



July 21, 2010

Elliott Bay Seawall Scoping Comments
c/o Tetra Tech, Inc.
1420 Fifth Ave, Suite 550
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Comments on Scope of Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Responsible Official:

The Seattle Mariners appreciate the opportunity to comment on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Elliott Bay Seawall Replacement Project (Seawall Project). The Mariners have a long-term lease on Safeco Field and as such have an interest in the construction of, and functioning of, the Seawall project.

Our primary concern lies in the potential for impacts of the project on the operation of Safeco Field as a major event facility. We attract hundreds of thousands of people into the north SODO area each year and are highly dependent on a complete and accessible street and highway system to get our customers to the ballpark. Consequently, while we support the broad range of topics to be discussed in the EIS, our comments are limited to transportation, pedestrian and access concerns.

Over the past eight years, we have dealt with a succession of construction impacts in the area surrounding Safeco Field. First came SR519 Phase I, then SR519 Phase II, and now SR99 South End Project to be followed directly by the central waterfront bored tunnel project and the seawall project. All of these projects, with the exception of the seawall project, have or will occur within one block of Safeco Field and all have had, or are expected to have, a significant negative impact on us. While each project has been made aware of what a major event facility needs, not all projects have been competent in meeting the needs of Safeco Field. As a publicly-owned facility worth over \$500,000,000 (plus another \$300,000,000 of public investment in the adjacent Qwest Field) it is in the best interests of the public to keep these facilities viable. And as the source of jobs for thousands of people, it is important to understand the significant economic impact we have by providing employment in the local economy. As a sports and entertainment facility there has been a tendency to underestimate the role of Safeco Field in the local economy. It isn't just fun and games.



Major event facilities are highly dependent upon private automobiles to bring customers to events. Local transit agencies cannot provide the quantity of service that would be needed to replace private autos. Other options are too expensive or too onerous for families to consider. Safeco Field is a venue that attracts large numbers of families and people from outside of King County that are not familiar with local transit. Safeco Field also attracts a considerable number of people from the west side of Puget Sound – as many as 5,000 people for a single game come by ferry – so we are also highly reliant upon having an intact pedestrian access between Safeco Field and Colman Dock.

We understand that some lane or street closures may be required as part of the project. Many of these closures might require detours that could affect traffic, transit, ferry passenger and pedestrian access to and from Safeco Field. The duration and depth of the project construction impacts may be significant if not appropriately mitigated. Consequently we urge SDOT and its project partners to carefully evaluate all of the construction impacts, including those related to stadium operations, and take appropriate measures to mitigate those impacts. We are asking for impacts on the stadiums to be addressed fully and separately from other transportation issues such as commuting, which is a significantly different issue. This has been previously identified as “event traffic” conditions or analysis.

Throughout the discussions with the other projects we have been relentless in pointing out our concern about the safety of pedestrians and the need to give pedestrian use of the public right of way a higher priority than street vending, sidewalk cafes, etc. While some progress has been made in this area, we believe that it still needs more attention. This can only happen if the project develops a complete understanding of how event pedestrian traffic moves, and how completely different it is from other pedestrian movement. Hundreds of baseball fans access Safeco Field on game days via the Washington State Ferry System’s Colman dock and from parking locations north of the ferry dock. Maintaining safe and adequately sized pedestrian access, particularly from the ferry terminal to Safeco Field through the seawall construction work area, will be vital to minimizing project impacts. We ask that pedestrian access and safety be separately analyzed as part of the transportation section of the EIS.

We are concerned about the cumulative impacts resulting from the construction of this and many other public and private projects at the same time in the Central Waterfront and South Downtown areas. We urged you to include a well-developed discussion of cumulative impacts in the EIS and how they will be mitigated relative to operation of the stadiums. Projects likely to occur at the same time include new projects as the outcome of the City’s South Downtown rezoning, and other SDOT and WSDOT projects in the vicinity. Private projects may include the redevelopment of the North Lot of Qwest Field, the redevelopment of the Home Plate Parking Lot at First Avenue S. and S.

Massachusetts Street, and a host of other projects in the Pioneer Square, International District and SODO areas. All of these projects will rely on street use permits that close down both parking and travel lanes. A cumulative impacts analysis should carefully consider the timing of all of these projects and the opportunity for imposing some common mitigation measures that reduce otherwise potentially significant impacts (e.g., from construction truck/haul traffic). Without careful analysis and appropriate mitigation, these cumulative impacts could be significant.

We are committed to working with SDOT and its project partners regarding mitigation planning for implementing this major project. As a spectator sports and event facility the continued success of Safeco Field turns in large part on our baseball fans' and patrons' having a positive experience not only while in the ballpark but also while getting to and from the ballpark. We understand (all too well) that facility access may be affected during Seawall Project construction, but we believe that the impacts of construction can be reduced. We look forward to seeing a detailed analysis of potential mitigation measures in the draft EIS, and we will provide comments and suggestions to you throughout the environmental review process.

We also note that the Public Facilities District is submitting a separate comment letter. We have reviewed that letter and join in the concerns and issues raised by the PFD.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment, and we look forward to working with the City of Seattle and the consultant team as this important project proceeds. If you have any questions, please contact me at (206) 346-4236.

Sincerely,



Susan K. Ranf
Director of Transportation and Neighborhood Relations

cc: Bart Waldman, Executive Vice President, Seattle Mariners
Kevin Callan, Executive Director, PFD
Tom Backer, Legal Counsel, PFD