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Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program News

This program is led by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), King County, and the City of Seattle.

February 2009

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Learn more about the bored tunnel recommendation - Attend a public scoping open house on Feb. 23 and 24

You're invited to attend a public scoping open house and get a first look at the bored tunnel recommendation to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct. These meetings are an opportunity to review current project information and tell us what issues- such as noise, air quality, traffic, etc.- should be considered in the central waterfront environmental document.

Last month, Gov. Chris Gregoire, King County Executive Ron Sims and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels announced their recommendation to replace the central waterfront portion of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The recommendation includes an approximately 1.7 mile bored tunnel beneath downtown, a new waterfront surface street, transit investments, and downtown waterfront and surface street improvements. The central waterfront seawall between Colman Dock and Pine Street will also be replaced.

At the scoping open house, you can learn more about the tunnel as well as investments in city streets, transit, and the tunnel's environmental process. The meetings will also feature information on accessing the tunnel from West Seattle and Northwest neighborhoods such as Ballard and Magnolia.

You'll also be able to submit comments at the open house in writing or verbally to a court reporter.

Both open houses will be held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the following locations:

Monday, Feb. 23

[Adams Elementary School](#)

6110 28th Ave. NW

Ballard

Tuesday, Feb. 24

[Madison Middle School](#)

3429 45th Ave. SW

West Seattle

If you can't make it in person, you can also submit comments or questions directly to the program by mail, [e-mail](#) or phone.

Mail: Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program

999 Third Ave., Suite 2424

Seattle, WA 98104

Phone: 1 – 888 – AWW – LINE

Questions from you:

We've received a number of questions and comments from you regarding the bored tunnel, and each month we will feature one of those questions in this news update.

Our February question from you is: How is the bored tunnel's design different from Boston's Big Dig or the previous cut-and-cover tunnel?

As we design the new SR 99 bored tunnel, it is important to know how this tunnel will be different compared to other well-known tunneling projects such as Boston's Big Dig and the previously considered cut-and-cover tunnel replacement.

Many people have heard about Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project, commonly referred to as "The Big Dig." Among other issues, the Big Dig project faced cost overruns as a result of inflation and schedule delays.

While replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall will be a major project, it is important to note that the Big Dig project was several times larger. Boston's project was eight miles long with multiple tunnels and bridges. The new SR 99 bored tunnel will be approximately 1.7 miles long, which is less than a quarter of the length of Boston's project. WSDOT also uses a rigorous cost estimate process called [CEVP](#) for all state projects exceeding \$100 million to ensure costs are complete, reasonable and appropriately represent risk and uncertainties.

The bored tunnel will also be different from the cut-and-cover tunnel, which was considered by voters in 2007. Cut-and-cover is a method of constructing shallow tunnels where a trench is excavated and then enclosed.

Unlike cut-and-cover tunnels, bored tunnels are created using tunnel boring machines. This is a highly automated process that occurs deep underground and can be routed under existing structures and utilities. Because the majority of this process only impacts those near the ends of the tunnel, bored tunnels are much less disruptive to surrounding residents and businesses.

More information on the bored tunnel recommendation can be found on our [Web site](#).

Progress continues on electrical line relocation

Crews are currently relocating high voltage electrical lines attached to the viaduct to an underground system just east of the structure. This work is part of our [Moving Forward](#) projects, and must be completed before we take down the viaduct south of S. King Street. This project will also protect downtown's power supply in the event of an earthquake.

This month we will install electrical line duct banks and utility vaults and remove abandoned train tracks between S. Atlantic Street and Railroad Way S. Crews will also install duct banks and relocate other utilities under S. Royal Brougham Way. During this work, at least one lane on S. Royal Brougham Way in each direction will be open at all times.

You can see pictures of the current construction work [online](#).

Starting in March, we will need to make a series of traffic revisions on Colorado Avenue S. in order to create enough room to install additional duct banks beneath the road.

Some construction work north of S. Royal Brougham Way is temporarily on hold while we consider how this project will be affected by the bored tunnel design.

Construction on this project is expected to be complete in winter 2009. For more information about the electrical line relocation project, please visit our [Web site](#).

About these updates

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