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To champion a healthy, vibrant urban core

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Downtown Seattle Association

April 23, 2008

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Grace, Dave and Harold,

As an organization representing Seattle's downtown businesses, non-profit, arts and housing organizations as well as the city's core commercial and residential neighborhoods, Downtown Seattle Association has a very strong interest in the planning process and projects related to replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct. We appreciate being included in the Alaskan Way Viaduct Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and look forward to discussions of alternatives with our fellow committee members and representatives of the State of Washington, the City of Seattle and King County.

After establishing evaluation criteria for a successful alternative, learning about the components of our current transportation network and identifying the multitude of projects and policies ("Building Blocks") that, when combined, create different options for a surface-transit alternative to the viaduct, we believe now is the time for individual members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to provide comment to what they have heard and seen thus far. In addition to the issues raised during the March SAC meeting, there are three additional topics that we ask you to consider examining in the near term. They are as follows:



Add economics expertise to the Collaborative Management Team

The Collaborative Management Team is composed mostly of engineers and operations planners, who clearly have project management, design and modeling expertise. Most of the six Guiding Principles used to measure the relative success of different viaduct alternatives are centered around the physical aspects of the project, in which engineers are the most qualified to determine the measurements and then compare and contrast the many "Building Blocks" against those measurements. Yet, we do not believe there is anyone identified within the Collaborative Management Team who has either the qualifications or, more importantly, the credibility among all of the Stakeholders to evaluate the Guiding Principle to, "Maintain or improve downtown Seattle, regional, the port and state economies." Certainly from a business perspective, maintaining the economic vitality of our region is of paramount importance and we cannot allow the way in which we measure compliance with that principle to be questioned. This economics expertise should be far removed from the historical and current debate, cannot be any individual that has already taken a public position on the viaduct, and must have the ability from which all parties can agree will provide a credible evaluation. Without appointing an individual with economic expertise to the Collaborative Management Team, how do the City, the County and the State propose to evaluate the "economic vitality" principle?

Replacement of on-street parking

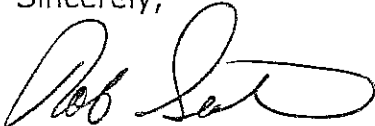
With the backdrop of State-mandated reduction of our carbon footprint, we agree that Downtown Seattle should be a model for shifting more car trips to other modes of transportation, where and when reasonable alternatives to driving alone exists. The primary focus for mode shifts should be on commuters and employees, not "discretionary trips" that are dismissed by some. Many of those "discretionary trips" are customers, clients, tourists, and other visitors to downtown, all of whom contribute to our economic vitality. Many of these customers use on-street parking which is proposed to be eliminated soon. It is these visitors that help make Downtown Seattle more than just a job center – but also a place to dine with friends, see a show, shop at Pike Place Market, and stroll the waterfront. Viable replacement parking must be provided for these visitors or we will lose some of downtown's energy and economic vitality.

Project Funding

The Downtown Seattle Association remains concerned that the Collaborative Management Team will identify many great "Building Blocks," consolidate them into an agreed upon alternative, and then find that the identified funding sources are unable to complete the projects. In order to achieve the aforementioned mode shift for commuters, more transit service must be put into place, as most transit routes into and out of downtown at peak period operate at full capacity today. We have a shortage of supply of transit into downtown, not a shortage of demand for transit. Unfortunately, significant investments in transit are not currently eligible for state gas tax funds. It appears other funding sources have not been identified, let alone secured. Furthermore, many of the local street improvements identified as potential building blocks require a state legislative action in order to be eligible for state funding. Lastly, the amount of available funds regardless of project eligibility, remains an issue. Of the \$2.8 billion in appropriated state funds, \$900 million is already dedicated to the "Six Preliminary Projects." Regardless of which surface-transit recommendation is made, it will be, by definition, a collection of projects rather than a single undivided project. We are concerned that any funding restrictions may result in the implementation of only a limited fraction of the projects which make up the entire recommended Alternative.

The Downtown Seattle Association remains committed to the Alaskan Way Viaduct Stakeholder Advisory Committee process. We thank you and your staff for their effort, professionalism, candor and responsiveness throughout the process. We look forward to a resolution on the viaduct that not only preserves what makes Downtown Seattle a thriving place, but enhances it. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Policy Director, Ryan Bayne, with any comments or questions. Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rob Sexton
DSA Viaduct Task Force Chair

cc: Governor Christine Gregoire
King County Executive Ron Sims
Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels