

**Transportation Report to Uptown Alliance Members
and Queen Anners - 11/30/06**

The funding process for improved transportation in our city and region is beginning to grind out tax measures.

YOUR TAX DOLLARS WILL GO TO WORK

City voters just approved a property tax levy (\$144 per average home) to fund street and bridge repair and renewal.

Two-way Mercer St. in South Lake Union is part of the multi-part tax package which also includes a tax on employers and a tax on pay parking lots.

Uptowners will need to keep an eye on how and when the Bridging the Gap Transportation Levy dollars are spent.

County voters (that's us too) just went for a tenth of a cent sales tax increase to fund Transit Now enhanced bus services. We're told that we can expect more frequent and more on-time buses from Uptown/Queen Anne to Downtown via the #1 route and to Capital Hill via #8. The big item for us is the Bus Rapid Transit route replacing the #15/18 with bigger buses (if you can imagine that) running more frequently and more on-time. New, fancy bus stops are part of the 15/18 route deal. The new 15/18 service will probably go through downtown on 3rd, not congested 1st Ave. We're told to expect that by '09.

Some Uptowners will need to volunteer to participate in Metro's "Sounding Board" focus group that will give input on the Transit Now bus service enhancements. Expect some Ballardites on the Sounding Board to oppose running the Bus Rapid Transit 15/18 through Uptown/Queen Anne.

TITANIC TRANSPORTATION PROPOSITIONS IN THE WAITING ROOM

The really big regional transportation funding will be on the Nov. '07 ballot. Both WSDOT and Sound Transit will be asking for substantial tax support. WSDOT's

Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) and Sound Transit II funding will be campaigning for your dollars.

We can work to influence both to include items of importance to Seattle:

RTID should include the Lowered Aurora funding to complete the SR99 project. We'll need Lowered Aurora to obtain better east/west connections via Mercer and new connections via Harrison and Thomas. These new east/west routes will bring new, improved transit to and from Seattle Center and Uptown without much cost to Metro. We could expect fewer car trips to Seattle Center and less future need for huge, sterile garages around the Center.

But above all, the Lowered Aurora project would provide a direct, westbound route from I-5 to Uptown/Queen Anne. At last, at last!

Watch this website for opportunities to plug for inclusion in the RTID package.

Sound Transit II will probably offer light rail extensions from Seattle to Bellevue and Redmond and a Seattle extension to Northgate via Roosevelt.

Our historic Seattle Monorail is a connection for us to the Light Rail/Streetcar intermodal station at Westlake Center: our gateway to the light rail destinations: SeaTac Airport, U-District, Northgate and presumably the east side.

SAVE OUR SAGGING MONORAIL

We'll need to keep our eye on funding for the repair and maintenance of this old monorail system or a new streetcar replacement on the route. Seattle City Council just put \$4 million in the pot for Seattle Center to start to play catch-up on the maintenance that was deferred during the short, 4-year lifetime of the erstwhile Seattle Monorail Project.

Watch for news of State Legislative action to combine RTID's proposition with Sound Transit II. STII polls

show that it's probably a shoo-in, but RTID polls show dubious voter support locally, since no one knows what's in or out for King County.

Certainly the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement and the 520 floating bridge will be part of RTID.

Today's legislation requires both RTID and STII to pass in '07 for either to become effective. Some big brains in Olympia think that combining them would enhance the chance for passage by the voters. This combo proposition might be labeled The Titanic Prop. Could it dodge the iceberg of voter tax burn-out?

MAKE YOUR OPINION KNOWN ABOUT VIADUCT VS. TUNNEL
Now's the time to express your preference for the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement on Seattle's Central Waterfront: new bigger viaduct or cut and cover tunnel. Now the Governor will make the choice in December. Write your opinion to her at:
Governor Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Fax 360-453-1110

Or post your opinion at www.governor.wa.gov.

Most major WSDOT highway projects through Seattle have delivered cars to us, but have ruined many parts of our city. Yours truly, favors the cut and cover tunnel alternative, the only SR99 Central Waterfront solution that adds value to our city.
But don't be swayed by me!

Here is a letter from the former Director of Metro Transit, a respected transportation engineer now with CH2mHill. He is addressing State Rep. Marilyn Chase D.32nd (N. King Co., Shoreline.) Richard Sandaas gives reasons from an engineering and budget angle on why it is worth our while to fund the more expensive tunnel alternative for the Central Waterfront portion of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, SR99.

From: Richard Sandaas
To: Chase, Rep. Marilyn
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2006 4:37 PM
Subject: Re: Viaduct Replacement

Thanks for your reply. Here's some additional information to supplement the points I raised in my letter to the Governor which I have attached to this e-mail.

Visionary and Long Term Decisions:

Much too often the most expedient alternative is chosen because of lower cost, less opposition, or because its easier.

One example is the interim off ramp from I-405 to southbound SR 167. While it cost less than a fly-over ramp it doesn't do the job and WSDOT will be replacing it at some future date.

Other examples are the many overpasses in western Washington that are being knocked down and replaced or substantially modified because the footing placement is constraining traffic beneath them or they are not wide enough for the mainline traffic. Long term planning was lacking.

Public works projects costing hundreds of millions of dollars should be enduring and provide benefits beyond their core intent. One example where this was done was in the design and construction of the West Point Treatment plant additions. Here a policy decision was made to provide extensive landscaping and buffering along with restoration of the shoreline and other mitigation measures for a facility which will remain there for decades. Shoreline access is now available to the public adjacent to a facility that could be offensive but because of the landscaping and operational controls the plant is not at all evident. A similar approach is being used for the Brightwater treatment plant adjacent to Highway 9. Both represent visionary and long term approaches.

Replacement of the viaduct with a tunnel would dramatically change the nature of Seattle's waterfront. Those cities that have connected their CBD's with their waterfront have made a dramatic transformation. Baltimore is one of those and I have already seen the beginning of that in Boston.

Our significant public works projects should also last for longer than 40 or 50 years. Consider the Brooklyn Bridge is over 100 years old and the Golden Gate Bridge is more than 70 years old and there is no need to replace them. But here we are replacing the viaduct and the SR 520 Bridge and continually propping up the Hood Canal Bridge. The viaduct replacement, regardless of what it is, need to be enduring so that it doesn't require replacement in another 40 years.

Creative Financing:

The viaduct and SR 520 replacements demand creative thinking to finance them. One component should be tolls because user fees are appropriate and necessary. There may be others including public/private mechanisms and they should be seriously considered.

Designating the "dogleg" of the combination of the Spokane Street Viaduct (which will probably fall down next) with the waterfront viaduct as part of the Interstate Highway System should be pursued. This is not a new concept, in fact one exists today in Tacoma, I 705. These spurs exist in a number of other places around the country including our own Tri-Cities and in Milwaukee. With Senator Murray in her upcoming transportation subcommittee chair, this should be aggressively pursued to leverage the local dollars.

Risks of the Tunnel:

The detractors of the tunnel have painted a picture of disaster by comparing the waterfront tunnel with Boston's Big Dig. Make no mistake, tunnel projects, in fact all major construction projects, bring with them extensive risks. But the key is identifying and managing those risks. I have some background with the

Big Dig, having served on a National Academy of Engineering committee which reviewed the project a couple of years ago. The Big Dig is much different in scope and with the types of construction. While it has one component which is similar to the proposed waterfront tunnel, it has a number which are not. These include a large cable stayed bridge, and submerged underwater box structures, the latter of which has had extensive difficulties. A capable project team can identify and manage the risks associated with the proposed waterfront tunnel.

Why Should a Suburbanite Care?:

First, Seattle is the central city and how it goes, so goes the region. Second, one way or the other, I am going to pay for the replacement and I would like it to meet the objectives outlined above. Third, let's be a leader in developing a progressive approach.

And, there are others like me out there. Without exception my circle of acquaintances feel it is shortsighted to build another viaduct and miss this opportunity.

I hope this helps. Please let me know if you'd like more.

Regards,

Richard Sandaas

ENTERTAINMENT NOTE

Seattle Center has signed an agreement with the Seattle International Film Festival to have SIFF provide year-round showings of classic films, new films, film director homages, etc. in the McCaw Hall's Nesholm Lecture Hall venue. This little-used, but new facility has its own entry off Mercer under the pedestrian bridge from the Mercer St. Garage to McCaw Hall. If this works out, we'll have a new sort of repertory cinema in our great urban center. Expect to see fully professional film presentation in this new cinema

theater. This venue should be fully competitive with the Northwest Film Forum theater on Capital Hill, but with the long reach of SIFF to bring in old and new movies.

John Coney
Uptown Alliance Vice Pres. for Transportation