

The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

919 Arctic Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

LPB-101/77

REPORT ON DESIGNATION/REPEALER/120 DAY PROPERTIES

NAME OF PROPERTY:

Lacey V. Murrow Bridge, West Plaza,
Mt. Baker Tunnels, and East Tunnel
Portals.

LOCATION:

Seattle, Washington

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Lacey V. Murrow Bridge #90/25 Lacey
V. Murrow; Structure Identification
#0000KN @ State Milepost 6.1;

and

Mt. Baker Tunnels -

Reverse Bridge #90/24 Mt. Baker Ridge
Tunnels; Structure Identification
#0000KM @ Milepost 3.97, all within
that portion of Highway Department
right-of-way extending from City of
Seattle's eastern limits to western
edge of right-of-way within Tunnels
as of June 24, 1977 (Ref. - Exhibit A
drawings dated May 13, 1971, & Sheets
12, 13, 14, 15).

OWNERS:

State of Washington, Department of Highways.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNATION:

On April 20, 1977, the Landmarks Preservation Board conducted a Public Hearing to consider the nomination of the subject complex of properties as Seattle Landmarks. After reviewing the nomination and hearing testimony (see also Seattle Historic Building Data Sheets, copy attached), the Board voted to recommend designation to the Seattle City

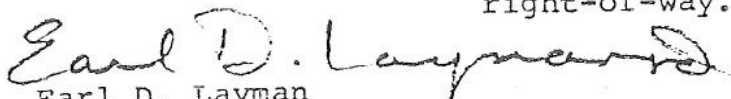
RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNATION (cont.):

Council based on satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 102229:

- Section 6(1) - has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or nation; or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; and
- Section 6(5) - embodies those distinguishing characteristics of architectural type or engineering specimen; and
- Section 6(6) - is the work of a designer whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of Seattle; and
- Section 6(7) - contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; and
- Section 6(8) - by being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif; and
- ~~Section 6(9)~~ - owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or city.

In recommending designation on the basis of the above enumerated criteria, the following features were specified which would require a Certificate of Approval prior to implementation of any proposed work:

- a) any demolitions or major changes, other than repairs in-kind to:
 - a.1 - the Floating Bridge and all its elements extending eastward to the Seattle city limits;
 - b.2 - the West Plaza;
 - c.3 - the Eastern Portals of the two existing Mt. Baker Tunnels;
 - d.4 - that portion of the Mt. Baker Tunnels included within existing Highway Department right-of-way.


Earl D. Layman
City Historic Preservation Officer

Landmarks Preservation Board

Seattle Historic Building Data Sheet

1. Name (common or present and/or historic) Lacey V. Murrow Memorial Bridge, including West Plaza, Mt. Baker Tunnel & East Portal
2. Street and Number N/A Block Lot Year Built 1940
3. Present Owner Washington State Dept. of Highways Present Use Highway Bridge
4. Interim Owner(s) Same as above Interim Use(s) Same as above
5. Original Owner Same as above Original Use Same as above
6. Architect Lacey V. Murrow - Bridge & Plaza Builder Wash. State Highway Dept.
Lloyd Lovegren & James Fitzgerald - Portals
7. Assessed Value: Building Unknown Land Unknown Assessors File No. N/A

8. Classification:

- ☐ Building
☐ Site
☒ Structure
☐ Object
☐ Other

- ☒ Public
☐ Private
☐ Both

- ☒ Occupied
☐ Unoccupied
☐ Preservation work in progress
☐ Threatened by demolition
☐ Unknown

Open to Public:

- ☒ Yes
☐ No
 Hours 24 hours

9. Neighborhood Information:

A. Compatibility With Neighborhood

Structure Yes X No
 Use Yes X No

B. Importance to Neighborhood

Great X
 Moderate
 Minor

C. Architecturally Strong Neighborhood

Comments Structures relate well to surrounding natural environment.

10. Special Research Sources (Be Specific, list name or item and where found)

Senate Resolution 1967-21; State Highway Commission Resolution 1815; Civil Engineering, V.9, no.12, December 1939, pp 703-706.
Draft EIS for I-90. (All above in file.)

11. Cross Street Reference

12. Photos Attached & Photographer

13. Physical Description

A. Style of Architecture

N/A

E. Exterior Deterioration of Original Design

None or little XX

Moderate amount _____

Considerable _____

B. Construction Material

Reinforced Concrete

C. No. of Stories

N/A

F. Architectural worth as Example of Its Style

Exceptional XX

Excellent _____

Good _____

Fair _____

Poor _____

D. Condition

Excellent XX

Good _____

Fair _____

Poor _____

G. Notable Features: (Be specific, i.e., detailing, craftsmanship, proportions, materials, colors, interior, etc. Refer to Guidelines of Landmarks Preservation Board).

Bridge - roadway spanning Lake Washington on series of floating concrete pontoons.

West Plaza - Open landscaped area encompassing interchange between I-90 and 35th Ave. S.

Tunnel Portal - Distinctive low relief design utilizing Northwest Coast Indian motifs.

Mt. Baker Tunnel - Pierces Mt. Baker Ridge.

14. Significance

A. Major Significance

- ☒ Historical
- ☒ Architectural
- ☒ Engineering
- ☐ Cultural
- ☐ Geographical
- ☐ Archaeological

B. Level of Significance

- ☒ National
- ☐ State
- ☐ Community

C. Statement of Significance (Be specific, history, personages, events, etc.)

When completed in 1940, the Lacey V. Murrow Memorial Bridge (so named in 1967) was the longest bridge of its type in the world and was recognized as an engineering marvel. It constitutes a unique solution to a difficult problem: how to span $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of lake, 200 foot depths, and a clay bottom which would cause footing problems for conventional bridge piers. The allowable budget was \$9 million; a conventional bridge in this application would have cost at least \$18 million.

Construction began on December 29, 1938 and the bridge was opened on July 2, 1940. From the east tunnel portal the roadway is carried on elevated fills, viaduct, and truss structure to a point approximately 630 feet off the west lake shore, where transition is made to the floating structure. The latter continues over the west channel of the lake for 6,560 feet to a similar truss, viaduct and fill construction extending eastward from a point 520 feet off the east lake shore. A floating movable pontoon to afford a 200 foot clear waterway is provided for navigation of major ships, and a 200 foot opening with 30 foot vertical clearance is provided near each shore under the fixed steel spans for pleasure craft.

The floating portion of the structure is carried on reinforced concrete pontoons, 59 feet wide and from 117 to 378 feet long, numbering twenty-five. The weight of this structure is some 100,000 tons, making it the largest structure afloat when built (exceeded only by present-day supertankers). The structure is anchored by sixty-four anchors, each weighing 65 tons.

The East Portals of the Mt. Baker Tunnel feature a design which is the result of collaboration between architect Lloyd Lovegren and artist James Fitzgerald. These beautiful and distinctive low relief sculptures utilize Northwest Coast Indian motifs, and are fitting in their relationship to this area. (See attached sheet)

Surveyor Signature

[Handwritten Signature]

Date

04/18/77

Reviewed:

[Handwritten Signature]

Historic Preservation Officer

Date

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The combination of the Mt. Baker Tunnel, with its decorative portals, and the Lacey V. Murrow Memorial Bridge, with its west plaza, afforded the solution to the problem posed by the position of Lake Washington between Seattle and points east. Prior to the construction of this route, it was necessary for motorists to travel many additional miles in order to skirt the north or south ends of the lake.