

April 20, 2006

Re: Open House Summary

The Seattle Department of Transportation conducted five city-wide open house meetings during March and April of 2006. The open houses were held at the following dates and locations:

- Thursday, March 16 at Garfield Community Center (Central)
- Monday, March 20 at New Holly's Gathering Hall (SE)
- Tuesday, March 28 at Olympic View Elementary School (NE)
- Wednesday, March 29 at West Seattle High School (SW)
- Tuesday, April 4 at Ballard High School (NW)

The open houses included statements from the Mayor's office, City Councilmembers, Citizens' Review Panel representatives and a formal presentation regarding the condition of our transportation infrastructure. Attendees were also provided materials and information regarding our aging transportation system, it's condition and need for additional transportation funding. The meetings were staffed by many of SDOT's leadership who answered questions and spoke with citizens about their transportation priorities. At four of the five open house meetings attendees broke into small discussion groups that were facilitated by SDOT staff, City Councilmembers and/or Citizen's Advisory Members. Over 500 citizens attended the five open house meetings.

## Initial Findings

- Vast majority of people felt transportation was “very important” to their day-to-day life.
- Overall, there appeared to be acceptance that our streets, bridges, sidewalks and other parts of our core transportation infrastructure were deteriorating. Majority rated the current condition “fair” to “poor”. People especially seemed to be aware of our deteriorating streets, poor or lack of sidewalks, challenging on and off road bike trails, and insufficient street signage. Vast majority of people felt that improving our transportation system was a priority.
- Participants appeared more divided on why the City’s transportation infrastructure had reached it’s current condition and if an infusion of dedicated funding was the solution to fixing the problem. Most people seemed to believe it was one or combination of the following reasons:
  - 1.) Lack of funding
  - 2.) Mismanagement of current funds
  - 3.) Decision to focus on other priorities from City leadership
  - 4.) Rapid population growth.

## FUNDING

- A number of participants appeared to favor using more than one funding source to pay for the needed improvements. There appeared to be some reluctance to solely use a property tax. By identifying several different funding options people felt it would lower the amount needed from a property tax and more fairly spread out the costs to everyone and not just property owners.
- Throughout the five meetings a consistent theme was to tax the users of Seattle’s transportation system. Several possible user taxes that were mentioned were parking tax, tolls on specific mega projects and the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax. Note: Some of these funding sources are not available to the City under current state law.

## PRIORITIES

- One of the top priorities that came from many of the participants was the need to make **pedestrian safety improvements**. Building more sidewalks, improving intersections and better signage for crosswalks was needed throughout the city. Sidewalks were of particular importance to southeast and northeast.
- **Improving transit service** was another high priority for many of the participants. People continually stressed the need for more options to the car. People wanted to use the bus but expressed frustration with trip time, frequency, indirect routes and poor condition of buses. Many participants wanted to see the City work with Metro and other transit partners to increase speed, reliability and comfort of ride. Several specific improvements that were identified by citizens were bus only lanes, signal prioritization, improved bus stops, better buses and more direct routes to key destinations.
- There were also a number of participants who wanted to see **more investment in bike facilities**. Many comments centered on completing the Urban Trails System and adding more marked, safer on-street bike lanes.

## ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT

- There were a number of questions from participants regarding whether or not the Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall retrofit/rebuild/tunnel would be a part of this possible ballot measure. A number of people turned out to protest the AWV tunnel and advocate for repairing/retrofitting the structure.
- There appeared to be an acceptance that something needed to be done to repair or rebuild the AWV. However, there was widespread disagreement with what was the best option. As a result, a number of people felt it best to just include funding in the ballot measure for the parts of the AWV project that apply to all the options. Avoid contentious elements of the project that are design specific.

- Many participants also expressed concern around the length of AWW construction and access around town. New transit options and streets needed to be made available prior to any major construction. This could include improving SR 519, signal priority, streetcar on Jackson, BRT, etc.