

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
North Portal Working Group – May 3, 2012
Meeting Summary

Working Group Attendees

- Warren Aakervik, Ballard Oil
- Glenn Avery, Queen Anne Community Council
- John Coney, Uptown Alliance
- Matt Curry, South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce
- Stephen DeForest, Magnolia Community Club
- Tessa Greeger, Cascade Bicycle Club
- Bree Moore and Lauren Auten, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Robert Nellams, Seattle Center
- Vince O'Halloran, Puget Sound Ports Council and Sailors Union of the Pacific
- Eugene Wasserman, North Seattle Industrial Association
- Elaine Wine, Ballard

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

- Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Vulcan
- Howard Cohen, Seattle Hotel Association
- Tom Graff, Belltown Business Association
- Lorie Groth, South Lake Union Community Council
- Lee Harper, Phinney Neighborhood Association
- Ron Hildebrandt, Trident Seafoods at Interbay
- Jim Miller, Millionair Club
- Lee Newgent, Seattle/King County Building and Construction Trades Council
- Bob Viggers, Charlie's Produce
- Bruce Wynn, Interbay Neighborhood Association

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Linea Laird, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Matt Preedy, WSDOT
- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Lauren Stensland, Mercer East Communications
- Mike Merritt, Port of Seattle
- Ron Posthuma, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions

Linea Laird, WSDOT Program Administrator, welcomed the working group members and the public to the meeting. The meeting's focus was to provide a look at upcoming construction, including associated traffic or other impacts.

Agenda Item #2 – North End Construction

Lauren Stensland, Mercer East Communications, provided an update on the Mercer East Project. Matt Preedy, WSDOT Deputy Program Administrator provided an update on SR 99 Tunnel Project activities in the north end of the project.

Mercer East Project

We anticipate Mercer Street opening to two-way traffic in late summer or fall of 2012. This will be followed by restrictions on Fairview Avenue and Valley Street. The project is still on target for completion in the summer of 2013.

Warren Aakervik: When will the signal be installed at the intersection of Ninth Avenue North, Westlake Avenue North and Aloha Street? I suggest temporarily placing a stop sign for northbound Westlake Avenue North traffic at that intersection, allowing for two lanes on Ninth Avenue North to accommodate northbound truck traffic.

Answer: That intersection will be reconfigured and a signal will be added, likely next spring or summer near the completion of the project. Lauren Stensland will follow up with Warren Aakervik about the traffic functions at Aloha Street and Ninth Avenue North intersection.

SR 99 Tunnel Project

In the north end, near Taylor and Aurora avenues, and John and Harrison streets, crews are relocating utilities to prepare for the tunnel boring machine receiving pit. Additionally, the right lane of southbound SR 99/Aurora Avenue North near the Denny Street exit will close again for up to 60 days in late June. The goal is to have the Broad Street exit open in time for the southbound lane closure, but there may be overlap. Matt Preedy requested feedback from the group on the potential overlap of these two closures.

Crews preparing for the tunnel boring machine receiving pit are demolishing the building at 330 Sixth Ave. N. Once the building demolition is complete in early June, the contractor will begin to build the walls for the receiving pit.

Warren Aakervik: It would be good to avoid the overlapping lane closure of southbound SR 99 and the Broad Street exit. Potentially a weekend overlap would be okay, but if there is an accident near those closures there would be a major traffic impact.

Robert Nellams: How long would the overlapping closures be?

Answer: Two weeks starting at the end of June.

Vince O'Halloran: I don't think the overlapping closures are a good idea.

Bree Moore: Would you provide traffic control during the overlapping Broad Street exit and southbound SR 99 lane closures?

Answer: Yes.

Bree Moore: What bicycle safety considerations do you have to give near the Denny exit?

Answer: Most bicyclists use Dexter Avenue North.

Matt Curry: Is the utility relocation in the north end delayed? We are getting notices of future IT outages in South Lake Union, which keep getting pushed back on the calendar.

Answer: Utility relocation in the north end is a bit delayed. The IT trunk line work might be associated with the Mercer Corridor Project. Matt Preedy will follow up with Matt Curry about the IT outages.

Matt Curry: Is the reason for the overlapping closures of the Broad Street exit and the southbound SR 99 lane closure due to the delayed schedule for north end utility relocations?

Answer: No. Today we are simply asking for your feedback on the topic and still weighing our options.

Robert Nellams: The Seattle Center has a major concert, the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and a festival around June 24. Please try not to schedule any closures on that weekend.

Answer: We would not do it that weekend.

Agenda Item #3 – Working Group Member Feedback

Linea Laird asked the group to provide feedback on what topics related to the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program would be the most valuable during working group meetings.

John Coney: One of the biggest concerns the Uptown Alliance has is the WSDOT parking lot on Thomas Street and Aurora Avenue North. We would like to see if there could be a below-grade use of the alley to the west of the parking lot. This would enable a developer to have more room for below-grade parking. We want that parcel to be developed as mixed use. We also think Aurora Avenue North south of Harrison Street should be renamed.

Stephen DeForest: Is the Mercer West Project fully funded?

Answer: The Mercer West Project is not yet fully funded. We are waiting for a decision about a TIGER grant that we applied for. The project is aiming to advertise in late fall, with construction starting early next year.

Stephen DeForest: When Mercer Street is widened under Aurora Avenue North, how will that affect traffic flow?

Answer: Mercer Street under Aurora Avenue North will be two lanes eastbound during construction. Broad Street will be open in both directions when we start Mercer West Project construction. Pedestrian access will be maintained on at least one side of Mercer Street.

Robert Nellams: Will Mercer Street always be two lanes eastbound during Mercer West construction?

Answer: We are not expecting to close more lanes of Mercer Street.

Robert Nellams: You do a good job of letting Seattle Center know when major construction is happening. As the program moves forward, holistic coordination between agencies is good. We are anxious about the Mercer West Project and the SR 99 Tunnel Project starting work near us.

Warren Aakervik: Will the Broad Street exit be open when Aurora Avenue North is reduced to two lanes over the Mercer West widening work?

Answer: It will likely be closed.

Elaine Wine: What is the extent of the Mercer Street widening?

Answer: The western boundary is Fifth Avenue North in terms of the widening work. There will be signal changes west of Fifth Avenue North, into the Uptown neighborhood.

Warren Aakervik: You've generally said that SR 99 will remain open during construction. However, you are still balancing special events and inspection weekends that close the viaduct. How do you coordinate with special events that close the viaduct?

Answer: The ability to close for inspection weekends is not very flexible. We are rethinking whether we should continue to close the viaduct for special events.

Warren Aakervik: Is the City going to designate West Mercer Street as a major truck street?

Answer: Mercer Street between I-5 and Fifth Avenue North, and Fifth Avenue North between Mercer and Broad streets will be designated a major truck street. SDOT is not planning to designate Mercer Street a major truck street west of Fifth Avenue North, but Mercer Street is a principal arterial street and trucks are allowed on arterial streets.

Vince O'Halloran: A new sports stadium in SODO will bring major construction and truck traffic. It could be disruptive to the south portal operations. Please look at mitigation efforts and study traffic patterns in SODO relating to this proposed arena.

Answer: We will continue to stay up-to-date with potential arena planning.

Eugene Wasserman: Based on the idea of a new sports arena in the south end, will more drivers be getting on or off SR 99 at the south portal?

Answer: We do not know.

Eugene Wasserman: I am concerned about the SR 99 exit near the stadiums. I'm worried it will not have sufficient capacity, especially with an added arena. You should look at the patterns exiting near the stadiums during the summer months.

Eugene Wasserman: Please place me on the email list for Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT). There are no representatives from the Northwest/Ballard areas on the ACTT. All working group members should be on the ACTT mailing list and an ACTT update should be provided at each meeting. North end freight interests do not want tolls in the SR 99 tunnel.

Answer: I don't want to mix the materials for this group, but we will make sure working group members receive notices about upcoming ACTT meetings.

Tessa Gregor: It is important for the Cascade Bicycle Club to stay up to speed on major construction impacts to our bicycle community. You do a good job of that and I hope it continues.

Elaine Wine: I would like to know what is happening at the Elliott and Western avenues and Alaskan Way connection.

Matt Curry: The South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce is concerned about transit planning related to South Lake Union. I hope that there is coordination between projects to incorporate King County Metro's goals and ensure that new streets are designed for transit.

Answer: We will continue to coordinate with King County Metro during design and construction of the Mercer West and north portal projects.

Eugene Wasserman: Where will the transit lanes be?

Answer: There will be transit lanes on Aurora Avenue North, with stops south of Harrison Street.

Agenda Item #4 – Central Waterfront Construction

Matt Preedy provided an update on the SR 99 Tunnel Project along the waterfront, including changes to waterfront traffic and viaduct reinforcement work. Bob Chandler, SDOT Assistant Director, Strategic Projects, provided an update on the Central Waterfront Transmission Line Relocation Project.

SR 99 Tunnel Project

On May 10, crews will reroute six blocks of waterfront traffic under the viaduct south of Spring Street. This new change will also affect ferry access to Colman Dock. Drivers now access ferry holding lanes at Madison Street. A new shared use bicycle and pedestrian path will be provided along the corridor. Transit loading and unloading will be on the eastern side of the ferry holding lanes. Bus islands will provide safe waiting areas for passengers.

Crews have widened Alaskan Way between Spring and Pike streets to add approximately 60 on-street parking spots to help off-set the loss of parking spots that were lost from under the viaduct. Crews are also conducting reinforcement work on the viaduct to prepare for when the tunnel boring machine passes beneath the structure. This work will require a full weekend closure of the viaduct from Friday, May 18 through Monday, May 21. Work continues for installing micropiles between South Washington and Columbia streets.

Central Waterfront Transmission Line Relocation Project

Utility relocation will continue through the month of May, with some impacts to Western Avenue. The majority of the work will be done by Mother's Day.

Warren Aakervik: Will the intersections under the viaduct be signalized?

Answer: Yes.

Eugene Wasserman: Will the signals under the viaduct be synchronized?

Answer: They may not be synchronized, but they will operate more efficiently than they do today.

Warren Aakervik: What date will you reroute waterfront traffic from Alaskan Way to the road beneath the viaduct?

Answer: May 10. We had the goal of completing the switch in time for Mother's Day.

Warrant Aakervik: Will the lanes beneath the viaduct be two lanes in each direction?

Answer: The road will be one lane in each direction between Spring and South Washington streets. A second lane just south of Yesler Way will be left-turn only, for pre-authorized vehicles,

such as large trucks. North of Yesler Way the road will be two lanes northbound (the left lane is ferry only) and one lane southbound.

Vince O'Halloran: How long will the detour along the waterfront be in place?

Answer: Through at least early 2014. It may remain in place longer depending upon the Elliott Bay Seawall Project.

Eugene Wasserman: Where will the horse-drawn carriages and pedicabs go, with the changes along the waterfront?

Answer: We have not thought yet about horse-drawn carriages and pedicabs, but will look into it.

Vince O'Halloran: If the seawall measure doesn't pass in the fall, what happens to the project?

Answer: The Elliott Bay Seawall Project is funded through design. We would continue through design and try to determine a next move.

Eugene Wasserman: The public doesn't know how much public space will open up after the viaduct is removed. Please provide visuals to help indicate to waterfront users how the space will change in the future.

Answer: We will consider that idea.

Warren Aakervik: Is there a chance that we can change the hours on the viaduct for hauling diesel?

Answer: Warren Aakervik and Bob Chandler will have a separate discussion about this issue.

Vince O'Halloran: Can bicyclists and pedestrians stay on the west side of Alaskan Way?

Answer: Yes.

Warren Aakervik: I didn't see signs for large trucks providing advanced warning to turn into the restricted access lane south of Yesler Way. Please make sure we have advanced signage for large trucks to access Colman Dock.

Warren Aakervik: The South Washington Street camera is not working. Is it permanently out of operation? Is there any way to get cameras on Alaskan Way?

Answer: SDOT will look at what is planned for cameras along Alaskan Way and the camera at South Washington Street.

Matt Curry: From the WSDOT website I can view a schematic map of traffic densities in the Puget Sound region. It doesn't show anything for SR 99 and Aurora Avenue North.

Answer: The technology is not available for that right now.

Agenda Item #5 – Action Items and Adjourn

There was not enough time to discuss the new Alaskan Way, as was originally planned. This topic, along with a discussion of King County south end transit pathways, will be postponed to a future meeting. Linea thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the meeting's action items.

Eugene Wasserman: I am willing to spend more time at our working group meetings to provide more time for updates.

Elaine Wine: I am also willing to spend more time at the working group meetings.

Vince O'Halloran: Why do the south portal working group meetings have more attendance? You are getting excellent suggestions and expertise from the group and that is valuable to all of us. You could just incorporate north and south portal working groups all together.

Answer: Construction in the south is much more advanced than in the north end right now, which likely attracts more attendance at the south portal working group meetings.

Action items:

- Follow up with Warren Aakervik on traffic functions at Aloha Street and Ninth Avenue North intersection (Mercer East Project).
- Follow up with Matt Curry regarding schedule for utility work near the north portal, specifically IT outages.
- Review WSDOT/SDOT policies on future closures of the viaduct for special events, including marathons. Follow up with Warren Aakervik.
- Email all working group members regarding future ACTT meeting dates and materials.
- Consider placing signs along the detour to help people visualize future waterfront plans and concepts.
- Consider changing restrictions for freight users on the viaduct. Bob Chandler will follow up with Warren Aakervik.
- Consider placing additional signs farther south on the new detour route to alert trucks about the left-turn lane into Colman Dock available at Yesler Way.
- The traffic camera at Alaskan Way South and South Washington Street is not working. See if this camera can be fixed or will be permanently unavailable.
- Review policy limiting carriages, pedicabs and other slow vehicles on the road under the viaduct.