

Thank you for your e-mail on transportation funding and the Alaskan Way Viaduct. I believe that building a tunnel is the right decision. In 2004, the federal, state and city governments selected the tunnel as the preferred alternative for replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall. The decision relied on three years of professional engineering and planning and over 4,500 public comments made since June 2001. The day of building elevated freeways in the heart of great American cities is dead. We are a city of the future and should not tolerate a larger and more disruptive freeway blocking Seattle's waterfront for another 50 years. Taking our waterfront back for the public is vital to attracting new jobs, new families and new opportunities.

If the Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall project is included in a future tax package, it will be part of a ballot measure that the public will vote on. Almost all of the funding for the new tunnel would come from state and federal (not city) sources. These funding sources cannot be used for local transportation infrastructure such as streets and bridges.

The city will be required to make a financial commitment regardless of whether the tunnel or the "rebuild" option is chosen. As owner of the failing Alaskan Way Seawall, the city has a responsibility to maintain this important piece of the city infrastructure. Most of the city's contribution to the project will consist of relocation of utilities currently located in the Alaskan Way corridor. Again, these utilities must be relocated under any Viaduct/Seawall replacement option.

I certainly share your concern about funding for maintenance for our aging transportation infrastructure. The transportation funding package that I am developing this year will focus primarily on streets, bridges and bicycle/pedestrian facilities throughout the City of Seattle. It's never pleasant to contemplate increasing taxes, but the cost of doing nothing is great. By fixing the roads, sidewalks and bridges that we depend on every day, we avoid having to replace these critical elements of our transportation system. As an example, the cost of reconstructing deteriorated roads is five times greater than the cost of maintaining them. So the sooner we can fund basic maintenance, the more tax dollars we will save in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your opinions.

Sincerely,

GREG NICKELS

Mayor of Seattle

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