

I-0887-001

Online Comment by User: spenner

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Comment Category: Comment on all alternatives

Comment Location: Chapter-5, Page-46

Address: , , 98004

Comment:

In general, the draft DEIS is inadequate in its discussion and analysis of the significant impact tolling plays in the project under consideration:

(1) The proposed plan will limit single vehicle HOV use. The HOV system in this state is 2+ occupants. The exception to that is the westbound portion of SR520 from 405 to the 520 bridge, which has been limited to 3+ given the shoulder configuration. The proposed plan as listed on p. 3-46 indicates that vehicles will have to have 3 or more people to travel across the bridge without charge. This is inconsistent with the purpose of HOV, i.e. to get people to share cars. Vehicles with only 2 occupants will tend to avoid 520 and travel the extra distance to I90. Anyone who spends 5 minutes watching current HOV traffic on 520 would see few 3 occupant vehicles.

(2) The stated tolls are exorbitant and are understated as they are in 2002 dollars. Why has WSDOT set the tolls so high? Further, why does the DEIS only list afternoon peak but not morning? Aren't peak tolls applicable to both?

(3) The high tolls will have a negative effect on regional businesses. Will a person in Kirkland want to travel to Seattle to shop when it will cost almost \$7 in tolls alone just to drive across the bridge? Further, 520 is not just a commuter bridge. As the DEIS shows, significant bridge travel occurs at non-rush hour times.

(4) The draft DEIS contains no discussion of the impact of tolling in the discussion of the economy. See, e.g. p. 4-21.

(5) Much of the need for tolling appears to come from the decision of the state to only fund \$500 million of the SR520 costs. In contrast, the Viaduct, which has equivalent usage (approx. 100,000 vehicles/day) is slated to get \$2.0 billion. Why is the 520 bridge being so inadequately funded by the state?

(6) WSDOT's analysis largely relies on tolling to achieve traffic flow benefits. WSDOT's analysis of traffic patterns on 520 assumes for the 4 lane and 6 lane alternates that tolls will be imposed, which will have a deterrent effect on travel. The stated benefits of these alternates therefore both depend on tolls to achieve benefits. The comparison of the alternates to the no-build option is apples and oranges. For example, if the comparison in Exhibit 4-4 were done with a no-build option that imposed tolls, the differential probably would be much less.

(7) In the discussion of the project's impact on neighborhood traffic and parking (p. 4-7), there is no discussion of the negative impacts on both Seattle and Eastside neighborhoods resulting from vehicles traveling through their neighborhoods to access the non-tolled I90 bridge.

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Comment Summary:

Tolling Scenarios, Pricing, and Revenue

Response:

See Section 3.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

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(8) No provision is made for the negative economic impact on property values in neighborhoods on both sides of the lake for which the only practical way across the lake is 520. The average commuter will have to spend \$6.70 (in 2002 dollars) to drive across the lake. That equates to \$1600 a year. That will negatively impact the value of those homes.

(9) Page 4-35 states simply "we considered alternatives to using the new facility, allowing drivers to avoid the toll." However, there is no discussion of what they are and what the impact would be.

(10) Page 9-8 indicates that the tolls "could be a hardship for some lower-income people." What about people of middle class means who need to drive?

(11) Are the high tolls stated in the DEIS understated? Today (9/20) the WSDOT announced that the costs estimates for all alternates have been grossly understated. If the difference is going to come from tolls, the bridge will be an unaffordable luxury for most people.