



Seattle Department of Transportation

## News Release

**Greg Nickels, Mayor**

Grace Crunican, Director

For Immediate Release:

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Contact: Gregg Hirakawa, (206) 396-3053 cell.

# WSDOT Review of Hybrid Tunnel Deeply Flawed Report is based more on state politics than traffic analysis

(Seattle) –Grace Crunican, Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation, said today that WSDOT’s review of the surface/tunnel hybrid was deeply flawed and does a disservice to the people of Seattle by failing to provide an independent, accurate or reliable technical review of the proposal.

The report contains numerous conclusions without the necessary technical analysis to back up the findings. For example, the assertion that the surface/tunnel hybrid doesn’t meet safety and operating standards is contradicted by many examples of similarly-designed tunnels across the United States. Modern tunnels with limited or no shoulders have been approved by the federal government and operate safely every day, including:

- Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel in Virginia
- Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in Virginia
- Fort McHenry Tunnel in Maryland
- Cumberland Gap Tunnel between Kentucky and Tennessee
- Eisenhower Tunnel in Colorado

The surface/tunnel hybrid’s design includes 11-foot lanes, which are common in highway projects around the state and country, including current plans for rebuilt portions of Highway 99 north of downtown Seattle. By comparison, the existing Viaduct has 9.5-foot lanes and no shoulders.

In January, a WSDOT-lead team of 50 spent some 2,000 hours carefully analyzing the surface/tunnel hybrid and concluded that it was a safe, affordable design that met the mobility needs of the corridor. The findings were reviewed by the independent Expert Review Panel and included participation by the City of Seattle.

In its latest review, WSDOT excluded city engineers, and the Expert Review Panel was so concerned with the process that it chose to end its participation last week.

“In January, WSDOT concluded that this was a tunnel design that met all travel needs – it was safe, affordable and handled traffic demand,” Crunican said. “Now, a month later, with no one else in the

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Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3900, PO Box 34996, Seattle WA 98124-4996

Tel: (206) 684-ROAD (684-7623), FAX: (206) 684-5180

Internet Address: <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation>

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room, WSDOT writes a paper contradicting itself. This is just a lot of words with no technical analysis to back it up.”

*The Seattle Department of Transportation builds, maintains and operates Seattle's \$8 billion transportation infrastructure. To further Mayor Nickels' goal to get Seattle moving, the department manages short- and long-term investments in streets, bridges, pavement and trees, that better connect the city with the region.*