

# Potential Questions

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## General

### How does the tunnel provide enough capacity with only four lanes?

- 85,000 vehicles will use the tunnel to bypass downtown when it opens in 2015 and it can accommodate more vehicles. As a comparison, the four-lane SR 520 carries 110,000 vehicles.
- 63,000 vehicles bypass downtown through the Battery Street Tunnel today.
- 25,000 vehicles will use the new four lane street on the waterfront, which will connect to Elliott and Western avenues.
- Future growth will be accommodated through transit investments (17,000 new riders) and city street improvements.

### How will the public be involved in access and mobility decisions for the bored tunnel?

- Plan to continue our intensive public outreach program.
- Last year had 16 meetings with the stakeholder advisory committee.
- By the end of March, will have briefed over 70 groups since January 13 and held two public meetings.
- Will be forming three working groups to help with access and mobility as well as construction and design issues at the north portal, south portal, and central waterfront. The freight and Northwest Seattle communities will be well represented on these groups.
- There will also be the required public comment periods on the Draft and Final EIS.

### Will a six-lane tunnel be evaluated in the EIS?

- A six-lane tunnel would need to be X feet in diameter. No other tunnel of that size has been built in the world and would be beyond current technology. This would increase the construction risks and thus the costs of the tunnel.

## Northwest Seattle

### How long will it take a driver to get from Ballard to SODO?

- It takes drivers approximately 13 minutes during the morning peak to get from Ballard to SODO taking 15<sup>th</sup> to Elliott to the viaduct.
- The trip time will increase by 5.5 minutes during the morning peak for this same trip on the new four-lane Alaskan Way.
- The trip time will increase by four minutes during the morning peak if this trip taking 15<sup>th</sup> to Mercer to the SR 99 bored tunnel.
- These travel times will lengthen regardless of what happens to the viaduct as the city and region grows.

### How much longer will it take to get to the airport from Ballard?

- Trips between Ballard and SeaTac Airport will increase by four to 5.5 minutes depending on the route (1.5 minutes longer is on the waterfront) compared to today’s travel times.
- If drivers take the waterfront, they’ll be able to get on SR 99 near the stadium area on a new ramp.
- That travel time will lengthen regardless of what happens to the viaduct as the city and region grows.

**Will a spur tunnel to Ballard be evaluated in the EIS?**

- A spur tunnel to Ballard has been investigated by the project team and is expected to cost at least \$750 million.
- In addition, adding a spur to the bored tunnel will greatly increase the construction risks and lengthen construction.

**How does two-way Mercer help the bored tunnel?**

- A new six-lane underpass under Aurora Avenue will help drivers get to and from the bored tunnel.

**Will there be access to downtown at Denny Way?**

- Yes, there will be access into downtown at Denny, similar to today.

**How will vehicles from Northwest Seattle access the bored tunnel?**

- Via Aurora Avenue North near Mercer Street (all directions).
- There will be new east-west connections over SR 99 between Mercer Street and Denny Way that will improve circulation in the area, relieving pressure on Mercer and Denny.

**How will volumes change on city streets in Northwest Seattle with the bored tunnel compared to what it would have been if the viaduct was still in place?**

- Streets such as Market, N 39<sup>th</sup>, N 46<sup>th</sup>, Nickerson, and Westlake might increase between 2% to 7% on a daily basis, and about this same range during the peaks. This level of daily change is not that significant and reinforces that most trips are staying in the 15th/Elliott corridor to the waterfront or to Denny or Mercer to get to the bored tunnel and I-5.

**How will trips on Alaskan Way get through event traffic?**

- Traffic during events will be directed by police officers as it occurs today. Traffic can be managed to provide priority for through trips from Alaskan Way going to SR 99.

**If volumes increase on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, how will they get through the new traffic generated by the cruise ship terminal at Terminals 90 and 91?**

- We don’t expect total volumes on 15<sup>th</sup> Ave/Elliott Ave (between Denny and Magnolia bridge) to materially change with the bored tunnel.
- Port of Seattle environmental analysis regarding cruise ship activities at Smith Cove concluded that most of the traffic would occur in off-peak hours and did not identify a need for transportation mitigation on Elliott and Western avenues.
- Central waterfront analysis that led to bored tunnel hybrid decision included a level of peak hour traffic generation in this area that would be above that reported for the cruise ship activity, thereby accounting for it plus other nearby growth.

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Deleted: <#>No change on N. 46<sup>th</sup> Street east or west of Fremont Ave. (access to Aurora at 45th)¶  
 <#>17 percent increase on Leary Way east of 15<sup>th</sup>¶  
 <#>19 percent increase on N. 39<sup>th</sup> Street west of Phinney¶  
 <#>5 percent increase on Fremont Way southeast of Fremont Ave. N.¶  
 <#>2 percent increase on Fremont Bridge¶  
 <#>11 percent more on W Nickerson St. west of 13<sup>th</sup> Ave W¶  
 <#>3 percent more on W. Nickerson St. west of 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave W¶  
 <#>4 percent more on Westlake Ave southeast of Nickerson St.¶  
 <#>14 percent more on Dexter Ave. south of Westlake Ave. N.¶

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## Freight

### Will the connection between Elliott and Western and the waterfront work for freight?

- Today the Elliott and Western ramps experience backups during peak travel times due to conflicts with pedestrians and parking, as well as the curb bulb at the Elliott on-ramp.
- There will be a four-lane grade separated crossing over the railroad tracks between the waterfront and Elliott and Western. The grade of this crossing will be six percent.
- The streets will be controlled by signals to reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts and signals can be timed to prioritize through trips.

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### How can we ensure that Alaskan Way will prioritize freight?

- There will be 13 signals on Alaskan Way between Pine Street and S. King Street.
- These signals will be operated so that through traffic moves along the waterfront efficiently.

### What happens to the vehicles carrying hazardous or combustible materials?

- Most freight will be able to use the SR 99 tunnel.
- Vehicles hauling hazardous or combustible materials will be prohibited from the tunnel, similar to today's restrictions in the Battery Street Tunnel and on the viaduct during peak travel times.
- These vehicles will take I-5 or Alaskan Way as they do today. The Mercer and Spokane projects will improve connections from I-5.
- Flammable restrictions on I-5 do occur - on the order of a half dozen times each year. The total time of restrictions was the equivalent of seven days over the past two years. This means flammable loads were able to travel freely under the I-5 convention center 99 percent of the time

### What will the grades be in the tunnel?

- The entrances to the bored tunnel will be at five percent grade. Recent feedback from construction experts has highlighted several opportunities for reducing this grade.
- The tunnel ramps are expected to have grades between five and seven percent, which is within WSDOT design guidelines. For comparison, the viaduct's existing southbound on-ramp from Elliott Avenue is a 6.3 percent upgrade, and the northbound on-ramp from First Avenue is a six percent upgrade.

### Will car carriers be allowed in the bored tunnel?

- Car carriers do not fall within the category of restricted cargo as listed in the City of Seattle ordinance.

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### How will the Nickerson "road diet" affect freight?

- We understand that the City of Seattle has performed a traffic analysis of the proposed change and that it would not substantially change levels of service.
- The city's plan creates a continuous left turn lane that should decrease collisions, thereby keeping traffic moving for everyone.

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**Will tolling the tunnel put more traffic on Alaskan Way, making it a less reliable through route for freight?**

- We have more work to do on analyzing how tolls might be used on the bored tunnel, both in terms of how much revenue it might generate as well as how it could change some travel behavior.
- As you are aware from our briefings of SR 520 toll analyses, there is a relationship between generating revenue and the level of diversion off a tolled roadway, however it is possible to apply tolls in a manner that minimizes diversion.

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## **West Seattle**

**How long will it take a driver to get from West Seattle to downtown?**

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