

VandenBerghe, Alissa (Consultant)

From: Alaskan Way Viaduct [wsdot@service.govdelivery.com]
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Washington State
Department of Transportation



City of Seattle

Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program News

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

May 2009

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Governor signs bill to commit state funding for bored tunnel

Governor Christine Gregoire signed a bill into law on May 12 that commits state funding to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct with a bored tunnel beneath downtown Seattle.

The legislation approves \$2.4 billion to construct a bored tunnel and remove the current structure. The funding will also be used to replace the [south end](#) of the viaduct between S. Holgate and S. King streets with a new surface roadway. The Legislature also directed WSDOT to evaluate whether an additional \$400 million can be raised through tolls. We will submit a traffic and tolling revenue study and report its findings to the Washington State Transportation Commission, Washington State Legislature, and Governor Gregoire in January 2010. You will have a chance to review and comment on the tolling analysis this summer and early fall.

In addition to a bored tunnel, the plan includes replacing the seawall between Colman Dock and Pine Street, building a new Alaskan Way surface street including a new connection to Elliott and Western avenues, constructing a waterfront promenade, and implementing transit and surface street improvements. The total cost for all the improvements is \$4.24 billion. The Port of Seattle, King County and the City of Seattle will fund the remaining \$1.44 billion through local sources.

Pictures of the governor signing the bored tunnel legislation are located on the WSDOT [Flickr](#) site.

Working groups formed to give input on viaduct's central waterfront replacement

The state, county and city departments of transportation have formed [working groups](#) to gather feedback on design and mobility issues related to the bored tunnel. The Port of Seattle also participates in working group meetings. Members will comment on access into and around the tunnel portals, the configuration of the new waterfront surface street, construction plans and urban design features.

The three groups will focus on the central waterfront, north portal and south portal areas of the corridor. Group members represent a variety of interests including neighborhood, business and freight communities.

The public is welcome to attend and provide written comments. Visit our [public events](#) Web page for meeting times and locations.

Learn more about plans to replace the viaduct at local festivals

Visit our program team this summer at a fair, festival or farmers market near your neighborhood. We are hosting a project booth at a number of community events to share the latest news, listen to your comments and answer questions. We talked with more than 4,500 festival attendees last summer, and hope to meet even more visitors this year.

You can find us at the following events:

Fremont Fair: June 20-21

West Seattle Summer Fest: July 10-12

Chinatown International District Festival: July 11-12

White Center Jubilee Days: July 18-19

Ballard Seafood Fest: July 25-26

Magnolia Summer Fest: July 31-Aug. 1

Questions from you

We have received a number of questions and comments from you regarding the [bored tunnel](#). Each month we feature one of those questions in this news update.

Our May question from you is: **Have engineers determined that it is safe to dig a tunnel in the soils under downtown Seattle?**

The [bored tunnel](#) will be located several blocks away from Elliott Bay under First Avenue, at depths of 60 to 200 feet. We expect to encounter dense natural soils during construction, based on information from past downtown Seattle tunnel construction projects. These soils are very dense and strong because they have been compacted by the weight of glaciers many thousands of years ago.

While we already have substantial geotechnical information from previous environmental studies, we are currently conducting geotechnical investigations to further our understanding of the types of soil along the tunnel alignment. For example, this past spring we drilled 17 geotechnical borings on and around First Avenue. We will drill an additional 30 borings this summer along the proposed alignment. By the time we are done, we will have taken samples of the soil about every 300 feet along the alignment. We'll use this information to ensure the best design of the tunnel and the tunnel boring machine, and determine where the soil needs to be strengthened before and during construction.

We have also met with national and international tunnel experts to evaluate the current bored tunnel plan and seek input on how best to construct the tunnel under downtown. We will continue to engage these and other experts to ensure our construction plans incorporate lessons learned from [tunnel projects around the world](#).

About these updates

Please forward this e-mail to others who might be interested. To subscribe or unsubscribe from this mailing list, visit the [subscription page](#). You will be asked first to enter your e-mail address and set your preferences. Then you can subscribe or unsubscribe to the Alaskan Way Viaduct e-mail update from the Northwest updates section. For more information about the Viaduct program, visit www.alaskanwayviaduct.org.

Know before you go

Visit the Puget Sound 2009 construction season [Web site](#) to learn about the latest construction projects in your area.

GovDelivery, Inc. sending on behalf of Washington State Department of Transportation · 310 Maple Park Ave SE · PO BOX 47300 · Olympia WA 98504-7300 · 360-705-7000