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Deep bored tunnel to replace Alaskan Way Viaduct

Governor, Executive, Mayor, and the Port agree to viaduct solution

SEATTLE – Gov. Chris Gregoire, King County Executive Ron Sims, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, and Port of Seattle Chief Executive Officer Tay Yoshitani today announced their agreement to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct with a deep bored tunnel under downtown Seattle. The plan also includes investment in improved bus service, east-west city streets, a new seawall, relocated utilities, and an upgraded waterfront.

The agreement is the result of a year-long study of solutions for replacing the central section of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Thousands of hours of technical analysis, public meetings, and letters and emails from the public, interest groups, and local jurisdictions were considered.

“Building a deep bored tunnel will support a strong economy today and in the future,” Gregoire said. “This decision will improve public safety, help ensure Seattle is a 21st Century international city, and generate thousands of new family-wage jobs in the Puget Sound region.”

The bored tunnel will be approximately two miles long and carry four lanes of traffic. Drivers will bypass downtown by entering the tunnel near the sports stadiums in the south and connect to SR 99 north of the existing Battery Street Tunnel.

The total cost of the investments is \$4.24 billion. The state’s commitment of \$2.81 billion will be used for a new state route 99 corridor from the sports stadiums to South Lake Union in a bored tunnel, and restoring land under the existing viaduct to a four-lane surface street.

“There are pivotal moments when great cities make history,” said Nickels. “Today, we come together with a plan that creates more transit. We ensure that our city remains economically competitive. And we reclaim our destiny as a true waterfront city—tearing down an elevated highway and re-connecting Seattle to Elliott Bay.”

The project costs for the city are \$930 million to replace the central seawall and construct a waterfront promenade, relocate utilities, build a streetcar on First Avenue, and improve east-west streets. The county will seek new motor vehicle excise tax authorization from the legislature to fund over \$190 million in transit capital and \$15 million annually in operating expenses. Port CEO Tay Yoshitani will ask the Port Commission to consider a \$300 million investment in the replacement of the south mile of the viaduct and a new east-west connection to the container terminals.

The agreement also includes federal funds toward the Spokane Street Viaduct and Mercer Street projects. These projects provide critical east-west connections for west side neighborhoods. Seattle's waterfront will become a world-class destination when the viaduct is taken down and replaced with a four-lane surface street and open space. The central seawall will also be replaced.

Investments in transit will add 17,000 new riders to King County METRO buses. New service will be provided for west side neighborhoods that use the viaduct to go to downtown Seattle. A new streetcar will be built on First Avenue from Pioneer Square to Seattle Center.

"This agreement will improve our transportation system, improve our quality of life and make an historic shift in the way we view mobility in an age of global warming," said Sims. "There are only four lanes in the bored tunnel and the plan includes a new stable source of transit funding that will help Metro make a vast increase in service, which will mean fewer cars on streets, less pollution and better traffic reliability for business and industry."

The Port of Seattle serves as an international gateway for the region – bringing cargo in and sending Washington goods to the world," said Yoshitani. "Our cargo, cruise, fishing and industrial facilities – and the thousands of jobs they support – need a transportation network that keeps people and goods moving."

Construction of a bored tunnel will begin in 2011 and be open to drivers in 2015. Added transit service will begin next year, and the Spokane St. and Mercer St. projects will be completed by 2012. It is expected this proposal will establish 10,000 jobs in a ten year span.

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