



## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**Greg Nickels**  
Mayor

**Diane Sugimura**  
Director, DPD

**Raymond Gastil**  
Planning Director, DPD

**Mary Johnston**  
Chair

**Andrew Barash**

**Julie Bassuk**

**Graham Black**

**Brendan Connolly**

**John Hoffman**

**Julie Parrett**

**Nathan Polanski**

**Dennis Ryan**

**Norie Sato**

**Guillermo Romano**  
Executive Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Tom Iurino**  
Senior Staff

**June 18, 2009**

Convened 9:00 am  
Adjourned 12:00 pm

### Projects Reviewed

Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement  
Soundway Street Vacation

### Commissioners Present

Brendan Connolly, Chair  
Andrew Barash  
Julie Bassuk  
Graham Black  
John Hoffman  
Nathan Polanski  
Dennis Ryan

### Commissioners Absent

Mary Johnston  
Julie Parrett  
Norie Sato

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano  
Valerie Kinast  
Jeff Arango



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June 18, 2009

**Project:** Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement

**Phase:** Pre-Design

**Last Reviewed:** January 15, 2009; May 21, 2009

**Presenters:** Steve Pearce, SDOT  
John White, WSDOT

**Attendees:** Dave LaClergue, DPD

**Time:** 1.5 hours

(228)

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## ACTION

The Design Commission thanks Steve Pearce of SDOT and John White of WSDOT for the presentation on the south and north portal areas of the tunnel proposed to replace the Alaskan Way viaduct. The Commission understands that the design will soon be “frozen” in order to begin work on the EIS. The phasing of construction a challenge that still needs to be resolved soon. The Commission has the following recommendations and comments at this point in the design:

- The Commission recommends that a concept plan be developed that shows the urban design and landscape vision for the portal areas. This could be instrumental in eliciting public input on the design.
- Commissioners question how safe and “complete” the bike trails will be at the south end, and urge the project team to continue to pay attention to this.
- Commissioners urge the project team to consider the important gateway function of the south portal area to the downtown. Urban designers will be engaged in creating design guidelines for the area and the Commission hopes that they will look at how improvements in the area could create a good transition between the industrial and stadium areas to Pioneer Square and the downtown.
- The Commission urges DPD to play a strong role in being sure that the more intense land use in the portal area will fit in to the urban fabric of South Downtown.
- The Commission recommends that the project team carefully consider a system of signage to clearly differentiate between access to downtown Seattle, and the tunnel.

## Presentation

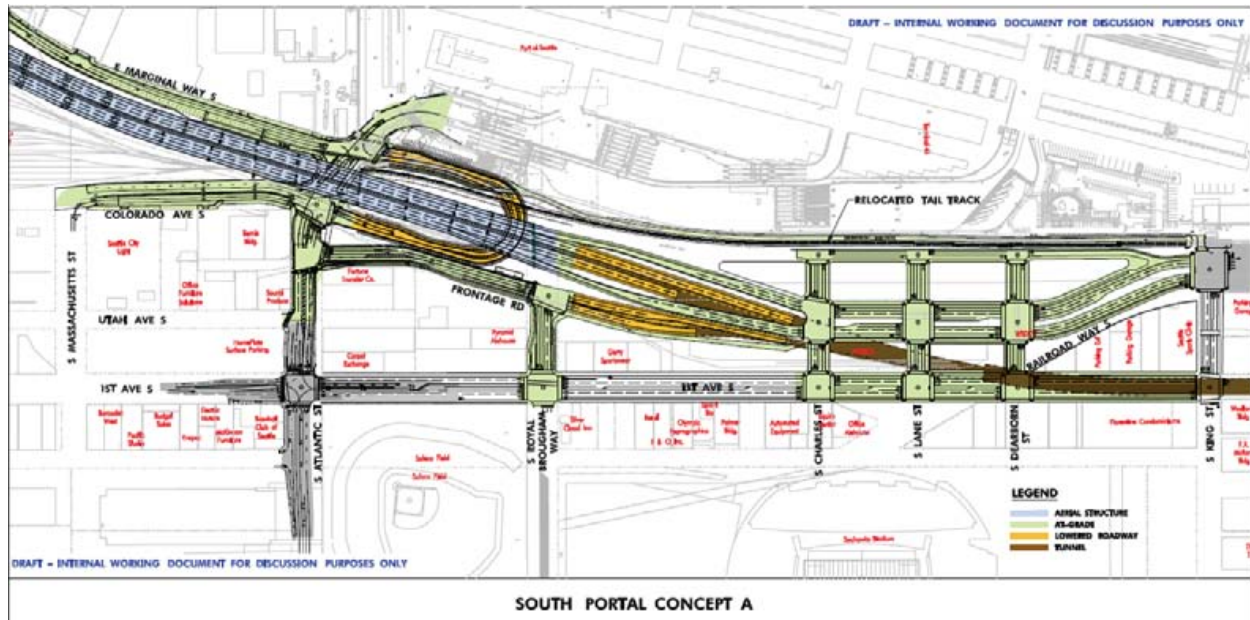
The presentation focused on the north and south portals. Two video simulations were shown of the bored tunnel and central waterfront.

The sequencing of work and timing and phasing of the project has not been finalized.

## South Portal

For the south portal, there were more options for the street design than at the north portal. The preferred option for the deep-bored tunnel goes under 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South and will include two lanes in each direction. The roadway (SR 99) will expand to three lanes in each direction south of the south portal. Tunnel access to and from the north will be provided via a new northbound on-ramp, southbound off-ramp and frontage road with connections to S. Atlantic Street and S. Royal Brougham Way. SR 99 access to and from the south will be provided through new ramps and surface streets to connect with the Alaskan Way surface street. Vehicles accessing downtown from South, or West Seattle will utilize a new northbound off-ramp and southbound on-ramp at a newly constructed

extension of S. Plummer Street. Vehicles could then use either 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South, or the new Alaskan Way surface street to access downtown. Today, vehicles exit the existing elevated viaduct at midtown. A new, elevated connector has been proposed between E. Marginal Way and the surface Alaskan Way.



### South Portal Concept A

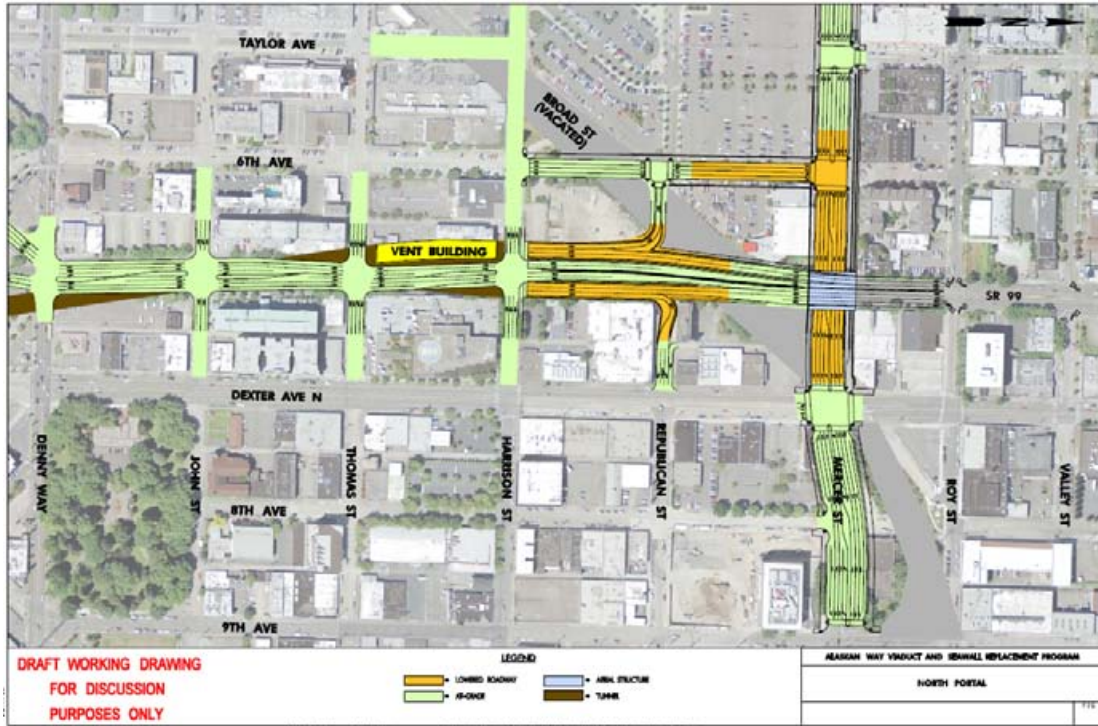
One of the city's objectives is to extend the character and street grid of Pioneer Square to the south. The proposed blocks are the same size as those found in Pioneer Square. There is an ongoing debate whether the blocks should be larger. There also is concern that the smaller blocks will increase the delay for vehicles traveling through the area. Ferry traffic will utilize 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South to access the Alaskan Way surface street and Coleman Dock. The existing Alaskan Way Viaduct connects with 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South via on and off-ramps at Railroad Way South. The existing railroad ramps currently act as a barrier between the Pioneer Square area, and the Stadium area to the south. The railroad ramps will be removed, which creates an opportunity to extend the character of the Pioneer Square area further south.

### North Portal

The north tunnel portal is at Harrison Street. Aurora Avenue (SR 99) access to and from the north will be provided through new ramps and a surface street extension of Aurora Avenue boulevard to be constructed over the tunnel to the south. The new downtown ramps will be placed on the inside, or "left side" of the road, with "through" traffic utilizing the center and outside lanes. The reconstructed two-way Mercer Street will have seven lanes in this section, and will travel beneath SR 99. Mercer Street will reduce to a four-lane section further west. A new 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue extension will be constructed to the north, to connect with Mercer Street. In terms of connections with the tunnel, there will be a southbound on-ramp, and northbound off-ramp at Republican Street, along with access to and from Roy Street. Roy Street will become a two-way street, and intersect with Aurora Avenue, but will be limited to right turns only. Broad Street will be vacated in the area.

The new east-west connections across Aurora Ave. may be developed in the future for bicycle connections. Reconnecting the grid will take some of the pressure off of Mercer St. and Denny Way as vehicular corridors.

A median will likely be incorporated into the new Aurora Ave. surface street along with wider sidewalks, but the final design has not been completed.



North Portal Preferred Alternative

**Urban Character – North Portal Concept B**

**Advantages**

- Creates an urban street grid across, and including Aurora Avenue.
- Creates three new crossing at existing street grade.
- Develops a new surface Aurora Avenue boulevard from Harrison to Denny Streets.
- Enables potential development of surplus properties (needed for construction only).
- Creates enhanced bike and pedestrian connections via the widened Mercer Street underpass

**Disadvantages**

- Would create a narrow sidewalk on the east side of Aurora Avenue north of Harrison Street.
- Aurora Avenue sidewalk would be disrupted at Republican Street.

**Commissioners’ Comments and Questions**

*Where will the vent structures be located?*

We’re still in the early stage of design and we don’t want to deviate substantially from the portal entries. The vent buildings will be integrated with the portal buildings. The buildings will be designed as part of a process that is separate from the design-build contract for the tunnel.

*I want to know what it looks and feels like. This just seems like a lot of concrete. At some point we have to get from the straight-moving city to the Emerald City. How do you make the transition into the Emerald City?*

We’re pretty early on in the design. The aesthetic of the urban design details have been considered throughout, but we don’t have significant details at this point in time. We have just established an architectural and urban design team that has all facets of the project for their consideration. Visual and architectural guidelines will be developed for the portals and street designs. We continue to have Roma Architects from San Francisco as part of the team.

*Given the fact that there is time between now and when the detailed plans will be developed for landscaping and urban design details, I would encourage you to develop a simple concept diagram that can inform the design.*

*How will bicyclists cross Rte. 99 east-west?*

There will be a dedicated bike lane. Bicyclist and pedestrian advocacy groups have been involved in the process throughout.

*Where will ferry traffic cue to wait for the ferry?*

Dedicated turn lanes and cueing storage will be incorporated on Alaskan Way north of King Street to Colman Dock. This issue could also be addressed if the ferry goes to a reservation system.

*I don't think we should leave it up to the transportation experts alone to determine the land uses in the area.*

We have coordinated with DPD on the south downtown work. We are trying to anticipate more intense development and residential development, which are not allowed in the area today.

*Is there anything you'd like to add about the other options?*

Each had a fatal design flaw to create the proper connections.

June 18, 2009

**Project:** Soundway Street and Alley Vacation

**Phase:** Alley and Street Vacation

**Last Reviewed:** N/A

**Presenters:** Chip Nevins, Parks and Recreation

**Attendees:** Donald Harris, Parks and Recreation  
 Beverly Barnett, SDOT  
 Tracy Record, West Seattle Blog  
 Mark Tomkiewicz, Nature Consortium

**Time:** 1 hour

(170)

**ACTION**

The Design Commission thanks Chip Nevins for the presentation and unanimously approves the urban design merit of the proposed Soundway Vacation. The Design Commission also approves the public benefit aspect of the vacation; this vacation extinguishes the public rights for transportation use and the abutting property owner, Parks will establish and protect the public rights for recreational and habitat use; Parks proposes leasing the land to the Nature Consortium for restoration and maintenance.

**Presentation**

The property will be leased to the Nature Consortium and the City needs to vacate the street to Parks and Recreation in order to allow the Nature Consortium to manage the property. The property is approximately 400 acres and is the largest greenbelt in the City. The land was acquired in the 50's to connect the lower Duwamish and eventually to Vashon Island via a bridge. The land also provides a lot of other benefits in terms of trail and neighborhood connections. The Nature Consortium holds weekly work parties to manage the land and it constitutes one of the most important green-spaces in the city. A future discussion will involve whether or not there is enough active recreation amenities.



Project Map

**Public Comments**

Beverly Barnett, SDOT

It's important that everything be looked at and the Design Commission provides an important review in that respect. I wish we'd be able to find some old concept drawings of the transportation project.

## **Commissioners' Comments & Questions**

*From North to South, how long is the greenbelt?*

At least four miles.

*This property is 32 acres in the midst of a 400-acre greenbelt. We're not changing ownership because it's still the City of Seattle, but the administration is changing from SDOT to Parks and Recreation.*

*In terms of the greenbelt providing a filter between the residential areas and the Duwamish, it isn't doing so in terms of stormwater although it could be.*

There are some interest groups trying to address this issue, but a large scale hydrology study of the entire watershed would need to be undertaken before it can be comprehensibly addressed.

*As a West Seattle resident I might characterize it as one of the most underutilized open space resources in the city. I think a more established system of trails would go along way to inviting people to use it and there is a lack of clarity on where to go within the area.*

*The more trails and public access and wayfinding that are incorporated the less desirable it is for transient camps.*

We've had problems with undesirable users in the past along with it being used for dumping, but those are no longer significant issues.