1 Introduction to the Mobility Plan

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Urban Mobility Plan

Briefing Book

Introduction

Well before the Nisqually earthquake shook the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the City of Seattle had adopted a policy that put Seattle on a path toward a dramatically different future for how people access and move through Center City. Seattle's downtown is the heart of the region and a focus of much of the state's economic energy. In the next half century, downtown employment is projected to roughly double, and residency to more than triple. Regardless of the future of the viaduct, environmental concerns, energy concerns and raw growth projections demand a comprehensive systems approach to move people and goods efficiently in downtown's highly constrained rights-of-way.

The Urban Mobility Plan (UMP) is an opportunity to ensure Seattle's Center City will continue to grow in size, economic vitality and accessibility because existing infrastructure is made more efficient, inviting, and accommodating. The Plan also recognizes the importance of the effective movement of goods, protection and support of industry, facilitation of Port activities, and continued attraction of large and small business.

The Nisqually earthquake reinforced the need to look at alternatives to the current Alaskan Way Viaduct, which divides Seattle's waterfront from its downtown core. The goal of the Urban Mobility Plan is to develop one option for removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, consisting of a combination of physical and service-oriented improvements and policy changes designed to optimize the movement of goods and people to and through Center City, without requiring a new elevated viaduct or replacement highway tunnel.

While the Urban Mobility Plan is a project of the City of Seattle, it is being completed with the full cooperation of the King County and the Washington State Departments of Transportation (WSDOT). Many of the concepts developed for the Urban Mobility Plan are likely to be included in other alternatives for viaduct replacement, as all alternatives developed and evaluated through the Collaborative Process for the Central Waterfront (described below) are expected to include multimodal elements and enhancements to the transportation system.

The Urban Mobility Plan and the Collaborative Process for the Central Waterfront

The Collaborative Process is intended to resolve the longstanding needs of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and related projects in a manner capable of being broadly supported and implemented. The intention is to develop a recommended approach by December 2008, with the full collaboration and support of the City of Seattle, King County and State of Washington; for consideration by the appropriate legislative bodies during 2009.

The Urban Mobility Plan will deliver a surface and transit alternative to the Collaborative Process, which will allow this option to be evaluated along with other alternatives. The full range of alternatives considered in the Collaborative Process are likely to include options for replacing the viaduct with another aerial structure, as well as one or more tunnel options. All alternatives will be evaluated using a consistent set of goals and objectives and a consistent set of evaluation measures developed jointly by the three primary agencies involved in the Collaborative Process – Seattle Department of Transportation, King County Department of Transportation and WSDOT.

The Urban Mobility Plan, along with all other alternatives being evaluated through the Collaborative Process, expands the focus beyond highway capacity in the SR 99 corridor to a system of transportation enhancements from Elliott Bay to Lake Washington. All alternatives will be designed around six guiding principles. These principles are as follows:

- **Improve Public Safety.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must improve public safety for current Viaduct users and along the central waterfront.
- **Provide efficient movement of people and goods.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must optimize the ability to move people and goods in and through Seattle in an efficient manner.
- **Maintain or improve downtown Seattle, the region and state economies.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must sustain the city, region and state's economic vitality.
- **Enhance Seattle's waterfront as a place for people.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must augment the Seattle waterfront's reputation as a world-class destination and welcoming front door to the city.
- **Create solutions that are fiscally responsible.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must make wise and efficient use of taxpayer dollars.
- **Foster environmentally sound approaches.** Any solution to the Alaskan Way Viaduct must demonstrate environmental leadership, with a particular emphasis on supporting local, regional and state climate change initiatives.

While the Urban Mobility Plan is a project of the City of Seattle, it is an integral part of the Collaborative Process. Because the Urban Mobility Plan is likely to include a collection of capital projects, transportation policy, and new operating plans for multiple modes, it is important that variations of possible solutions under this alternative be developed quickly and in enough detail that an optimized package can be fairly evaluated against the other viaduct replacement options. Previous efforts to develop surface roadway alternatives did not fully consider multimodal enhancements beyond the SR 99 corridor and did not provide enough information to convince stakeholders and the public that such an alternative could work. The Urban Mobility Plan is intended to deliver the best possible surface and transit alternative to the Collaborative Process for a fair and full assessment.

Project Schedule

The Urban Mobility Plan is currently scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2008. The goal is to develop this plan in time to deliver it to the Collaborative Process for their evaluation along with the other options they may consider in time for a December 2008 recommendation.

A preliminary timeline for the Urban Mobility Plan is attached.

While the Urban Mobility Plan must be developed in a short timeframe, it also must meet the scrutiny of the public. The Urban Mobility Plan team will work in close cooperation with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee established by the Collaborative Process to ensure that all interests are represented and the development of the Urban Mobility Plan is transparent and inclusive of the public.

Introduction to the Briefing Book

This briefing book is designed to provide a consistent set of background information that can provide a framework for considering any transportation alternative. The briefing book provides information about how the transportation system works today, as well as what is known or projected about the future, and how other cities have handled similar challenges.

The Briefing Book is divided into thirteen sections, each organized around a central theme. The sections are :

1. **Introduction** – Describes the Urban Mobility Plan process and its relationship to the Collaborative Process.
2. **Traffic and Congestion** – Provides information about the causes and general solutions to traffic congestion, and provides information about the concept of "complete streets". This section also includes two case studies, looking at how people responded to closures of the Bus Tunnel and closures on I-5 in Seattle.
3. **Transportation in Center City Today** – Provides complete information about the use of all modes in Center City, as well as historic trends for use of I-5 and the viaduct.
4. **What we Know About the Future** – Describes planned transportation investments and looks at anticipated growth and changes in land use that will affect travel behavior.
5. **Surface and Transit Goals, Objectives and Measures** – An initial set of Guiding Principles was presented to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee in January. These principles will be further defined with specific performance measures which will be added to the briefing book in the future.
6. **Case Studies in Urban Freeway Removals** – Looks at seven cities that have either removed or resisted building freeways in their downtown areas and identifies lessons they might offer for Seattle.
7. **Best Practices in Transportation Demand Management** – Documents some of the best practices in Transportation Demand Management, lessons learned that can be applied to Seattle, and provides a basis for understanding how these policies could be part of an overall systems solution. Transportation Demand Management includes a wide range of policy changes designed to provide incentives for reducing travel by single occupant autos.
8. **Best Practices in Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel** – Provides best practices examples of ways to increase the use of non-motorized modes, with specific applications to Seattle. A multimodal city will increasingly rely on pedestrian and bicycle travel, especially for shorter trips within Center City.
9. **Best Practices in Transit** – Looks at best practices in transit and suggests ways to maximize transit use in Seattle. All of the alternatives being considered for replacement of the existing viaduct will include improvements to the transit system.
10. **Best Practices in Freight Movement** – Identifies alternatives being considered in other cities for keeping freight moving in a multi-use constrained area, with lessons learned for Seattle. Moving goods throughout the city and maintaining the vitality of the Port and other industrial uses along the waterfront is a critical component of any alternative.
11. **Economics of Transportation** – Assesses the potential impact of transportation system decisions on the economy of the region.
12. **Urban Ecology** – Provides information relating potential transportation improvements to broader environmental and public health goals for the city and region.
13. **Relationship to Other Projects and Policies** – Summarizes the relationship between the alternatives for the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement and other projects, policies and studies that may impact this decision.

Urban Mobility Plan: Task Schedule

Task	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12	Month 13
Task 1 Public Involvement	Stakeholder Interviews			Stakeholder Advisory Committee →									
				Public Meetings and Workshop									
			City Council Briefings →										
Task 2 Goals, Objectives and Evaluation Measures		Establish Goals and Objectives											
Task 3 Assemble Information & Background Research		Assemble Information & Research											
Task 4 Identify Strategies		Identify Strategies											
Task 5 Develop Alternatives					Develop Alternatives								
Task 6 Assess Alternatives							Assess Alternatives						
Task 7 Refine Alternatives										Refine Alternatives			
Task 8 Refine Safety & Mobility Projects	Refine WSDOT's Safety & Mobility Projects →												
Task 9 Prepare the UMP												Prepare the UMP	