

City of Burien Councilmembers:

At the Burien City Council meeting on March 23, questions and concerns were raised regarding the capacity of the proposed SR 99 bored tunnel. We hope that the information below sheds some light on this issue and better describes the features of the bored tunnel hybrid alternative, which was recommended by the Governor, King County Executive and Seattle Mayor.

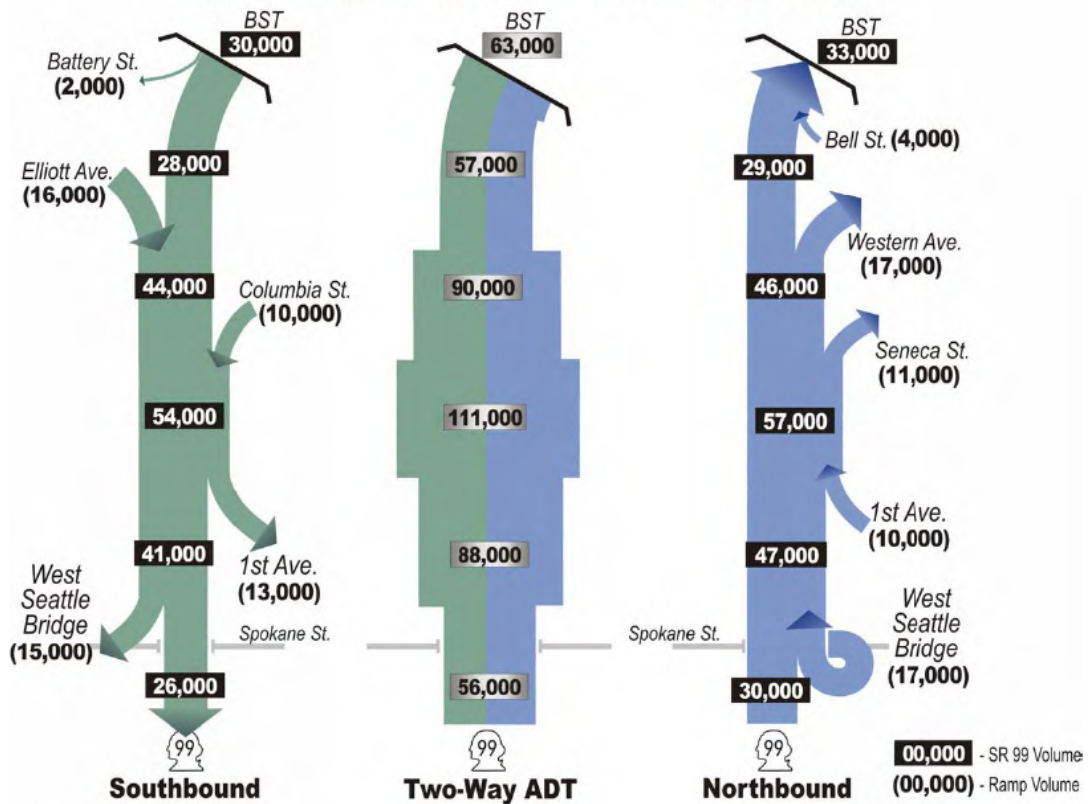
The viaduct currently carries approximately 110,000 vehicles per day. Of this amount, 63,000 vehicles are trips going through downtown Seattle. The bored tunnel is expected to carry 85,000 vehicles each day through downtown when it opens in 2015, and will have capacity to accommodate more as the region grows. This will allow for an additional 20,000 cars to make through trips on the day of opening in 2015 and will exceed the number of vehicles that currently travel through downtown on the viaduct and either exit at the Elliott and Western ramps (34,000) or travel through Battery Street Tunnel (63,000)

In addition, we anticipate 25,000 vehicles will use the new four-lane Alaskan Way boulevard when it opens. We will build a connection from the new Alaskan Way to Elliott and Western avenues, and this connection will be two lanes in each direction, instead of the single-lane ramps that exist today. The new Alaskan Way will be four lanes (two lanes each way) plus turn lanes between Pike and Columbia streets. South of Columbia Street, Alaskan Way will expand to six lanes to accommodate ferry traffic at Colman Dock. When drivers get to the stadium area, they will be able to access southbound SR 99 at new ramps that allow access on and off SR 99 at approximately S. Royal Brougham Way. We anticipate that trips on the waterfront will be a mix of through and downtown trips, depending on their final destination.

Once the bored tunnel is finished, drivers going into downtown will be able to access the street grid at either end of the tunnel and then choose among a variety of routes to connect to their destination. In addition, travelers will have a variety of transit options, including additional peak-period service to downtown.

The graphic below shows how drivers currently use the viaduct. It shows the numbers of cars that enter and exit at given ramps along the central waterfront and a total number of vehicle counts in the middle.

Alaskan Way Viaduct SR 99 - 2008 Daily Traffic



In addition to maintaining and increasing capacity, the bored tunnel hybrid alternative will:

- Minimize construction impacts to businesses and the traveling public. An advantage of the bored tunnel is that it allows us the option of building the new corridor while SR 99 remains open to traffic.
- Provide more travel choices and improve access and mobility to and through downtown Seattle. Enhanced RapidRide service, new peak period transit service and improved east-west Mercer and Spokane streets will provide new and more reliable ways to get to downtown Seattle and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Create a world-class destination on Seattle’s waterfront for residents and visitors. Moving SR 99 underground will improve the waterfront’s contribution to the economy; reconnect downtown with the natural environment in Elliott Bay; and create an enjoyable place for people to live, work and play.

Selecting the bored tunnel as a recommended alternative is a major milestone for the project, but there is still a lot of work to do. We will continue an environmental process on the bored tunnel that invites additional public comment. This process will help us build a better project.