Alaskan Way Viaduct
REPLACEMENT
PROGRAM

August 2013

Building a new State Route 99 through Seattle

In summer 2013, the world's largest-diameter tunneling machine began a historic journey beneath downtown Seattle. Its purpose: dig a tunnel to replace the SR 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct, a double-deck highway that has spanned the downtown waterfront for more than 60 years.

The machine's task sounds straightforward enough, but the story behind it is complicated. It begins with an earthquake in 2001 that damaged the viaduct and led to a decade of debate about how to replace the structure. The story's conclusion is unfolding now, as we at the Washington State Department of Transportation, along with our agency partners, build a new SR 99 corridor through Seattle that includes:

- A two-mile-long tunnel beneath downtown Seattle.
- A mile-long stretch of new highway that connects to the south entrance of the tunnel, near Seattle's stadiums.
- A new overpass at the south end of downtown that allows traffic to bypass train blockages near Seattle's busiest port terminal.
- Demolition of the viaduct's downtown waterfront section in 2016.
- A new Alaskan Way surface street along the waterfront that connects SR 99 to downtown.

The SR 99 tunnel work zone to the west of Seattle's stadiums in June 2013.

Demolition of the Alaskan Way Viaduct's south end in fall 2011.

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration | Washington State Department of Transportation | King County | Port of Seattle | City of Seattle

Connecting SR 99 to downtown

The tunnel will change the way traffic uses SR 99 in Seattle. Drivers approaching the tunnel from either direction will face a choice depending on their destination: use the tunnel to bypass downtown or exit to city streets and head into downtown.

At the tunnel's north end, downtown access will be similar to today, with on- and off-ramps near Seattle Center. From the south, new on- and off-ramps near the stadiums will connect SR 99 to a new waterfront surface street. This connection and new east-west connections between the new Alaskan Way and downtown will replace the function of today's midtown viaduct ramps and also provide improved access to the waterfront.

SR 99 tunnel south portal design concept.

SR 99 tunnel north portal design concept.

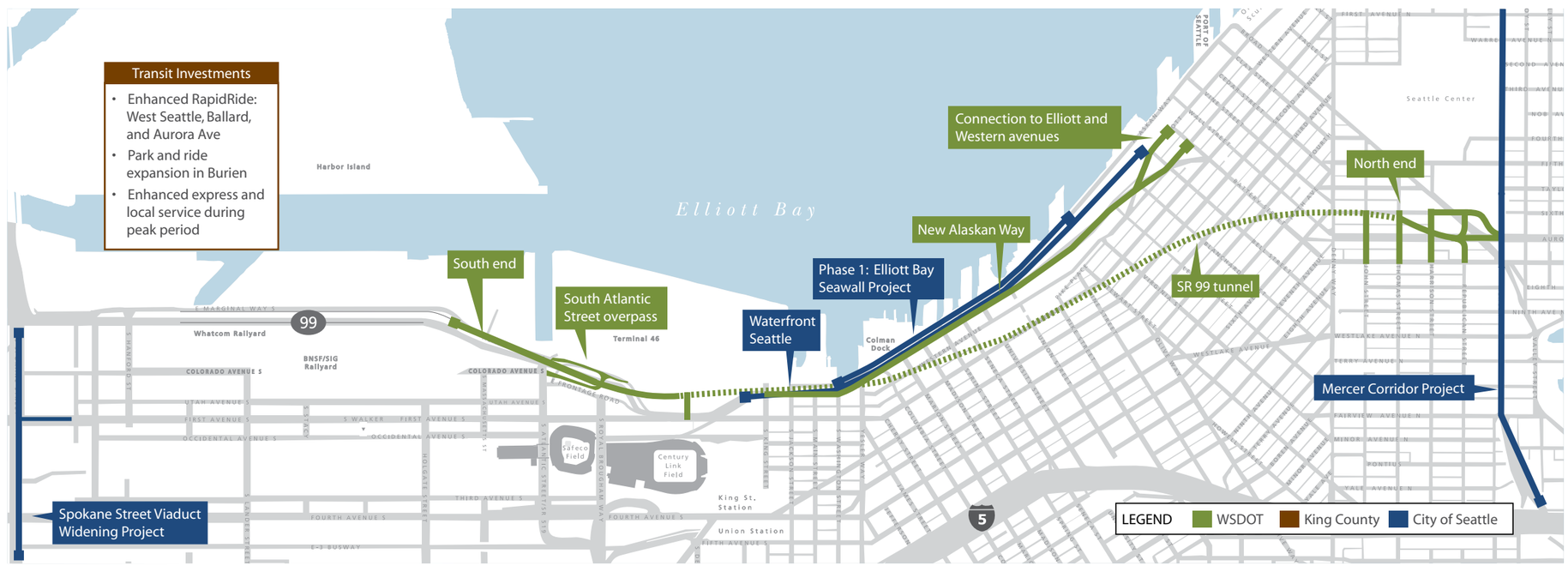
Halfway there

Half of the viaduct is already gone, demolished and replaced by our crews at the south end of downtown, near Seattle's stadiums. Completed in September 2012, on budget and one year ahead of schedule, this new section of SR 99 connects to the remaining viaduct along the waterfront to keep SR 99 traffic moving until the tunnel opens in late 2015.

Looking south at the new SR 99 bridges, near Seattle's port and stadiums, and the construction bypass connection to the viaduct along the waterfront.

Related projects

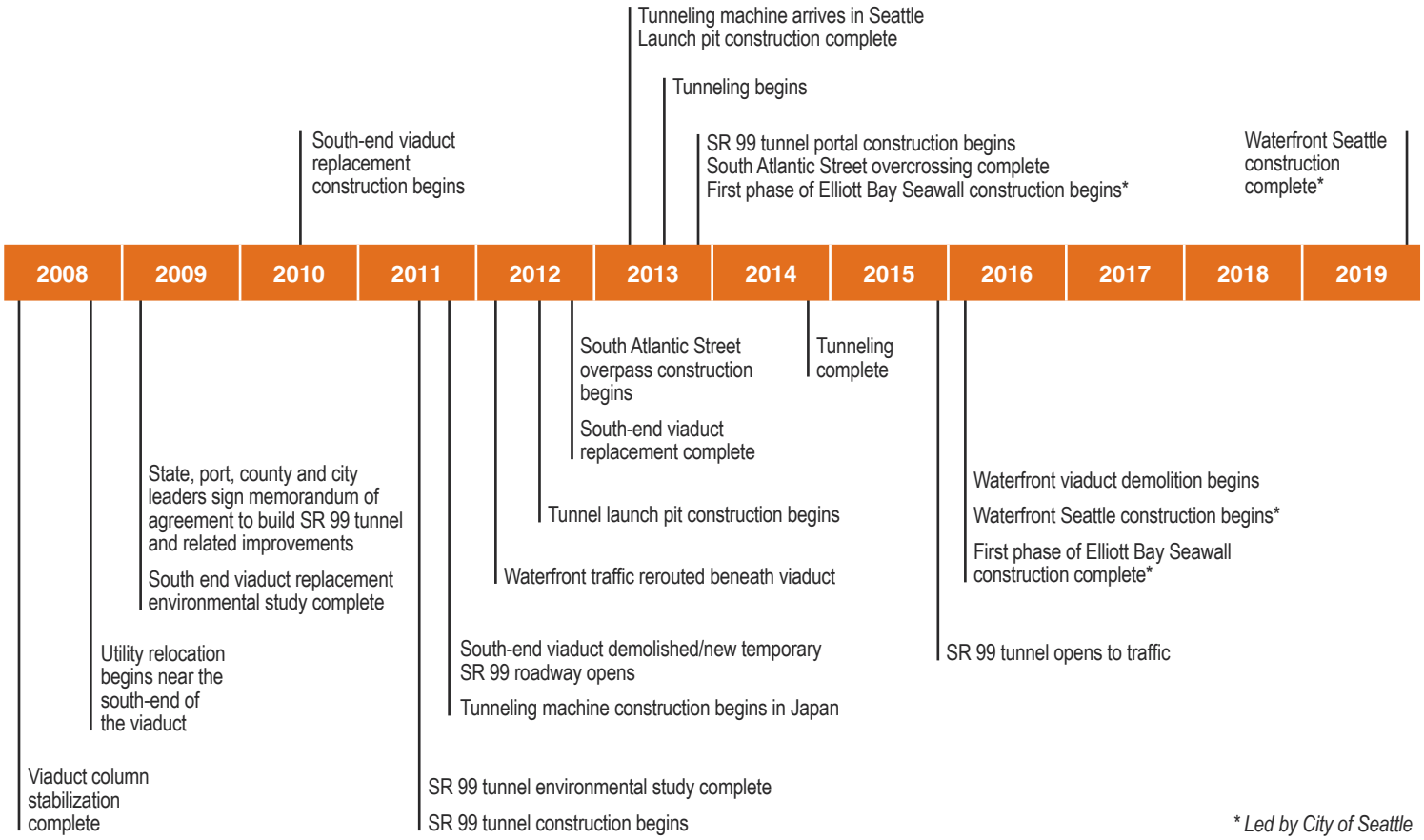
As part of the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program, King County, the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle are planning street, transit, seawall and waterfront improvements. The city will build new public open space along the waterfront, replace the Elliott Bay seawall and improve other city streets such as the Spokane Street Viaduct and the Mercer corridor. The county is seeking funds to provide enhanced transit service to downtown in the SR 99 corridor. The city and county are responsible for managing these projects, including their environmental review.



Schedule

The Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program is led by WSDOT in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, King County, the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle. It includes more than 20 projects that will work together to reshape the SR 99 corridor.

Construction on the first project began in 2008, when crews stabilized four viaduct columns that settled following the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake. Since then, more than a dozen projects have been completed, with several more in progress or set to break ground soon. The below timeline includes major accomplishments along the road to viaduct replacement.



For more information

Visit the website at www.AlaskanWayViaduct.org

Call the hotline at 1-888-AWV-LINE

Send an email to viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov

Send a letter to:
Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
Washington State Department of Transportation
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Seattle, WA 98104

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