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**From:** Smith, Helena Kennedy  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 21, 2009 9:09 AM  
**To:** Greco, Theresa; Paananen, Ron  
**Subject:** RE: Seattle Times - Ramsey

Somebody should sit down right away and explain the funding and the roles of state compared to city and county. The state's funding is already there, so another vote is extraneous. On the city/county pieces, he has more of a point, since they're the ones who plan to raise taxes.

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**From:** Greco, Theresa  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2009 5:10 PM  
**To:** Smith, Helena Kennedy  
**Subject:** FW: Seattle Times - Ramsey

FYI - see end of document.

Theresa

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**From:** Van Ness, Kristy (Consultant)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2009 4:38 PM  
**To:** Paananen, Ron; White, John; Greco, Theresa; Preedy, Matt; Dye, Dave  
**Cc:** Grotefendt, Amy (Consultant); Lenz, KaDeena (Consultant)  
**Subject:** Seattle Times - Ramsey

Just posted online:

[http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/opinion/2008651131\\_opinb21ramsey.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/opinion/2008651131_opinb21ramsey.html)

## Viaduct's tunnel proposal depends on taxpayers who already said no

Should voters get a say in the proposed Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement — a deep-bored tunnel and surface street and transit improvements? Yes, says Seattle Times columnist Bruce Ramsey, but which ones? Seattle utility ratepayers, vehicle owners and parking-lot users; King County property owners and vehicle owners; state taxpayers; federal taxpayers; and waterfront property owners — and maybe toll payers — will pay their share.

By [Bruce Ramsey](#)

Seattle Times editorial columnist

I asked Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels if voters would have to ratify the agreement between him, King County Executive Ron Sims and Gov. Christine Gregoire to replace Seattle's Alaskan Way Viaduct. "I certainly hope not," Nickels said. "I think we're at a time when we need to make a decision."

Perhaps so. It is also what leaders say when they get what they want.

Their agreement would extend a tradition begun in the 1990s with the Mariner stadium. The stadium was offered to the people, they voted it down and politicians built it anyway. The ostensible reason for obstructing an election was that the team was leaving town. The real reason was that the leaders had got what they wanted, and didn't want to be overruled.

Recall that the viaduct vote of March 13, 2007, was not because leaders conceded the people of Seattle's right to decide. It was because leaders couldn't decide. Seattle politicians wanted a tunnel and the governor would pay only for an elevated highway. Seattle voted 55 percent against the elevated highway — but 70 percent against the tunnel.

Will leaders ignore that big *no* on the tunnel? Sure. They agree that other politicians have the right to say no: members of the Legislature, the Port of Seattle Commission and the Metropolitan King County Council. Waterfront property owners will have the right to turn down a Local Improvement District. Those steps can't be avoided.

A public vote can — or maybe not, because a Seattle citizen has filed a ballot initiative. So the thing might get on the ballot anyway, but only through the initiative process.

It could be argued, and with some justification, that the public is ignorant of the real issues of viaducts, tunnels and transit, and should not make such decisions. Some of the public's ideas — indeed, some of leaders' ideas — seem far-fetched.

Backers of the ballot initiative favor a cable-stay suspension bridge all along the central waterfront. House Speaker Frank Chopp wants to build a new viaduct encased in a mile-long office and retail building with a rooftop park for bikers and joggers.

For more than a year, Seattle's Discovery Institute has been trying to break its proposal out of this fanciful pack. It was Discovery — the proponents of Intelligent Design — who promoted the deep-bored tunnel by bringing in experts from Europe. This agreement is a feather in Discovery's cap.

Clearly, the three leaders got what they wanted. Sims' priority was transit, and he got money for that. Nickels' was urban design, meaning no more viaduct, and he got that. Both were drawn to the plan to run Highway 99 on city streets, which would open up views but congeal traffic with 27 stoplights.

Gregoire could not accept the long-run blockage of traffic through Seattle — and good for her. This is, after all, a plan for a major state highway.

Gregoire agreed that the state will pay for the full cost of the tunnel, including overruns. For Seattle taxpayers, cost-overrun protection is "a significant victory," wrote Seattle Councilmember Nick Licata. In big road projects, Licata has consistently been the taxpayers' most vocal defender. He says the new plan is "probably an acceptable design, but it's going to be a tremendous tax burden."

The financing breaks down this way: Seattle utility ratepayers, vehicle owners and parking-lot users will pay 12 percent of the cost; King County property owners and vehicle owners, 11 percent; state taxpayers, 61 percent; federal taxpayers, 8 percent; waterfront property owners, 7 percent.

A toll is not included in this, though Gregoire says, "I absolutely think there will be a toll." Its share of the total will be small.

And so: Should citizens get a vote? Yes, certainly. But which ones?