

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
North Portal Working Group – Oct. 6, 2011
Meeting Summary

Working Group Attendees

- Glenn Avery, Queen Anne Community Council
- Rachel Ben-Schmuel, Vulcan
- David Brown, Pacific Northwest Ballet
- John Coney, Uptown Alliance
- Layne Cubell and Deborah Daoust, Seattle Center (on behalf of Robert Nellams)
- Stephen DeForest, Magnolia Community Club
- Tom Graff, Belltown Business Association
- Ron Hildebrandt, Trident Seafoods at Interbay
- Kevin Hughes, Pacific Science Center
- John Mauro, Cascade Bicycle Club (on behalf of Tessa Gregor)
- Bree Moore, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Vince O'Halloran, Puget Sound Ports Council and Sailors Union of the Pacific
- Elaine Wine, Ballard

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

- David Delfs, Magnolia/Queen Anne/South Lake Union Design Review Board
- Tom English, Plymouth Housing Group
- Bob Grossman, South Lake Union Community Council
- John Kane, BINMIC
- Jason McKinney, South Lake Union
- Lee Newgent, Seattle/King County Building and Construction Trades Council
- Kim Suelzle, CityIce Cold Storage
- Marko Tubic, Fremont Chamber of Commerce
- Bob Viggers, Charlie's Produce
- Eugene Wasserman, North Seattle Industrial Association

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)
- Angela Brady, 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

Linea Laird, WSDOT Program Administrator, welcomed the working group members and the public to the meeting. Linea provided an update on staff changes within the program. Ron Paananen, the program's former WSDOT administrator, left in September. Linea Laird is the

new 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 membership on the working group. The next meeting will be in early next year.

Agenda Item #2 – General Program Updates

Linea Laird and Matt Preedy provided an update on the Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT) and state-led projects; Bob Chandler and Angela Brady, Mercer East Project Manager, provided updates on city-led projects; Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle Manager of Local Government Relations, discussed the port's East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project; and Ron Posthuma, KCDOT Assistant Director, reviewed transit service.

Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT)

On Sept. 19 the Seattle City Council approved 15 members to serve on the committee. The committee will make advisory recommendations on tolling the SR 99 tunnel and mitigating diversion impacts. The first ACTT meeting will take place in December.

Third Avenue South Street Repairs (SDOT)

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

Airport Way South Viaduct (SDOT)

SDOT has started seismic retrofit and rehabilitation work on the Airport Way South Viaduct over the Argo Railroad Yard. The bridge will stay open during the SR 99 nine-day closure and will close in early November.

Waterfront Seattle (SDOT)

On Oct. 27 Waterfront Seattle will host a public event on design concepts for the central waterfront. The last Waterfront Seattle event attracted nearly 1,000 people.

Elliott Bay Seawall Project (SDOT)

The project is starting preliminary engineering and will be at 30 percent design next spring. The environmental process is progressing.

Mercer East Project (SDOT)

In late October SDOT will re-open Ninth Avenue North between Aloha and Republican streets and close Westlake Avenue North between Mercer and Valley streets. Ninth Avenue North will

be temporarily reconfigured to two lanes southbound and one lane northbound. Eastbound Broad Street access between Fifth and Ninth avenues will not open until Mercer Street re-opens to two-way traffic in late summer or fall 2012.

By early 2012 SDOT will shift all existing eastbound Mercer Street traffic to the newly built lanes on the north side of the street, while crews shut down the south side of Mercer Street. This will impact traffic accessing Mercer Street from the south.

Vince O'Halloran: Will there be any disruptions to SR 99 when SDOT closes the south side of Mercer Street early next year?

Answer: No. Northbound SR 99 to the Broad Street off-ramp will remain open.

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.

East Marginal Way Grade Separation Project (Port)

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.

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 transit seats to 5,000.

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. The goal is to replace this timber bridge before the SR 99 tunnel is complete. WSDOT has not committed to a construction start date on this project and is waiting until SR 99 re-opens after the closure to analyze how traffic patterns change in the south end. WSDOT 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 SR 99 nine-day closure.

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.

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. WSDOT will check in with partner agencies three times a day during the closure. 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 into downtown will have increased service and reliability. Both WSDOT and SDOT traffic management centers will operate on extended hours during the closure.

Electronic message boards are located at key decision points along the SR 99 corridor. The public can access message board information on the Internet and make decisions about an upcoming trip. SDOT is repositioning cameras along the SR 99 corridor so the public can gain a better view of traffic impacts.

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. Metro also has enhanced their travel time monitoring system.

SR 99 Closure Truck Routes

The downtown traffic control zone is restricted to vehicles less than 30 feet during daytime hours. We looked at relaxing this restriction during the closure, but decided against it to maintain vital transit routes through downtown Seattle. Trucks traveling north and south along the corridor can take I-5 and the Alaskan Way surface street.

Demolition Event

On Oct. 22 WSDOT is hosting an event where the public can walk on a portion of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and view ongoing demolition work.

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.

There will be two open houses for the public to learn more about the SR 99 nine-day closure. They will be held Monday, Oct. 10 at the West Seattle High School and Wednesday, Oct. 12 at Adams Elementary in Ballard.

Ron Hildebrandt: What websites show travel times?

Answer: Travel time information is currently available on SDOT's website. WSDOT is working on adding this information to their website.

Tom Graff: Why is southbound SR 99 at the Battery Street Tunnel closed during the nine-day closure? Why can't traffic exit via the Western Avenue off-ramp?

Answer: The Battery Street Tunnel and Western Avenue off-ramp will be closed for safety-related reasons. Closing the viaduct just south of Western Avenue would force many drivers unexpectedly onto a short, limited sight distance exit ramp that quickly leads to a traffic signal. The Western Avenue off-ramp would not be able to handle traffic volumes efficiently during the closure, which would increase the likelihood of collisions if traffic backs up into the Battery Street Tunnel.

Tom Graff: How are you demolishing the viaduct?

Answer: We will use ramming, crunching and sheering equipment. The goal is to get as much of the southern end of the viaduct demolished during the nine-day closure as we can.

Tom Graff: Is that how the remaining viaduct will come down in five years?

Answer: Yes, except for when demolition work is close to buildings. We will use specialized methods in certain areas.

Kevin Hughes: What will you do with the viaduct demolition debris and excavated soil from the tunnel?

Answer: The contractor is looking at two options for recycling demolished concrete. Some debris may be brought to a port site, crushed and brought back as road base. The other option is to take the concrete to other projects to use as road base. The demolished viaduct concrete will not go into a landfill. Tunnel soil will be removed by truck if it's contaminated. Clean muck will be loaded onto barges at Pier 46 and sent to the Mats Mats Quarry in Port Ludlow.

Vince O'Halloran: Have bids gone out for tunnel excavation work?

Answer: No.

Stephen DeForest: On Oct. 28 how do I get to the airport for an 8 p.m. flight?

Answer: WSDOT will not have signed detour routes; however, we are publishing a series of recommended routes on our website.

Layne Cubell: I think that north end organizations aren't as aware of the nine-day closure as many of the south end organizations. We would like to see more customized information on recommended routes near Seattle Center. We also want to know how we can get the word out about the closure to our organization and customers. As closure-related materials are updated, please send them to us.

Answer: Yes, we will do so.

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. Utility relocation work and viaduct strengthening will continue through spring of 2012.

Additionally, there will be distribution vault work near the Washington State Ferries terminal that will impact sidewalks and one lane of Alaskan Way in early November.

Central Waterfront Transmission Line Relocation Project

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 parking 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.

Ron Hildebrandt: Will the Washington State Ferries have assistance from the State Patrol during the nine-day closure?

Answer: We will watch that area of Alaskan Way closely during the closure. If we need additional assistance, we can bring in the State Patrol or other resources.

Vince O'Halloran: Can we keep a record of complications that drivers see during construction along Alaskan Way? When we meet with the City's Central Waterfront Committee, we can use this evidence to describe changes that are needed to ensure that traffic can move as freely as possible along that route.

Answer: The City will look at traffic flows throughout and after construction. We will consider your suggestion and think about how we can provide real-time information during construction along the waterfront.

John Coney: What is the funding status for the Mercer West Project? Does \$30-35 million still need to be identified? Can the project seek bids without this funding?

Answer: We do need all funding identified before the project can go to bid. We are finishing our 60 percent plan and cost estimates. We will continue to work with our funding partners to fill this gap. Funding is needed by June 2012.

John Coney: The Uptown community has concerns about upcoming Broad Street closures.

Answer: Program partners continue to work closely on these construction issues.

John Coney: Will the Legislature fill the funding gap for the Mercer West Project?

Answer: The Mercer West Project is likely to be funded by several sources. SDOT also has requested a grant from the Transportation Improvement Board.

John Coney: What is the Transportation Improvement Board?

Answer: It is an independent state agency that gives grants for various transportation projects. The City of Seattle has been quite successful with grants through the Transportation Improvement Board.

Layne Cubell: The north end construction staging simulation is fantastic. The Seattle Center has started conversations on the critical need for construction coordination and communications plans and mapped detour routes around Seattle Center during tunnel construction. It is important to ensure that traffic will be able to leave Seattle Center events without clogging the neighborhoods. We pledge to continue conversations in the next few months on these topics.

Agenda Item #5 – Action Items and Adjourn

Linea Laird thanked everyone for coming and reminded the group that staff will contact members regarding continuing their memberships on the north portal working group.

Action Items:

- Program staff will follow up with working group members to discuss their continued membership.
- Program staff will follow up with the Seattle Center on nine-day viaduct closure information.