

-----Original Message-----

From: Clark Frazier [mailto:ClarkFrazier@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 10:27 PM
To: Swenson, Michael/BOI
Subject: eComment Issue

Preface: The web site does not work well enough to be able to access the SR 520 DEIS and actually read very much of it.

Initial comments:

I-1147-001

From what I could access, there are some significant problems with the analysis and underlying assumptions that were intended to support the conclusions but don't really.

It appears that none of the options will really improve travel times in the corridor without adding a light rail component that is competitive in travel time. The proposed I90 corridor, while desperately needed, will be too indirect for accessing destinations north or northeast of downtown Seattle.

The highway system is obviously constrained by the limitations of I5 in downtown Seattle and I405 in Bellevue. It appears that making the bridge wider will make backups shorter, but wider, and perhaps making travel time worse unless a direct connection from SR 520 and SR 99 is built (a potential environmental disaster in its own right).

My primary concern is that Seattle is effectively inaccessible from the East side during the PM rush hour. I could substitute transit for the trips that I make if frequent evening service on the 545 bus (at least 15 minute headway) was available. Any time savings on the in bound trip using the carpool lane are lost on the return trip. The second immediate need is direct service from Redmond (and Bellevue) to the Seattle Center making it possible to make event oriented trips by transit. Currently using transit to reach the Seattle Opera or Key Arena is impractical because of poor scheduling, connections and lack of reasonable waiting facilities in Downtown Seattle.

My fear is that whether this project is built or not, traffic or carpool lane configuration changes will increase transit travel times and reduce transit usage rather than increase it as is hoped for in the introduction to the DEIS.

I-1147-002

Some conclusions:

It is clear that at least 4 travel lanes in each direction with additional space for future light rail is needed. It is also quite clear that without rebuilding the I5 interchange and the I405 interchange, the project will not ever function properly and may actually make congestion worse. The left on merge and the right off exit to Seattle Center is quite dangerous and (at a minimum) a fly over/under is needed to separate that traffic from the I5 flow.

I-1147-003

Local access to Eastbound SR 520 should remain separated from the main traffic flow west of I405 until the bridge approach is reached. Ideally, the bridge would have an extra lane or strong ramp metering at that point to accept the east of I405 flow.

I-1147-001

Comment Summary:

Freeway Operations (I-5 Area)

Response:

See Section 5.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-1147-002

Comment Summary:

8-Lane Alternative

Response:

See Section 1.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-1147-003

Comment Summary:

Eastside Concerns

Response:

See Section 24.0 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-1147-003 Removing the frequent merges would speed access to the bridge and keeping a separate car pool lane would further reduce the queue. It is also clear that SR 520 will have to be rebuilt or reconfigured between the Redmond line and the bridge. The outside carpool lanes and the proximity of the center barrier are quite dangerous and contribute to increasing traffic friction and interactions to unacceptably high levels.

I-1147-004 Tolls, if implemented should be 100% electronic using license plate (and driver) photographs as a back up. Any electronic tolling scheme should be compatible with other regions, especially California and also the Northeast US standard. Collecting tolls from out of town visitors should be a lower priority than avoiding having cars stopping (or even slowing down) for toll collection. Significant in-state violators can have their auto registration revoked.

I-1147-005 Systematic underinvestment in transit and the unwillingness or inability to fix choke points in the highway system will seriously impact the effectiveness of this project. It is not clear that conventional traffic analysis will determine the true travel needs or the positive benefits (if there are any) of this project, because the current system is so congested that any analysis of trip behavior will be compromised. In other words, adding capacity will only serve encourage some to take trips now forgone or to try for more convenient trip times, erasing any travel time gains that this project might have achieved otherwise. Without significant additional and sustained investment, the highway (and perhaps the transit network) will continue to collapse and fail to function in any useable way for many residents.

I-1147-006 This may be one of the few projects that might conceivably improve air quality if queues are shortened or average speed increases. Normally, excess capacity is consumed by pent up demand or, more long term, longer commutes as families look for cheaper housing away from congestion, poor air quality and highway noise.

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I-1147-004

Comment Summary:

Tolling Technology and Infrastructure

Response:

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

I-1147-005

Comment Summary:

Methodology (Freeway)

Response:

See Section 5.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-1147-006

Comment Summary:

Air Quality Analysis

Response:

See Section 13.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.