyond the RapidRide C are deteriorating throughout West Seattle, with many busses arriving late or early, especially at South Seattle Community College. It seems that these issues have arisen since the service change.

*Answer: The on-time performance is better for RapidRide C and we haven't heard of the other problems you've mentioned.*

Pete Spalding: The loss of transit mitigation funding from the South Holgate Street to South King Street project is a huge concern.

*Answer: Metro saw a lot of growth to and from West Seattle and from northwest Seattle since the service change, averaging about 1,500 riders per day.*

John Odland: When do you expect to have the more time-tested results for fall 2012?

*Answer: In early March.*

Pete Spalding: Are the morning numbers similar to what you've shown for the evening peak?

*Answer: The morning generally has lower volume overall.*

Susan Ranf: Some of the businesses in SODO are finding that their employees are dropping out of bus programs because of the removal of buses on First Avenue South. The current routes are not conducive to riders' schedules and safety needs.

*Answer: We are planning to restore First Avenue South bus service once construction is completed.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Since the service changes were implemented, the commute from Magnolia to South Park has increased by as much as 85 minutes.

*Answer: Metro has not heard of that being an issue.*

### **Agenda Item #3 – Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program**

AWV Deputy Program Administrator Matt Preedy outlined the SR 99 tunnel launch pit and support facilities and the South Atlantic Street overpass construction. He also reported on the status of the receiving pit construction and excavation, and the tunnel boring machine assembly and arrival.

John Odland: How deep is the glacial till in the launch pit area?

*Answer: In that area it is only about 40 feet below the surface because this was once tideflat area.*

Herald Ugles: What's the largest rock that can travel through the tunnel spoils conveyor belt?

*Answer: The largest boulder that can fit through the tunnel boring machine's cutterhead is three feet in diameter. Therefore, the conveyor belt is designed to accommodate that size.*

Don Newby: Was there a testing failure of the tunnel boring machine in Japan?

*Answer: There was a clearance issue during testing between a stationary part and a rotating part. The manufacturer is aware of the source of the problem and has fixed it. The machine will be reassembled and tested again before it is shipped to Seattle.*

### **Agenda Item #4 – Other Project Updates**

Bob Chandler noted that the Airport Way South Viaduct has opened to drivers and the project is complete. WSDOT Assistant Regional Administrator Amir Rasaie gave an update on the SR 99 Spokane Street Overcrossing Replacement Project, otherwise known as the Timber Bridge. He also addressed the I-5 and Spokane Street interchange project and introduced the I-5 concrete repair project that will occur in the University District and Eastlake neighborhoods.

Pete Spalding: Any time there's a traffic incident south of the West Seattle Bridge the traffic backs up to the Spokane Street Overcrossing. How will you configure this lane reduction to prevent drivers from using the exit to West Seattle to jump the traffic queue?

*Answer: There isn't enough width for people to jump traffic at the conclusion of this reduction, which will start before the West Seattle Bridge. We can bring an overview schematic of what the configuration will look like to a future working group meeting and post this to the West Seattle Blog.*

Don Newby: Will the traffic lights in the area between the Spokane Street Overcrossing and the First Avenue South Bridge be retimed to facilitate truck movement through the area?

*Answer: This project will actually help meter traffic in that area. Also, southbound SR 99 has two lanes at the point where the trucks need to merge.*

Marty Oppenheimer: Weren't most of those expansion joints replaced several years ago?

*Answer: Those were on mainline I-5, whereas with this project we are mostly working on the Spokane Street Bridge.*

#### **Agenda Item #5 – Mercer Corridor Program**

SDOT Project Manager Eric Tweit gave an update on the Mercer East and Mercer West projects. He noted that Fairview Avenue North will open at the end of February and Valley Street and the east phase of Mercer Street will open summer 2013. Mercer West will begin construction in late March or early April 2013.

Don Newby: If you make Mercer Street two lanes eastbound and then close Broad Street, how will traffic be impacted at Fifth Avenue and Mercer Street? I encourage you to have clear signage during that period.

*Answer: We expected that road configuration to be our biggest challenge and it will be in place for 12 months. Unfortunately, with the restrictions that Aurora Avenue creates we don't have a lot of options to divert traffic.*

John Odland: How does the potential of a basketball team playing at the Seattle Center next fall impact your plans?

*Answer: A lot of these improvements would be needed regardless of the basketball team's status. We will coordinate with the Seattle Center if and when a team is secured. We plan to install a temporary signal at Harrison and Broad streets to improve access to I-5 and the South Lake Union area.*

Don Newby: Are you redoing West Mercer Place as well? Has the north portal working group addressed this issue?

*Answer: No, we looked at the potential benefits of that and found that the cost, which was about \$13 million, would only result in a five second travel time improvement for the corridor. This analysis was presented to the north portal working group and other stakeholders in the community. We reconfigured the queuing area on Elliott Avenue West which has helped. We've committed to reexamining the area after completion of the Central Waterfront Program.*

#### **Agenda Item #6 – Working Group Member Feedback**

Matt Preedy posed the idea of combining the north and south portal working groups into one stakeholder group. Members in attendance were supportive of the idea.

Pete Spalding: How would combining the groups impact the length of the individual meetings?

*Answer: We could extend the meetings to 2 1/2 hours if need be.*

### **Agenda Item #7 – Elliott Bay Seawall Project**

Bob Chandler noted that SDOT has hired a general contractor for the project, is in the process of finalizing the design and is continuing to plan construction sequencing. Final costs for the project will be available in summer 2013. He offered to provide another update on the project at the next working group meeting.

Herald: My understanding is that they are still working on the project labor and Pier 46 piece. There has been some progress on the bids and I hope that is settled before we get further on in the project. I want to strongly encourage everybody to keep an open mind on this issue.

*Answer: The contract with Foss has been awarded and negotiations are proceeding with the longshore union.*

### **Agenda Item #8 – Action Items and Adjourn**

Bob Chandler wrapped up the meeting. The presentation will be available on the program website, and the meeting summary will be emailed to the working group members.

Herald Ugles: An issue at the forefront of everybody's mind is the basketball arena. We haven't discussed how an 18,000 seat stadium will impact the construction we discuss in this committee. How will construction of a new stadium be coordinated with viaduct replacement? How does WSDOT feel about this issue given the timing they've laid out for their projects?

John Odland: Will WSDOT comment on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

*Answer: The State has not taken an official stance on the issue yet. We are interested in what the potential impacts would be to the highways during construction and after the facility is open. The current schedule indicates the draft EIS will be released in June, at which point WSDOT will make formal comments.*

John Odland: You should also be part of the conversation with the Department of Planning and Development regarding the stadium overlay area.

Susan Ranf: You're saying that the State is relying on the data in the EIS, which is being prepared by the proponents of the new stadium, to determine the viability of the state route?

*Answer: WSDOT has completed numerous EIS processes on our own projects and we have to assume that the stadium project owners will provide an equally objective report. They will be using some of the same data that the city and state have used for other types of analysis.*

Herald Ugles: Part of the stadium discussion is about unfunded mitigation for projects like SR 519. We need to determine how the industrial base will be protected from this land grab.

*Answer: We can update the group on the EIS schedule and opportunities for public comment.*

Linda Anderson: I would like an update on the status of transit-only lanes in the project. We need more 24-hour transit lanes.

*Answer: We will have more information on that topic along with other updated mode plans in spring 2013 and can bring this to the next working group meeting.*

Action items:

- Provide information about traffic models used in tolling scenarios, specifically where drivers are traveling to and from and whether 2030 projections reflect the end state of current projects like the SR 509 extension.
- Provide detailed maps showing lane configuration and closures during the SR 99 Spokane Street Overcrossing/timber bridge construction
- There is concern about ongoing labor negotiations and STP's work to unload the TBM at the Port of Seattle.
- Provide update at next working group meeting regarding the EIS schedule and opportunities for public comment on the arena proposal.
- Consider adding a left turn signal from southbound First Avenue South to South Horton Street.
- Provide an update on planned transit-only lanes in the final project design.