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## Votes are in: PSBJ readers prefer deep-bore tunnel

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle)

Last week in this space, we invited Puget Sound Business Journal readers to tell us what they think is the best solution for replacing the ailing Alaskan Way Viaduct. Many of you generously provided your informed business perspectives, and it turns out most prefer the deep-bore tunnel. Since then, elected leaders reached consensus and weighed in as well. Gov. Chris Gregoire, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and King County Executive Ron Sims signed a deal endorsing a deep-bore tunnel set back from the waterfront.

Now, as the issue goes to the Legislature for funding, your views are even more important. So we have printed them below and at the bottom of the facing page. We also are publishing comments you made regarding the tunnel decision, and a piece by House Speaker Frank Chopp, D-Seattle, who has been the chief proponent of a replacement elevated structure, a so-called "Choppaduct."

Before the governor's deal, we had asked Chopp to write about his goals for the current, budget-crisis legislative session. When we asked for his views on the viaduct decision, he offered a statement but declined to include it as part of his opinion piece. We've included the statement to give some idea as to his thinking on the issue.

– ALWYN SCOTT, Managing Editor

Thank you for opening up the subject. After spending time on committees over the last few years and hearing every possible replacement idea, I think we all have to consider the long-term impacts of the ultimate replacement choice. The rebuild on a viaduct structure on the waterfront does nothing toward improving the situation all the while causing massive traffic problems for years during the tear-down of the old viaduct and construction of the new one.

The second possible plan, the rerouting of traffic on surface streets and Interstate 5, will immediately develop a gridlock and that will only get worse year by year. It will not drive most to public transportation.

The only real, long-term answer is the deep-bore tunnel which can be constructed while the old viaduct structure is maintained and in service. Then, once opened, 70 percent of the 110,000 traffic count per day will be moved to the tunnel, the balance can be properly handled with

surface street and I-5 improvements and the old viaduct can be removed to bring about a wonderful improvement to our waterfront.

Yes, there are costs to be dealt with, but any good, long-term project requires investment.

**Roger Ottenbach**

**Seattle**

I am overjoyed that the option of a bored tunnel is back on the table. I feel most passionately that the deep-bore tunnel is the right way to go. Countless future generations will bless our foresight and willingness to make this investment in the beauty, safety and grace of Washington state's gateway to the world.

**Roy A. Hamrick**

**Seattle**

At last someone is applying some rational thinking to this issue. I have been unable to figure out how either businesses or average citizens of Seattle were going to deal with the loss of use of a major arterial for two to five years.

Bored tunnels either under First Avenue or further east under Fifth/Sixth will give us the capacity we need, as opposed to surface streets with multiple stoplights or a lesser capacity elevated structure.

Gentlemen, start your borers!

**P. Gerry Maurer**

**Seattle**

Here is a message to Rep. Frank Chopp. With regard to mass transit in Puget Sound:

Some people have suggested that tunnels cannot be built under Seattle because of earthquakes and geology. However, there continues to be a 100-year-old mile-long active tunnel underneath downtown Seattle, as you can see from [HistoryLink.org](http://HistoryLink.org). Please consider building underground high speed mass transit in the form of subways and tunnels.

**Kelly Charlton**

**Seattle**

The only solution that will avoid years of construction disruption and economic consequences is a deep-bore tunnel. Avoiding these disruption costs together with a tunnel life cycle twice as long as an aboveground solution makes the tunnel the best buy for taxpayers.

**John Blackman**

**Seattle**

The bored tunnel is the preferred solution hands down, because it:

- most convincingly reconnects the city and pedestrians to the waterfront.
- preserves capacity during construction.

- maintains through-capacity upon completion.
- cost premium acceptable over long term of overall city betterment.

### **Jud Marquardt**

#### **Seattle**

I've been a subscriber to the PSBJ since I started investing in King County apartment properties in 1986. The debate about what to do with the Alaskan Way Viaduct has an obvious solution — replace the viaduct with a surface boulevard with light rail public transit in the median strip.

The Embarcadero in San Francisco was marred by an elevated freeway for decades until that freeway was damaged in our 1989 earthquake and subsequently torn down. San Francisco replaced that elevated freeway with a grand boulevard with light rail public transit in the median strip. The Embarcadero redevelopment project has been very successful from a traffic standpoint and has significantly increased real estate values, new real estate development, and property taxes in the area surrounding the Embarcadero.

### **Phil Johnson**

#### **San Francisco**

#### **Responses from the web**

Editor's note: Here are some responses to news of the deal as posted by Business Journal readers on the website.

Thank goodness, this is wonderful news! Seattle will finally take back its waterfront and work towards their goal of being a world class city. As far as taxes go, I hope they target the adjacent increased property values and retail traffic they will create. In any event, it is great vision and forethought to lock in these plans while construction costs are down, labor is plentiful, and people need to see leadership on progress. Bravo to Washington state! Decisions like this make me remember why our family has four generations living here!

#### **Just what is needed ... another "Big Dig."**

How many billions of dollars in cost overruns will occur and who will pay for these overruns (not a trick question)?

This region needs the State Route 99 corridor to move commercial and other essential traffic quickly. The surface option would not do that. If Seattle, King County and the feds can finance the incremental cost of a tunnel, and Seattle then comes on board rather than obstructing a viaduct rebuild, it's a win-win.

Great, now we just have to (1) make sure the land opened up above is reserved for public use, not for real estate development. (2) make sure that we don't spend years and millions of dollars on consultants. Bigger and longer tunnels have been done all over the world in the past four decades, a lot of knowledge and technology are available to start the job and get it done.

Bravo! This is the only sane solution. The other solutions would have been regretted by the

time they're completed. The tunnel is the only solution to preserve the continuity between downtown and the waterfront. The waterfront is still the most marketable element of our tourism.

I cannot honestly understand how any intelligent person can agree that replacing a six-lane structure with a four-lane structure is going to reduce traffic. What worries me is the cost of the new "funnel," and how they expect to have us pay for it during these very tough economic times.

I'll miss my waterfront views of the Sound while driving on the viaduct. Every person I pick up from the airport, I'd take that route instead of Interstate 5.

Another bow to big oil and Detroit, against the will of the people and despite the lack of funds to support this folly. As I recall, we voted "No!" to a tunnel and "Hell, No!" to a rebuild.

For what may be the wrong reasons, they are actually choosing the right solution. For too long in Seattle, imaginative projects have been defeated by short-term (cost only) solutions. This gives Seattle the opportunity to eliminate surface traffic, regain pedestrian access to the waterfront, regain waterfront views and allow the real estate and the main business and retail core to benefit from Seattle finally developing a world class waterfront just minutes from downtown. It is a jewel other cities would die for. Please make it happen and give us an eco-friendly waterfront city of the 21st century!

How many times do we have to vote against this? Does our vote not count? This has happened more than once and why put it on the ballot if you do not or won't accept the consequences!