Special Events
Transportation events

Bertha’s Pre-Bore Dedication Event
Launching the SR 99 Tunneling Machine Beneath Seattle

TransComm 2014 Skills Contest
Arizona

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Welcome to Bertha’s Pre-Bore Dedication Event and the Bertha Pre-Bore Dedication Event of the State Route 99 Viaduct project. You are invited to join us on Saturday, May 3, 2014, from 2 to 4 p.m. as we celebrate the launch of the world’s largest tunneling machine, Bertha.

Today’s events include:
- Meet and greet with the project team
- Watch the pre-bore dedication ceremony
- Get a front-row seat at the exciting launch of the world’s largest tunneling machine

Join us for Bertha’s Big Day and be a part of this historic event!
**Situation:**

In July 2013, Bertha, the world’s-largest-diameter tunneling machine, began her historic, 1.7-mile-long journey beneath downtown Seattle. Prior to the start of tunneling, WSDOT and Seattle Tunnel Partners, the SR 99 tunnel contractor, hosted a dedication ceremony and public event to welcome dignitaries, media representatives and members of the public to Bertha’s launch pit, located in downtown Seattle.
Since construction began on the tunnel project, we received an overwhelming number of requests from the public to visit the site and see Bertha in person.

We were faced with a challenge: how do you invite the entire state to a bon voyage party? And how can we make it memorable, educational and safe?
Objectives:

- Provide an opportunity for the public to see Bertha up close
- Attract positive media coverage that tells the construction story
- Host a family-friendly event with an educational component
Event details:
WSDOT and Seattle Tunnel Partners opened the construction site on July 20, 2013 for all to visit. Seven information stations, staffed by project engineers, inspectors and communicators were positioned around the site. A passport activity was created for kids that corresponded with each station – answer a question correctly, and receive a colorful sticker.
Event details:
The Governor, state legislators and local elected officials formally dedicated the tunneling machine. Attendees could become a part of Seattle and Washington state history by signing their names or writing a message on one of the concrete tunnel segments. Attendees could also walk across the tunneling machine launch pit and get a birds-eye view of Bertha.
Event materials:

- Kids’ passport activity
- Bertha by the Numbers
- Information station map

How do you measure Bertha’s story? Let us count the ways

60
the number of years the Alaskan Way Viaduct has stood along Seattle’s waterfront

2,300
the number of miles Bertha’s cutterhead will rotate by the end of tunneling

6.8
the magnitude of the Feb. 28, 2001 Nisqually earthquake that damaged the viaduct

850,000
the amount of soil, in cubic yards, that will come out of the ground during tunneling

90+
the number of alternatives WSDOT considered for replacing the viaduct prior to hiring Bertha

326
the length of Bertha in feet

2
the thickness of the tunnel walls in feet

Bertha by the Numbers

Bertha’s Pre-Bore Dedication Event Map July 20, 2013

- 1. Conveyor system
- 2. Cutterhead
- 3. Bertha
- 4. Powering Bertha
- 5. Sign a segment
- 6. Gantry crane
- 7. Trailing gear

Legend:
- Information stations
- Public walkways

Event Entrance
- Restrooms
- Food trucks
- Trailers for construction workers
- Alaskan Way Viaduct
- Ramp Way
- South King St

- Elephant Head
- Elliott Bay
- Duwamish Way
- South Capitol St

- Circa, Inc.
- Welcome table
- First aid
Objective 1: Provide project stakeholders, staff and family, elected officials and media a chance to visit the project construction site and see Bertha up-close before the start of tunneling. Attract more than 3,200 attendees.

Results: Objective 1

- More than 5,000 people attended the event, including dignitaries, community leaders, the public and media. They were given the opportunity to learn about Bertha and her two-mile journey.
Objective 2: Garner positive media attention that tells the construction story and highlights project progress and how we plan to tunnel safely beneath Seattle. Attract media from all local broadcast networks and major print publications.

Results: Objective 2

- Thirteen media outlets arrived prior to the public event for a media-only tour of the tunneling machine.
- Twenty-six news and blog stories were published about the event, each mentioning project progress, Bertha’s size and complexity, and/or the 14-month journey ahead. Local broadcast, radio and print all covered the story.
Objective 3: Host a safe, family-friendly event that includes an educational component. Provide an activity that gets more than 500 kids excited about construction, science and engineering.

Results: Objective 3
- An estimated 1,500 kids attended the event and participated in the passport activity – an educational game that helped explain Bertha and her journey.