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**From:** Arboretum [mailto:arboretum@trompenburg.nl]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 29, 2006 12:35 AM  
**To:** SR 520 DEIS Comments  
**Subject:** UWBG (WASHINGTON PARK ARBORETUM) & SR 520

Dear Sir, Madam,

Please find in the attachement our letter of concern.

Sincerely  
Gert Fortgens

**I-0460-001**  
**Comment Summary:**  
Arboretum (Concerns)

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

**WSDOT – SR 520 Project**  
Paul Krueger, Environmental Manager  
414 Olive Way, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98101

10 oktober 2006

**I-0460-001**

Dear Mr Krueger

Trompenburg Arboretum, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, learns with alarm of proposals being put forward by the Washington State Department of Transportation with regard to the replacement of the SR 520 floating bridge and its effects on adjacent roads and lands on the western shores of Lake Washington in Seattle. We refer especially to the impact on Washington Park Arboretum, which collection of trees is the most important collection in the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. We therefore wish to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement made available on [www.SR520DEIScomments.com](http://www.SR520DEIScomments.com).

The form of the Arboretum was designed by the Olmsted firm at the beginning of the last century as a crucial component of their vision for the boulevard and park network for Seattle. The Arboretum now forms the southern limb of UW Botanic Gardens [[www.uwbotanicgardens.org](http://www.uwbotanicgardens.org)] which also include sensitive shoreline wetlands and a nature reserve (Union Bay Natural Area), besides the Union Bay Gardens surrounding Merrill Hall (Center for Urban Horticulture) to the north of SR520. The Arboretum alone is the largest open green space in the central metropolitan area of Seattle and provides an invaluable park experience for local people as well as visitors to the city. It has some 250,000 visitations a year [[www.uwbotanicgardens.org](http://www.uwbotanicgardens.org)].

The Arboretum is the only collection in Washington to be officially designated a State Arboretum. The tree collections are in the very top tier of North American botanic gardens and arboreta and, indeed, are of international significance, with worldclass holdings of oaks, maples, hollies, and many other plant groups. Already the first two are deemed leading collections in the North American Plant Collections Consortium, a major new conservation and stewardship initiative of the American Public Gardens Association. It is our firm contention, therefore, that any development that impinges on this national treasure must be assessed with the greatest care and consideration for future generations.

In the 1960s, the northern part of the Arboretum and the Montlake neighbourhood was sliced through east-west by SR 520 only after huge public process were plans for a further highway running north-south through the Arboretum abandoned. Proposals on the table today present an equally dismaying series of options, which, if implemented, will impact very adversely on the most ecologically sensitive parts of the Botanic Gardens, notably the wetlands lying at their heart. Furthermore, at present SR520 is largely at a low level near the Arboretum: proposals include raising it to 50-70 feet above the waterline [DEIS p. 5-7], making it visible over much more of the Botanic Gardens than it presently does.

One alternative now proposed [DEIS p. 5-27] has a 'footprint' some 400 feet wide over the western approaches to the Arboretum. Furthermore, one option [DEIS p. 5-32] calls for a large intersection over the wetlands and, from that, a bridge some 200 feet high leading northwards to the main campus of the University. The southern arm of what effectively would be a cross at the heart of the Botanic Gardens would funnel increased [DEIS 5-32] traffic down into the present-day northern part of the Arboretum and on to Lake Washington Boulevard, one of the Olmsted's most important thoroughfares in Seattle, so impacting on the Arboretum and its users as a whole.

We understand [DEIS p. 8-10] that construction will take some years and involve the building of a temporary bridge on Arboretum territory but that [p. 8-8] no meaningful traffic plan through the

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Arboretum for the construction period has been presented. We also learn that, despite requests by most neighborhood communities to have commissioned an independent assessment of alternative construction modes, notably a tube-tunnel option, those requests have not been entertained.

We believe strongly that such a study should be commissioned to assess the effects of such a system which would remove the concerns about the out-of-proportion scale of the proposed developments and their visual impact, the shading of the Arboretum, traffic noise, and the effects on salmon passing through waters surrounded by the Botanic Gardens. If such a scheme were acceptable after such a study, its implementation would also allow not only the Arboretum to be returned to the original Olmsted vision, but also restore tranquility to the Botanic Gardens as a whole - as well as to the adjoining neighborhoods.

In the national interest, we urge you to consider these issues.

Sincerely

**Gert Fortgens, director**  
**Trompenburg Arboretum, The Netherlands**