

October 30, 2006

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Dear Governor Gregoire, Mayor Nickels and members of the Seattle City Council:

O-028-001

Last week I came to Seattle to deliver several lectures. During this time I had the opportunity to visit the Washington Park Arboretum in the context of the recent transportation proposals. As a result of this visit, I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of The Cultural Landscape Foundation to urge you to take the Pacific Street Interchange option for the SR-520 floating bridge replacement off of the table.

As you may know, the Olmsted firm first came to Seattle in 1902, and began their long-term involvement with the city – such a tenure is shared by few cities in America. Personally, I have both a deep understanding of this legacy from my own work while I was in the private sector in the 1980s during which time I worked on the master plan for Lake Washington Boulevard, in addition to my work at the National Park Service for the last 15 years as the Coordinator of the Historic Landscape Initiative and the author of the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. What is most remarkable about the 1934 plan for the arboretum, is not just the fact that the Olmsted firm was still consulting thirty years later – imagine a firm having such a legacy today – but the work at the arboretum, like all the design work that came before this was about *borrowing scenery* -- and it is this cherished scenery that is at risk. To preserve and protect these character-defining viewsheds, we believe that there are more appropriate solutions to the 520 replacement that will better serve the needs of the region while minimizing the impact upon the historic resources that converge at Montlake Boulevard, the University of Washington's Rainier Vista and Seattle's Washington Park Arboretum.

O-028-001
Comment Summary:
Arboretum (Concerns)

Response:
See Section 9.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

O-028-001

Please understand that in our view, the impacts upon these historic designed landscape resources would have an adverse affect – and as such would be subject to a Section 106 compliance review (this is based on the assumption that the resources were already found eligible by the OAHF in November 1998). As both a significant design by the Olmsted firm as well as a horticultural treasure, the Arboretum is an invaluable resource whose design integrity will be severely eroded if the Pacific Street Interchange is allowed to move forward.

During my recent visit to the arboretum, and my conversation with dozens of Seattlites, it appears that the Arboretum currently absorbs significant traffic during the rush hour as drivers navigate to the on-ramps in the park, but if the Pacific Street interchange were to move forward, drivers—the heavy majority in single-occupancy vehicles—will use the Arboretum for both north-south and east-west trips at all times of day, dramatically increasing traffic through this nationally significant landscape.

O-028-002

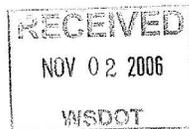
As a state agency, WashDOT is compelled to study the impacts to any properties that might be determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. We are extraordinarily concerned that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement does not adequately evaluate the impacts upon Montlake Boulevard, the University's Rainier Vista nor the Washington Park Arboretum as historic landscape resources that are eligible for nomination to the National Register for Historic Places. Nor does the DEIS address impacts to the intrinsic landscape qualities as described in *National Register Bulletin #18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes* including the park's spatial and visual relationships, historic circulation systems, and design intent. The association of these properties with the Olmsted Brothers firm and the historic patterns of urban settlement clearly establish it as a critical property in the history of Seattle's park system and a nationally significant place for its horticultural lineage.

O-028-003

In America there are less than 50 landscapes that have significance in Landscape Architecture that are designated as National Historic Landmarks. The collection of parks, boulevards and other spaces designed by the Olmsted firm, is without question, the first time that the firm borrowed scenery on a monumental scale, and as such would be eligible for such an honor. This honor also provides benefits for federal funding (e.g. Save America's Treasures grants). We urge you to set aside the Pacific Street Interchange and consider transportation options that are less disruptive and intrusive to these nationally significant landscape resources.

Sincerely,


Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
Founder and President



O-028-002

Comment Summary:

Olmstead Resources

Response:

See Section 11.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

O-028-003

Comment Summary:

Arboretum (Concerns)

Response:

See Section 9.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.