

I-0234-001

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

See Section 1.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

Online Comment by User: hinckley

Submitted on: 10/3/2006 6:35:00 PM
Comment Category: General Comments
Comment Location: Chapter-1, Page-1
Address: , , 98195
Comment:
6037 Princeton Ave. NE
Seattle, WA 98115

3 October 2006

Mr. Paul Krueger
WSDOT Environmental Manager
SR 520 Project Office
414 Olive Way, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Krueger:

I-0234-001

I wish to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement made available on www.SR520DEIS.com. I am commenting specifically on the Pacific Street Interchange option and its impact to the Washington Park Arboretum. I have attached an artist's rendition of the Interchange that appeared recently in the Seattle Times (provided in written letter sent to Mr. Krueger).

My comments come with the following background:

1. Graduate Student at the University of Washington (1966 - 1971) during which time I participated in several protests over the proposed RH Thompson Freeway and its potential impact on the Washington Park Arboretum. Personnel and resources of the Washington Park Arboretum were often important elements of several courses that made up my required graduate curriculum.
2. A faculty member in the College of Forest Resources at the University of Washington since 1980. Several of the classes I have or I am teaching regularly use the Washington Park Arboretum as an outdoor classroom.
3. The former Acting and then Director of the Center for Urban Horticulture (1999 - 2004) and member of the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (1999 - 2005).
4. Member of the Arboretum Foundation (2000 - present).

It is important to note first that all options impact Arboretum land and destroy valuable plantings; impacts range from minimal to extensive in terms of both land taken, views altered and both natural and specimen plants removed. The combined 6-lane and Pacific Street Interchange will have the most extreme impacts.

Through construction and staging process and the final product, native plants and collections of the Arboretum will be moderately to greatly affected. The collections are what make the Arboretum more than just a beautiful city park. It seems ironic that the recently

I-0234-001

passed master plan enables the development of new collections at the south end while the proposed replacement of SR 520 will eliminate many if not all from the north end.

In addition to the loss of collection specimens, there will be the loss of native plants and thus their associated upland and wetland communities will be either greatly altered or altogether lost. This will be especially true in the Foster and Marsh islands complex. Although the proposed replacement structure is taller and the columns will be more widely spaced, the impact to the physical and biological functions of these plant and animal communities will be extensive – to begin to comprehend the impacts, place the structure over any community in Seattle and listen to the complaints – unfortunately, non-human habitats and their associated animal and plant communities are unable to have a voice in this decision-making process, but the impacts will be strikingly similar.

The value of natural habitat, green space and especially green space and habitat featuring strong ecotones or edges (such as wetland – marsh – upland) cannot be minimized whether measured in terms of what natural features will still remain along Lake Washington or the City of Seattle's and King County's joint responsibility in meeting ESA – Salmon recovery requirements or the psychological health of local inhabitants or just Sunday visitors.

The six-lane replacement/Pacific Street Interchange option will have dramatic and irreversible impacts on the nature and management of the Washington Park Arboretum (via significant changes to the north end, loss of MOHI for administrative purposes, and continued overuse of Arboretum Drive as a north-south arterial and as a major exit – entrance to SR 520). It seems ironic that the community, city council, Department of Parks and Recreation and the University of Washington worked so hard and diligently to develop and have unanimously approved a master plan for the future and now much of that fine work will be obliterated.

Finally, this design will assure increased use of SR 520, perhaps a subconscious goal of any devote highway engineer. As living space in the city becomes less desirable, people will move to the urban-rural and urban-wildland interfaces in order to recapture green and in the process demand more cement and gasoline. At the same time that the mayor has committed to decreasing our area's carbon emissions, this project may merely assure that we are less able to achieve that noteworthy goal.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas M. Hinckley, Ph.D., Dr. (h.c.)
Professor of Ecosystem Science
Adjunct Professor of Biology

cc. Don Harris, City of Seattle's Department of Parks and Recreation, Deb Andrews, Arboretum Foundation, Bruce Bare, David Maberley and Sandra Lier, University of Washington, Tim Ceis, Office of the Mayor, City of Seattle, Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council, Ron Sims, King County Executive

