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Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 8:39 AM
To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS
Cc: Steve Mullin
Subject: 520 SDEIS comments - Washington Roundtable

Attached please find comments from the Washington Roundtable re: the SR 520 SDEIS. I am submitting them on behalf of Roundtable President Steve Mullin. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you.

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Comments on SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Submitted by:

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SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

C-033-001 The Washington Roundtable strongly supports Option A with the suboptions listed in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This option is the same as design Option A+ as recommended to the governor by the Legislative Workgroup in January, 2010.

Adoption of this option will ensure critical safety and commerce concerns are addressed quickly. The cost estimate for this option is within the targeted budget amount for the corridor project and it best addresses the various community, regulatory, treaty and environmental issues. It is clearly the best option to meet the purpose of the project as summarized in the SDEIS, "to improve mobility for people and goods across Lake Washington within the SR 520 corridor from Seattle to Redmond in a manner that is safe, reliable, and cost-effective, while avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating impacts on affected neighborhoods and the environment."

The Roundtable understands that a minority of stakeholder groups are interested in a pursuing a replacement bridge with less capacity or, alternatively, limiting the use of the new HOV lanes to transit-only (excluding carpools). The Roundtable would not support either action.

- This SDEIS adds to the analysis of the Draft EIS submitted in 2006. The Draft EIS rejected the four-lane option because it did not adequately address the growing need to move people and goods in the context of projected growth in regional population and commerce. The SDEIS clearly states that traffic congestion impairs the economy. The two HOV lanes included in the six-lane options ease traffic congestion by providing new roadway space to separate transit and 3+ carpools from general traffic.
- Further review of additional options that limit the new HOV lanes to transit-only (and exclude carpools) would be outside the scope of this SDEIS and require additional analysis thereby disrupting the schedule and increasing project risk. The expulsion of carpools from the HOV lane also would eliminate the traffic congestion benefits to the general purpose lanes.

C-033-002 The remaining design life of the Evergreen Point Bridge is currently estimated at 10 to 15 years. A severe storm could cause it to fail even sooner. The Portage Bay and west approach bridges are also vulnerable to collapse in a severe earthquake. The current risk is real and grows daily. The state has an obligation to its citizens to replace the bridge as soon as possible.

C-033-003 A wide variety of stakeholders – including elected officials as well as civic, neighborhood, business, labor and transit interests – have discussed and debated this project for more than 13 years. Safety and commerce concerns demand that the state continues to move forward. The Roundtable strongly urges adoption of Option A with suboptions as the preferred alternative.

C-033-001

Comment noted. WSDOT received a number of comments in support of and in opposition to Options A, K, and L and the associated suboptions. These opinions are summarized in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Summary of Comments (WSDOT, April 2010), available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/SDEIS.htm>.

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has identified a Preferred Alternative, which is similar to Option A but with a number of design refinements that would improve mobility and safety while reducing negative effects. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS describes the Preferred Alternative and Chapters 5 and 6 describe its environmental effects.

C-033-002

Safety is WSDOT's top priority. SR 520's Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, Portage Bay Bridge, and bridge approaches are vulnerable to failure during severe windstorms and earthquakes. Improving and replacing the SR 520 bridge and corridor is critical to maintaining public safety and the safety of Washington state's transportation infrastructure.

C-033-003

Comment noted.