Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall Replacement Project

The Alaskan Way Viaduct is a transportation asset of local, regional, state and even national significance. It serves one of the state's most important transportation corridors, carrying 110,000 cars, trucks and buses a day. The Viaduct is a deteriorating structure that was damaged in the 2001 Nisqually earthquake and has moved two more times since then. The nearby Seawall is aging and deteriorating and must be replaced. Both structures are extremely vulnerable to the next earthquake, and the failure of one could cause failure of the other.

In the face of this issue affecting public safety and the region's economy, it is clear we must replace the viaduct and seawall.

Acting as joint leads on this project, the City's Seattle Department of Transportation and the Washington State Department of Transportation developed options for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
We expect to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement in mid 2006.

By this agreement, we are designating the tunnel option as the "Preferred Alternative" for the purposes of managing the Environmental Impact Statement process. We recognize that important questions, including funding, remain to be resolved. It is prudent, therefore, to continue to study the rebuild option as a contingency in order that that all of the project's environmental effects and opportunities are fully discussed. This is consistent with federal and state environmental assessment requirements that a full foundation be displayed for decision-makers' ultimate choice.

We are pleased at the skilled and sustained efforts that our professional staffs and consultants have brought to the project. We are equally pleased at the enormous and well-informed public attention the project has received. We plan to see that both these features of the work continue as we press ahead. Our state legislature, the City Council, regional transportation leaders and even the United States Congress must be consulted with, listened to, and joined in the effort. Everyone's efforts working together will hasten our moving forward on this critical project.

Briefly, the "Tunnel" preferred alternative for the final EIS is described for the entire length of the project as follows:

> *Beginning in the south, SR 99 will be on the surface until the travel lanes enter the six-lane tunnel structure that will extend from near South Dearborn Street to Pike Street. The Alaskan Way surface street will have four lanes along the waterfront. Near Pike Street, an aerial structure will continue from the tunnel to the existing Battery Street Tunnel. A lid will extend from Pike Street to the north end of Victor Steinbrueck Park. The Battery Street Tunnel will be improved to meet seismic and fire/life/safety standards. North of BST, SR 99 (Aurora) will be lowered to allow for bridges at Republican Street, Harrison Street, and Mercer Street. A new intersection at Roy Street will provide access to and from SR 99 and the city street grid. The Tunnel Alternative will replace the seawall with the outer wall of the tunnel from S. Washington Street to Pine Street, and the remaining seawall to north of Broad Street will be replaced and the supported soils will be strengthened.*

A simple summary of the "Rebuild" contingency option follows:

> *Beginning in the south, SR 99 is on the surface until South Dearborn Street where the lanes move onto a six-lane aerial structure that will extend to the Battery Street Tunnel. The Alaskan Way surface street will have four lanes along the waterfront. The existing ramps at Seneca, Columbia, Elliott, and Western will be strengthened. The Battery Street Tunnel will be improved to meet seismic and fire/life/safety standards. For the Rebuild alternative, there are no improvements planned north of Battery Street Tunnel. The Rebuild Alternative would replace the seawall and strengthen the supported soils from S. Washington Street to north of Broad Street.*

The Honorable Greg Nickels, Mayor
City of Seattle

December 6, 2004
Date

Douglas B. MacDonald, Secretary
Washington State Department of Transportation

December 6, 2004
Date