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Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2010 2:14 PM  
To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS  
Subject: SR 520 Bridge Plan

I-014-001

I have been both living (Madison Park) and working (UW Medical School and Hutchinson Cancer Research Center) in the 43rd District for more than 4 decades. Given that, I am writing to let you know of my concerns about the new Plan A+ for rebuilding the SR 520 bridge, which has been recommended by the legislative work group. Plan A+ ignores the work by the mediation group, which had the support by the Bay Area communities. It eliminates the tunnel under the Montlake Cut and, instead, adds a new drawbridge over the Cut, which may necessitate removal of several residences. A new drawbridge shares the problem of the current drawbridge, which is opening and closing approximately 90 times daily and creating remarkable traffic backups. Further, Plan A+ proposes to place the highway 30 - 40 feet above the water rather than keeping it at the current level of 4 feet. This would be architectural insensitivity akin to moving Alaskan Way Viaduct from Elliott Bay to Union Bay and to Lake Washington and repeat that major city-planning blunder from the 1950's. Also, while not an engineer, I wonder about susceptibility of such an elevated, floating structure to high winds.

While any bridge floating on Lake Washington and cutting through unique, precious wetlands abutting Foster Island is like a scar, Plan K (now Plan M), supported by the Bay Area communities, minimized the bridge's impact. It kept the bridge at its current height, included tunnels east of the Museum of History and Industry and under the Montlake Cut, had a Foster Island lid, moved the interchange and, importantly, required noise abatement.

I strongly urge you to drop Plan A+ and, instead, to implement Plan M (formerly K) as developed by the mediation group and supported by the Bay Area communities. Repeating the Alaskan Viaduct disaster from the 1950's along with ruining irreplaceable wetlands per Plan A+ would make our children, grandchildren and their children wonder what we were thinking of.

Sincerely yours,

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Since publication of the SDEIS, FHWA and WSDOT have identified a Preferred Alternative that is similar to Option A but with a number of design refinements. The modifications included in the Preferred Alternative are intended to minimize the effects presented in the SDEIS. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the planning process and the Preferred Alternative.

The tunnel under the Montlake Cut in Option K would have more severe effects on natural resources than Option A and the Preferred Alternative. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS discusses the reasons that Option M, proposed during the legislative workgroup, was not considered a reasonable alternative. The primary reasons for its dismissal were environmental impact and cost. As stated in the findings of the legislative workgroup, "Because the Montlake Cut is an environmentally sensitive area, we believe the permitting of Option M's wetlands impacts will be very risky and very costly to mitigate and we believe there would be a high likelihood of a much longer delay (12 to 24 months) in order to negotiate the permitting issue with the US Army Corps of Engineers." Additionally, the Cost Review Panel was concerned that given the range of probable costs for Option M, it was unlikely to fit within the legislatively established budget for the project.

The second bascule bridge would create lane continuity between the Montlake Cut and the SR 520 Montlake interchange, which would improve traffic operations in the Montlake area compared to the No Build Alternative. Most notably, overall delay related to bridge openings would decrease for all vehicles because the additional capacity would help clear congestion more quickly. Bridge height would be the same as the existing Montlake bridge, and operational effects on traffic would be minimized by the ability to synchronize bridge openings of the existing and proposed bridges.

WSDOT has identified a floating bridge height that addresses community concerns with while providing for bridge maintenance needs. The height of the floating bridge with the Preferred Alternative would be approximately 20 feet above the water. It would be approximately 10 feet higher than the existing bridge, and approximately 5 to 10 feet lower than previous designs considered in the DEIS and the SDEIS. With any build alternative, noise mitigation, such as noise walls, would be provided where it both meets WSDOT and FHWA criteria for reasonableness and feasibility and is wanted by the community. However, the Preferred Alternative includes a number of noise reduction strategies that would reduce noise levels to the point that noise walls are not be recommended in Seattle, except potentially along I-5 in the North Capitol Hill area where the reasonableness and feasibility of a noise wall is still be evaluated. See Chapter 2 and Section 5.7 of the Final EIS for more information.