

Engineering Department West Seattle Freeway Bridge Construction Photographs and Slides, 1980-1983

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Seattle (Wash.) Engineering Dept.
Title	Engineering Department West Seattle Freeway Bridge Construction Photographs and Slides
Dates	1980-1983 (inclusive) 1980 1983
Quantity	over 2,000 photographs 3200 slides, (3 cubic ft.), (3 boxes), (22 digitized images)
Collection Number	2613-25
Summary	Photographs and slides documenting preconstruction and construction of the West Seattle Freeway Bridge, 1980-1983.
Repository	Seattle Municipal Archives Seattle Municipal Archives Office of the City Clerk City of Seattle PO Box 94728 98124-4728 Seattle, WA Telephone: 206-233-7807 Fax: 206-386-9025 archives@seattle.gov
Access Restrictions	Records are open to the public.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

The Seattle Engineering Department (SED) maintained the City's streets and bridges, designed and oversaw construction of public works projects, provided traffic and transportation planning, and operated the sewer and solid waste utility. The position of City Surveyor was created in 1873 to survey the City, establish boundaries and street grades, and administer condemnation processes. This position was renamed City Engineer in 1890. In 1931, the Engineering Department absorbed part of the Department of Public Utilities, and in 1936, it assumed the responsibilities of the Department of Streets and Sewers and the Traffic Department.

In 1997, the water, solid waste, drainage, and wastewater utilities from the Engineering and Water departments were merged with the Engineering Services Division of SED and the Customer Service Call Center and Construction Engineering Sections of City Light to form Seattle Public Utilities. The

traffic and transportation functions of the Engineering Department were consolidated in the Seattle Transportation Department.

Transportation from West Seattle to downtown Seattle had been problematic for decades; until the 1970s, two drawbridges were the major link between the two areas of the city. Although planning was authorized in the 1970s, the project was delayed until June 11, 1978, when the freighter Antonio Chavez struck and damaged one of the drawbridges, thereby forcing action on the issue. A state of emergency was declared, and emergency funds from the Department of Transportation and from Congress were added to existing funds for a bridge replacement.

In 1979, the City Council passed a resolution stating that the bridge damage caused "severe traffic disruption, congestion, and unsafe conditions" and approved a two-phase plan for a new West Seattle Freeway Bridge. Phase I would be a six-lane high-level bridge and Phase II would be a two-lane low-level bridge. Later in 1979, Ordinance 108643 authorized property acquisition, construction, and general obligation bonds to assist in funding the bridge's construction. The ordinance cited the importance of an improved bridge in assisting the development of the Harbor Island business area and Duwamish Industrial area. The City Council stated that the bridge design would "more effectively serve the needs of the City" by improving traffic flow, providing access to West Seattle and Harbor Island, improving safety on the bridge, and even reducing air pollution by cutting down on idling time as a result of the "uninterrupted flow of traffic." King County, the City and Port of Seattle, and the State of Washington would all contribute to bridge funding.

Construction on the West Seattle Freeway Bridge began in 1981, and the Phase I high-level bridge opened to traffic in 1984.

Content Description

This collection documents preconstruction and construction of the West Seattle Bridge in photographs and slides. Preconstruction photographs include aerial photographs, Polaroid photographs, and color prints; these images date from 1980. Information on right-of-way is included. The construction photographs are color prints and date from November 1980 to April 1981. Original negatives are not part of the collection.

Photographs are numbered. A complete list of all prints with description is included; the list also describes photographs 426 to 2011, for which there are no prints.

The slides date from 1980 to 1982. Descriptions exist for slides through number 728. No descriptions exist for slides 729 to 1726, nor for August 1981 through September 1983, which are unnumbered. 22 images have been digitized. [View 2613-25 online](#)

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Title of image, date. Item number.] West Seattle Freeway Bridge Photographs and Slides, Record Series 2613-25. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Photographs are arranged into two subseries:

Subseries I: Photographs

Subseries II: Slides

Photographs and slides are arranged chronologically.

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Photographs, 1980-1981

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Pre-construction		
Box/Folder		
1/1	Right-of-way	n.d.
1/2	Polaroid Photographs	1980-1981
1/3	Photographs (Numbers 1-90)	1980
1/4	Photographs (Numbers 91-150)	1980
1/5	Photographs (Numbers 151-230)	1980
1/6	Photographs (Numbers 231-300)	1980
2/1	Photographs (Numbers 301-402)	1980
2/2	Aerial Photographs	1980
Construction		
Box/Folder		
2/3	Photographs, November-December (Numbers 1-113)	1980

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/4	Photographs, January (Numbers 1-140)	1981
3/1	Photographs, February (Numbers 141-232)	1981
3/2	Photographs, March (Numbers 233-358)	1981
3/3	Photographs, April (Numbers 359-475)	1981
3/4	Description of Photographs (Numbers 1-914)	
4/1	Description of Photographs (Numbers 915-2011)	

Slides, 1980-1982

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Preconstruction		
Box/Folder		
4/2	Slides (Numbers 1-65)	1980-1981
Construction		
Box/Folder		
4/3	Slides, January-February (Numbers 1-313)	1981
4/4	Slides, March (Numbers 315-544)	1981
4/5	Slides, April (Numbers 545-728)	1981
4/5	Slides, May (Numbers 729-999)	1981
5/1	Slides, June (Numbers 1000-1200)	1981
5/2	Slides, July (Numbers 1231-1606)	1981
5/3	Slides, August (Numbers 1607-1625)	1981
5/4	Slides, September (Numbers 1833-2069)	1981

Container(s)	Description	Dates
6/1	Slides, October (Numbers 2070-2449)	1981
6/2	Slides, November-December (Numbers 2218-2362, 2450-2668, unnumbered)	1981
6/3	Slides, January-February (unnumbered)	1982
6/4	Slides, March-April (unnumbered)	1982
7/1	Slides, May-July (unnumbered)	1982
7/2	Slides, August-October (unnumbered)	1982
7/3	Slides, November-December (unnumbered)	1982
7/4	Slides, February-April (unnumbered)	1983
8/1	Slides, May-July (unnumbered)	1983
8/2	Slides, August-September (unnumbered)	1983
8/3	Description of slides (preconstruction and construction)	1981-1982

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Bridges--Design and construction--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs
 Bridges--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs
 Construction equipment--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs
 Soils--Testing--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs

Corporate Names :

Seattle (Wash.). Engineering Dept.

Geographical Names :

Duwamish River (Wash.)--Photographs
 West Seattle Bridge (Seattle, Wash.)--Photographs

Form or Genre Terms :

Aerial photographs
 Photographic prints
 Slides

Occupations :

Construction workers--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs

Finding aid prepared by Anne Frantilla
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<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv63620>

