

## Construction

---

Adjust font size: [+](#) [-](#)

March 25, 2009

### Port OKs \$50.7M for East Marginal project

By [MARGIE SLOVAN](#)  
Journal Staff Reporter

After years of delays, the East Marginal Way grade separation project is finally a go.

The Seattle Port Commission voted yesterday to build the \$50.7 million project, which will make it much easier for freight traffic to get in and out of the port's container yards at Terminal 5 and Terminal 18.

“Essentially what we're talking about here is a grade separation over the railroad tracks, so going north and south on East Marginal Way you'd never be stopped by a train,” seaport managing director Charlie Sheldon told the commission yesterday.

The Port of Seattle's container traffic is down because of the economy, but new marine cargo forecasts released Monday indicate it will grow over the long term. Container trade for all the ports in Puget Sound is projected to grow about 4 percent a year, reaching 9.7 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) by 2030, according to a report by BST Associates.

The commission also voted yesterday to plug the \$17.2 million budget deficit on the East Marginal Way project with money from its property tax levy. Delays in utility relocation, increases in construction costs, and rising property values have increased the price tag, according to a staff report.

Over the long term, Commission President Bill Bryant said, it is “not sustainable” to push the cost of projects like this one onto property owners. The port had hoped to get \$16 million in federal stimulus money to plug its budget gap.

Commissioner Lloyd Hara said, “We need the jobs and we need to get folks working.”

The port will move some money it had reserved to buy land for an off-dock container yard to this project, Sheldon said. The rest of the funding comes mostly from federal grants and the state.

The port hopes to advertise the East Marginal Way grade separation project within the next week and award the contract in early summer. It wants to finish construction by March of 2011.

The East Marginal Way project is one of several city transportation projects that are necessary for the tunnel/surface boulevard that will replace the Alaskan Way viaduct to perform efficiently, according to viaduct project director Ron Paananen of the Washington State Department of Transportation.

The port first began planning this project in the mid-1990s.

*Margie Slovan can be reached by [email](#) or by phone at (206) 622-8272.*

© Seattle Daily Journal and djc.com.