SEATTLE — For a few hours, the nine-day closure of Seattle's Alaskan Way Viaduct proved to be a hit of gawking and sentimental fun.

About 3,200 people strolled on the elevated highway Saturday, the first full day of the nine-day closure, said KaDeena Yerkan of the state Department of Transportation.

The people walked the highway as crews continue demolishing the [illegible] of the 1949 and earthquake-[illegible]

[illegible] State Route 99 over the viaduct on a typical weekday will go.

Traffic was heavy around the viaduct Saturday as people took the walk and others headed to CenturyLink Field for a college football game.

The real test will be Monday when work commutes begin.

The viaduct is being replaced by a waterfront tunnel.

The need to reinforce a two-block section of the Alaskan Way Viaduct above the path of the upcoming tunnel means the viaduct will be closed from late Friday until early Monday morning, according to the state Department of Transportation (DOT).

Both directions will be closed between the Battery Street Tunnel and the West Seattle Bridge from 11 p.m. Friday to 5 a.m. Monday.

That could mean more than usual congestion in and near downtown Seattle during the closure.

[illegible] was heavy around the viaduct [illegible]day as people took the walk and others [illegible] to CenturyLink Field for a college [illegible]

Transit officials have [illegible] free bus tickets and added ferry trips across Elliott Bay. Still, there's no shortage of fretting about where the 110,000 vehicles that take State Route 99 over the viaduct on a typical weekday will go.

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elevated road that runs along the waterfront. Yerkan said crews have demolished about a couple of hundred yards of concrete and metal as of Saturday afternoon.

But local residents took advantage of the public opening, some making the occasion a sentimental one. One person hung a sign thanking the old highway for its service. Another woman collected one of the lane dividers. A couple of men tossed a Frisbee while many others took pictures of the old highway, The Seattle Times reported.

A roller derby team and a motorcycle-stunt team also had free range of the highway for 30 minutes after winning a contest.

Gov. Chris Gregoire and other lawmakers [illegible] present to commemorate the start of [illegible] building the Highway 99 tunnel will [illegible] reinforcing both decks of [illegible] viaduct between [illegible] streets in [illegible]

"The weather is improving, and shops and restaurants will be open for the holiday weekend," Matt Preedy, DOT deputy administrator for the viaduct replacement, said in a news release. "Remember to plan ahead and allow a little extra time."

Crews building the Highway 99 tunnel will spend the weekend reinforcing both decks of a two-block section of the viaduct between South Washington and Columbia streets in Pioneer Square, the DOT release said.

There will be one additional weekend closure of the viaduct in mid-May to complete the scheduled work, which includes filling cracks and wrapping previously damaged sections of the structure in protective reinforcing fiber, according to the release.

Protecting this section of the viaduct is important because crews will drive the tunnel-boring machine beneath it in late 2013.

As excerpted from The Seattle Times on 10/22/12 and 4/4/12. Articles available on seattletimes.com.

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SEATTLE — Dissenting voices of a proposal to build a new arena in the SoDo District designed to lure the NBA back were nowhere to be found at Occidental Park on Thursday.

Instead, a two-hour rally organized by Chris Hansen, the lead financier behind the plan, served as an opportunity to remember the Sonics' history and fire up those hoping for the team's return.

"Thank you, Chris," yelled a crowd estimated by Hansen's group at 6,000 — and by others at 2,000 to 3,000 — as Hansen took the stage to open the rally at 4 p.m.

"This is why I'm doing this, right here," he said motioning to the crowd.

For the next two hours, a steady stream of former Sonics took the stage, as well as politicians who support the proposal.

The former Sonics included Gary Payton, Slick Watts, Shawn Kemp and Detlef Schrempf. The politicians included King County Executive Dow Constantine, Seattle City Council member Bruce Harrell and King County Council member Bob Ferguson.

Constantine told the crowd that the proposal is the best the area will ever get to bring back the NBA and possibly [illegible] NHL team.

[illegible] agreement.

"This is truly an [illegible] remarkable offer to do," he told reporters. [illegible] referring to the investors in the proposal, [illegible] Ballmer, Nordstrom [illegible] Mich[illegible] chief executive [illegible] Hansen. "They are willing to bring hundreds of millions of dollars, and the [illegible] investment [illegible] to be completely secured that [illegible] basically [illegible] to get paid back, and [illegible] all the other taxes and [illegible]

Amid the speeches and cheers, music blared from bands, including Seattle band The Presidents of the United States of America.

Signs in Occidental Park urged participants to tweet their support to the City and County Councils, which are considering Hansen's proposal to contribute almost $500 million to the arena and another $500 million to buy an NBA team. The arena proposal would also require up to $200 million in public bonds. Hansen is scheduled to testify before the City Council on Wednesday.

Gubernatorial candidate Rob McKenna tweeted: "There is no red or blue in Seattle today — [illegible] green & gold!"

Marygrace Aguiling of Renton was one [illegible] few women in attendance. She wore a [illegible] with the Sonics' logo and block letters [illegible] "ROBBED."

"We need the Sonics back," she said. "It's part of what makes Seattle Seattle. There's a void here."

Hansen closed the rally on a more somber [illegible]

"We're not there yet," he told the crowd. "There's still some work to do."

[illegible] though, he told reporters the rally [illegible] show of support.

"I think it's going well," he said. "[illegible] get the ask and questions. That's [illegible] Arena's not for public use. That's [illegible] should be."

"I think we all know that industry is not going to just disappear. All these same arguments were made [by maritime interests] about the Ballard Fred Meyer," said Brian Robinson of Arena Solutions in an emailed statement. (The Fred Meyer store opened in 1999 after years of opposition by those who said it threatened working industrial land.)

Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn and King County [illegible] the last week [illegible] Hansen under which [illegible] up would pay 12 [illegible] National [illegible] investment could be at [illegible]

The city [illegible] up to $200 mill[illegible] bonds to [illegible] SoDo from H[illegible] and to [illegible] would co[illegible] to $[illegible] National Hockey League team also [illegible]

Hansen [illegible] group would cover [illegible] operations and [illegible] create a reserve fund [illegible] in the building. The [illegible] be repaid [illegible] events and rent [illegible] the sports [illegible]

[illegible] Times readers [illegible] reports out of [illegible] of the Golden State [illegible] $200 million NBA [illegible] be privately financed.

But Ebwy notes that, when asked at the end of the phone survey if they would choose committing taxpayer dollars to the arena versus no arena, 61 percent of Seattle voters and 54 percent of county voters said no arena.

The poll surveyed 401 registered Seattle voters and 207 King County (non-Seattle) voters. The margin of error is 7 percentage points for the separate Seattle and King County samples and 5 percentage points for the combined, countywide data.

As excerpted from The Seattle Times on 6/14/12. Article available on seattletimes.com

As excerpted from The Seattle Times on 5/25/12. Article available on seattletimes.com

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LAS VEGAS — Microsoft ended its long run of keynote speeches at the massive Consumer Electronics Show with a presentation featuring a rousing gospel choir and entertainer Ryan Seacrest but little in the way of news.

CEA boss Gary Shapiro started the presentation by recalling Microsoft's first presentation at the show, by Bill Gates in 1995.

"Bill walked into the Hilton by himself with his head buried in a book," Shapiro said.

"His speech was called 'the coming revolution in consumer computing,'" Shapiro continued. "Bill said this coming revolution would be social—and that was in 1995."

Shapiro acknowledged that Microsoft's not coming back to deliver a keynote next year, a move that he characterized as "a break" for the software company.

"We agreed to a pause," he said, then introduced Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer.

Ballmer came on stage and accepted a framed montage from Shapiro, then stepped off, giving way to a funny video mixing up clips of Microsoft keynote speeches over the years.

Seacrest then made a surprise appearance as "host" of the speech. Seacrest said he's partnered with Microsoft for a number of years on Bing and other products.

Seacrest interviewed Ballmer [illegible] a staged interview, similar to the Conan O'Brien interview with Bill Gates in Microsoft's 2005 keynote, though O'Brien was much sassier.

They paused for a Windows Phone demo by Microsoft manager Derek Snyder, who had a minor demo glitch while showing the voice translation feature. While "speaking" a message for the phone to relay, he said "sounds great" but the message displayed on the big screen only had the word "sound."

Ballmer then talked up the Nokia [illegible] phones coming to T-[illegible] and AT&T and the HTC [illegible] coming to AT&T, but he did not [illegible] for the AT&T [illegible]

lighting Windows 7 PCs now available.

Reller appeared on stage with eight Windows 8 laptops of different sizes and four tablets, including a prototype running Nvidia's new Tegra 3 chip that she used to demonstrate the software's Metro interface.

Reller reiterated that the next beta version of Windows 8 is coming in late February. She also showed two of the new laptops announced at CES, including HP's "Spectre" Ultrabook with a glass cover and Samsung Series 9 that's less than 13 millimeters thick and weighs just over 2.5 pounds.

In response to a question from Seacrest, Ballmer said all Windows 7 PCs will run Windows 8 when it becomes available.

The hands-down hi[illegible] was the Tweet Cho[illegible] sang out tweets ab[illegible] drew and an enth[illegible] from Ballmer wh[illegible] performance and [illegible] during the follow[illegible]

Over 16 million Xbox [illegible] been shipped [illegible] nation of Kin[illegible] transforming [illegible]

The Xbox gr[illegible] video app is co[illegible] on-demand acce[illegible] Comcast's Xfinity [illegible] "announced" although it was [illegible] license that Microsoft d[illegible] and the keynote didn't [illegible] rival dates for either [illegible]

After showing a new [illegible] future ways that Kinect [illegible] said the voice-and-motion [illegible] to the Windows [illegible] form on F[illegible]

Seacrest [illegible] chance to clos[illegible] last G[illegible] interview with a [illegible] at what's ne[illegible] [illegible] consumer [illegible] Ballmer said the most important [illegible] Windows 8 is the next big change in the company's Windows [illegible] and its Metro style, a user's interacting with the computer [illegible] [illegible]

"It [illegible] that's next," Ballmer said. "Metro, Metro, Metro, and of course Windows. Windows + Windows!"

And that's a wrap.

A judge in a regional court in Germa[illegible] ruled

Wednesday that Microsoft's Xbox and Windows infringe on some of Motorola's patents.

The judge in Mannheim, Germany, granted Motorola's request for an injunction against the sales of Windows 7, Xbox 360, Internet Explorer and Windows Media Player 12 in that country.

But Motorola won't be able to enforce that injunction — at least for now — because a judge in Seattle last month granted Microsoft's request to prevent Motorola from enforcing any such injunction.

The patents in question involve standards for viewing videos over the Internet. The two companies have fought over patents for years, and the German judge's ruling is certainly far from the last round of wrangling between the two companies.

Microsoft has indicated it would appeal the [illegible] Seattle over [illegible] standards-essential patents — patents that have become standardized in the industry — on fair, reasonable and [illegible] discriminatory (FRAND) terms.

[illegible] patents [illegible] have becom[illegible] standard user [illegible] joining [illegible] Motorola to license those [illegible] and reasonable [illegible]

Motorola had asked [illegible] royalties for royalties [illegible] per copy on the price of each Xbox and Windows PC sold, saying some of the [illegible] used in those products infringe [illegible] patents.

[illegible] to $4[illegible] [illegible] 2010, filed [illegible] in Seattle.

[illegible] issued a state[illegible] judge's decision, [illegible] in a long process, [illegible] that Motorola will [illegible] to its promise to make its standard essential patents available on fair and reasonable terms for the benefit of consumers who enjoy video on the Web."

Motorola, which is in the process of [illegible] acquired by Google, issued a statement

saying: "We are pleased that the Mannheim Court found that Microsoft products infringe Motorola Mobility's intellectual property. As a path forward, we remain open to resolving this matter. Fair compensation is all that we have been seeking for our intellectual property."

The two companies' patent battles have been fought in courtrooms from Seattle to Washington, D.C., to Germany.

That lawsuit claimed Motorola had breached an agreement to provide, at reasonable rates, use of its patented technologies that have become standard in online video viewing and wireless usage.

The Seattle judge in the case issued a temporary restraining order last month, preventing Motorola from enforcing any injunction that could stop Microsoft from selling Windows and Xbox in Germany, should the German judge decide that Microsoft infringes on Motorola's patents.

As excerpted from The Seattle Times on 1/9/12 and 3/9/12. Articles available on seattletimes.com.

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OLYMPIA — Eight years ago, Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen walked into the King County Recorder's Office and applied for a license to marry.

From Boston to San Francisco, gay marriage was in the air and the two women, by then together nearly three decades, were among dozens of gay couples challenging Washington's ban on such unions.

They were denied a license, and as they left, Petersen recalled, "Jane and I turned around and said: 'We'll be back.'"

At the state Capitol Monday, Petersen and Lighty looked on as Gov. Chris Gregoire signed into law landmark legislation making it possible for them to eventually go back for that marriage license — decades after they first met on a blind date in Sacramento, Calif., and fell in love.

Speaking to a packed reception room and an overflow crowd in the balconies and hallways outside, a sometimes emotional Gregoire said, "This is a very proud moment for the state of Washington.

"It's a day that historians will mark as a milestone for equal rights — when we did what was right, just and fair and did it together, Republicans and Democrats, gay and straight, young and old."

The bill signing brought Washington in line with six other states, as well as the District of Columbia, where gays may wed legally.

Washington also becomes the first state in the country to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

The bill signing also came on the same day the New Jersey state Senate passed a measure to recognize same-sex marriages, despite the promise of a veto by Republican Gov. Chris Christie.

Rep. Jamie Pedersen, D-Seattle, who sponsored the House version of Washington's same-sex marriage bill, said, "Over the next nine months we will all need to work together to tell our stories and defend this victory." Sen. Ed Murray, D-Seattle, who sponsored the bill in the Senate, welcomed everyone to "the other side of the rainbow."

"Now matter what the future holds," he said, "nothing will take this moment in history away from us."

Same-sex couples in Washington can't make wedding plans just yet. The changes in the state's marriage laws won't take effect for 90 days, until June 7 — at the earliest.

Within hours of the bill signing, same-sex marriage opponents filed Referendum 73 with the aim of repealing the legislation. If they succeed in collecting 120,577 signatures by June 6, the law would be put on hold until the November elections.

The Rev. Joe Fuiten of Cedar Park Assembly of God Church, among those who filed the referendum, said this day will "not turn out to be so historic. I don't think it will be more than a blip on the screen."

He pointed out that, through the state's domestic-partnership law, same-sex couples in Washington have most of the same privileges of marriage as opposite-sex couples, that he believes that once voters "come to the consequences in terms of [illegible] religious freedom, it will change [illegible] dramatically."

But the possibility of that se[illegible] the minds of the cheering co[illegible] crowded in and around the re[illegible] at the state Legislative Building [illegible] the historic signing. Law makers [illegible] together at the front of the room [illegible] for photos, one group crowding to [illegible] for a shot with a cellphone camera o[illegible] holding.

As Gregoire entered the room, the crowd chanted "thank you, thank you" and a short refrain of "four more years" went up as she began to speak. Gregoire is not seeking a third term.

In January, she announced — after [illegible] of ambivalence — that she would [illegible] same-sex marriage. She recalled [illegible] journey in reaching the [illegible] required for [illegible] her Roman Catholic [illegible]

the chance to wed here.

"It is wonderful," Petersen said. "We didn't think it would come this soon, but it's here and we're so proud of the governor and the Legislature."

Throughout the Legislative Building, other couples smiled, took photos and hugged. Some cried.

Wearing a shirt that read "Legalize Gay," Keri Stout, of Seattle, witnessed the signing with her two children — Kaelin, 7, and Cameron, 4.

Stout, 40, said she was married to a man [illegible] the two divorced after she told [illegible] a lesbian. She said she [illegible] and when she was [illegible]

[illegible] to have the rights in my [illegible] not being able to have the rights [illegible] a discrimination I was prepared for[illegible]

John Medlin and Jeffrey Hedgepeth, [illegible] Seattle, said they already had a big wed[illegible] ceremony in Canada in [illegible]

"[illegible] definitely see us as a 'Till Death Do Us Part' couple," Hedgepeth said.

Petersen and Lighty came of age at a time when most gays found it necessary to keep their sexual orientation and relationships [illegible]

[illegible] had grown up most [illegible] opposite sides [illegible] and [illegible] relationships [illegible] but they [illegible] years.

The bill signing brought Wa[illegible] with six other states, as well [illegible] Columbia, where gays may wed [illegible]

"Peer pressure at that time t[illegible] heterosexual marriage was [illegible] recalled. "My friends were [illegible] ly was pushing the world [illegible] pushes."

Then, when Petersen [illegible] [illegible] criminal friend [illegible] for another.

"I walked in and saw her sitting there, and Pete-e smiled, and it was as if someone plugged her in cause she lit up like a Christmas tree," Lighty said.

"I liked her," Petersen said.

They talked for four hours that night, and Lighty two weeks later moved in with Petersen and her 10-year-old niece, whom she had adopted.

"This is the person I had been looking for my whole life," Lighty said of Petersen. "I never knew anything so strongly in my life. This was absolutely right."

As excerpted from The Seattle Times on 2/13/12. Article available on seattletimes.com.

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