

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle) - January 19, 2009  
<http://seattle.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2009/01/19/editorial1.html>



Friday, January 16, 2009

## Deep-bore tunnel promises a vibrant future for Seattle's waterfront

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle) - by [Alwyn Scott](#) Managing Editor

A brighter future for Seattle's waterfront took a dramatic step forward this week, as three key leaders endorsed a plan to use a deep-bore tunnel to replace the crippled Alaskan Way Viaduct.

Gov. Chris Gregoire, King County Executive Ron Sims and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels signed a bold deal endorsing the tunnel as an alternative to a replacement viaduct.

The agreement caps more than a year of study by a committee of 29 stakeholders, including neighborhood groups, environmentalists and business leaders. Using a range of guiding principles, the group evaluated eight options and in early December recommended that a bored tunnel be at least part of any solution.

We applaud the stakeholders group for sticking to its consensus, even when Sims and Nickels narrowed the options to two, excluding a tunnel. Tayloe Washburn, chair of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and a land-use attorney at Seattle law firm Foster Pepper, played a central role in building consensus. Gov. Gregoire also deserves praise for deferring a decision until she had studied the tunnel, and working to forge a compromise around that plan, which offers a future with cleaner, quieter downtown waterfront, with added capacity and with less construction disruption.

We hope the strong consensus will be enough to topple the proposed "Choppaduct" — a massive, multistory elevated structure that would include many lanes of traffic, retail space and a park on top.

Championed by state House Speaker Frank Chopp, this big viaduct is ill conceived. One can imagine the sorts of fine dining and retail establishments that would want heavy traffic rumbling overhead, shaking the chandeliers. Similarly, a rooftop park divided from the water by several stories of traffic is a non-starter. Unlike, say, the Brooklyn Heights promenade in New York, or the Victor Steinbrueck Park at Pike Place Market, the Choppaduct wouldn't connect to surface streets. In fact, you'd have to climb stairs to get there.

Compared to the proposed Choppaduct, the existing viaduct seems downright airy, in a mid-1950s sort of way.

So far, Speaker Chopp is holding out on giving his support to the tunnel, saying he needs to do

more homework. With all due respect, we consider him a little late to class — and his homework is overdue. The idea of a deep-bore tunnel has been part of the discussion for months. The Cascadia Center held an international conference on tunneling here in 2007. Where has the Speaker been?

We expect the Legislature to carefully vet the cost estimates and consider the criteria. But we expect that they, too, will make an informed analysis of this crucial decision — and come to the right decision in favor of a deep-bore tunnel.

*ascott@bizjournals.com | 206.876.5432*

*All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.*