
From: Grotefendt, Amy (Consultant)
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2009 2:49 PM
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Cc: Paananen, Ron; White, John; Van Ness, Kristy (Consultant); Lenz, KaDeena (Consultant)
Subject: FW: AWV Tunnel Q & A - Response to Brightwater Tunnel Sinkhole

FYI -- Feel copy if you get any questions...

From: Hicks, Elissa **On Behalf Of** Auyoung, Dillon
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2009 2:46 PM
To: Rep. Alex Wood; Rep. Brad Klippert; Rep. Brendan Williams; Rep. Christine Rolfes; Rep. Dan Kristiansen; Rep. Dan Roach; Rep. Dave Upthegrove; Rep. Dean Takko; Rep. Deb Wallace; Rep. Deborah Eddy; Rep. Dennis Flannigan ; Rep. Doug Ericksen; Rep. Fred Finn; Rep. Geoff Simpson; Rep. Jaime Herrera; Rep. Jay Rodne; Rep. Jeff Morris; Rep. Jim Moeller; Rep. John Driscoll; Rep. Judy Clibborn (clibborn.judy@leg.wa.gov); Rep. Larry Springer; Rep. Marko Lias; Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson; Rep. Matthew Shea; Rep. Mike Armstrong; Rep. Mike Sells; Rep. Norm Johnson; Rep. Tom Campbell; Becker Sen. Randi (becker.randi@leg.wa.gov); Haugen, Mary Margaret (haugen.marymargaret@leg.wa.gov) ; Sen. Chris Marr; Sen. Claudia Kauffman; Sen. Curtis King; Sen. Dan Swecker; Sen. Derek Kilmer; Sen. Don Benton; Sen. Fred Jarrett; Sen. Jean Berkey; Sen. Jerome Delvin; Sen. Jim Kastama; Sen. Ken Jacobsen; Sen. Kevin Ranker; Sen. Tim Sheldon; Sen. Tracey Eide; Armstrong Rep. Mike; Campbell Rep. Tom; Clibborn Rep. Judy; Dickerson Rep. Mary Lou; Driscoll Rep. John; Eddy Rep. Deb; Ericksen Rep. Doug; Finn Rep. Fred; Flannigan Rep. Dennis; Herrera Rep. Jamie; Johnson Rep. Norm; Klippert Rep. Brad; Kristiansen Rep. Dan; Lias Rep. Marko; Moeller Rep. Jim; Morris Rep. Jeff; Roach Rep. Dan; Rodne Rep. Jay; Rolfes Rep. Christine; Sells Rep. Mike; Shea Rep. Matt; Simpson Rep. Geoff; Springer Rep. Larry; Takko Rep. Dean; Upthegrove Rep. Dave; Wallace Rep. Deb; Williams Rep. Brendan; Wood Rep. Alex; Becker Sen. Randi; Benton Sen. Don; Berkey Sen. Jean; Delvin Sen. Jerome; Eide Sen. Tracey; Gattman, Nova; Jacobsen Sen. Ken; Jarrett Sen. Fred; Kastama Sen. Jim; Kauffman Sen. Claudia; Kilmer Sen. Derek; King Sen. Curtis; Marr Sen. Chris; Ranker Sen. Kevin; Sheldon Sen. Tim; Swecker Sen. Dan
Cc: Balasbas, Jay; Berntsen, Teresa; Fleckenstein, Mary; 'Leathers, Kathryn'; Long, Jerry; Matteson, Mark; Munnecke, David; Parker, Christie; Redfield, Beth; Richards, Jim; Baumgardt, Janice; Cecil, Amanda; 'Dory Nicpon'; Gamble, Hayley; 'Malkin, Wendy'; 'Margaret Shepherd'; Simpson, Kelly; 'Steve Breaux'; Tom Goff (goff.tom@leg.wa.gov); Ward, David; Zukowski, Natalie; 'David Forte'; 'Gene Baxstrom'; 'Paul Neal'; 'Sonia Plasencia'; Ziegler, Jennifer; Dye, Dave; Hammond, Paula; Reinmuth, Steve; Auyoung, Dillon; Leiste, Willy; Grotefendt, Amy (Consultant)
Subject: AWV Tunnel Q & A - Response to Brightwater Tunnel Sinkhole

Dear Senate and House Transportation Committee Members:

You may have read the story in this morning's *Seattle Times* about a sinkhole that appeared above the Brightwater conveyance tunnel yesterday. There was also an incident last week in Cologne, Germany where a shaft being constructed next to an existing bored tunnel caused excessive ground movement and a nearby building to collapse.

We are receiving inquiries from the media and others about whether these incidents affect our plans for the SR 99 bored tunnel. The short answer is no, we do not believe these incidents materially affect WSDOT's plans to move forward with the tunnel project. However, safety is our top priority and we take any news of problems during construction seriously. We will gather information regarding each of these incidents over the coming weeks and will work with the civil engineering community to incorporate lessons learned into the bored tunnel design and construction plans.

Below are answers to the questions we are sharing with others. We hope you find them helpful. I am available at 360-705-7773 to answer any other questions you may have.

Sincerely,

David L. Dye
Deputy Transportation Secretary

Could there be sink holes or building collapses during construction of the SR 99 bored tunnel?

Understanding soil conditions is a high priority for building a bored tunnel under downtown Seattle. We have been and will continue to analyze soil conditions to help inform our design and construction plans. More extensive soils exploration work, beginning next week, will help us pinpoint potential soils challenges and allow us to design construction approaches that will address them. We will drill test holes up to 300 feet deep that will tell us what the soils are like where the tunnel will be constructed. We will also conduct extensive monitoring during construction, which will provide real-time information about how the soils are performing that will allow us to make changes to tunnel boring and grouting as conditions evolve.

What is WSDOT doing to ensure there aren't problems during construction?

Safety is the top priority for WSDOT during any construction project and the agency has an excellent safety record. WSDOT maintains a strong oversight role before, during, and after construction to review and monitor safety designs and construction methods. For example, we made a decision earlier this year to proceed with a single bore tunnel design rather than a twin bore tunnel. The single bore tunnel is inherently less risky, because cross connections required in the twin bore design are not required, which virtually eliminates the kind of failure experienced recently in Germany. We are also meeting with national and international tunnel experts to evaluate the current plans and seek input on how best to construct the tunnel. These and other experts will be engaged throughout the design and construction oversight process to help ensure that our plans and construction management approaches are state of the art, and incorporate lessons learned from tunnel projects around the world.

Is building a bored tunnel more risky than building a new viaduct?

Building a bored tunnel is no more risky than building a new viaduct and some experts argue that building underground is less risky. Large highway or rail tunnels are found in many countries, including the U.S., Canada, U.K., Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Russia, Greece, Turkey, India, China, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The tunneling machine technology is well established, a majority of the tunnel will be constructed deep underneath downtown Seattle in glacial soils, and disruptions at the surface level will be concentrated at the south and north portals in relatively open areas. There are several recent examples of successful tunnel construction in the Puget Sound area, including Sound Transit's Beacon Hill light rail tunnel and the I-90 Mount Baker tunnel. In contrast a new viaduct would have significant environmental and business impacts on the waterfront during construction. Also, the foundations of the new viaduct would be in more challenging geotechnical conditions, and construction would take several years longer – leading to more risks related to increased scope and cost escalation.