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**From:** earljb@netscape.net [mailto:earljb@netscape.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 08, 2006 2:00 PM  
**To:** SR 520 DEIS Comments  
**Subject:** Comments on DEIS

The attached Word document contains my personal comments on the DEIS dated August 18, 2006. They do not represent any others than myself. Please contact me immediately if there is any difficulty in opening the Word document.

Earl J. Bell, Ph.D.

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1808 N.E. Ravenna Blvd.  
Seattle, WA 98105  
October 10, 2006

I-0508-001

**Comment Summary:**

Pacific Street Interchange Option

**Response:**

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

I-0508-001 from Dr. Earl J. Bell and for purposes of identification I am an Emeritus Professor of Urban Planning, University of Washington. I have lived in Seattle for 40 years since 1966 all of them in the area north of the Ship Canal and adjacent to the University of Washington. I am submitting these comments on the SR 520 DEIS as my comments solely; they are not intended to reflect those of any group or organization.

I am completely opposed to the "Six Lane Preferred Alternative". The quotes are used because WSDOT has not formally declared a preferred alternative as far as I can tell. The "Six Lane Preferred Alternative" should be understood to include the Pacific Street Interchange Option (PSIO) because of the way that the DEIS features it. I have no comment yet on other six-lane options; therefore, my opposition at this time is solely against the PSI Option as part of the Six Lane Alternative.

As a result of my long term membership in the University community I have used the waterfront activities center mainly when I was an active member of the Washington Yacht Club. Together with my family I have spent many days over twenty years in the area boating and walking on or around Foster Island. Some of my fondest memories of those years involved the area that would forever be shaded by the four lane (5-lanes with a bicycle/pedestrian lane) Union Bay Bridge. Independent of any impact of the shadowing of juvenile salmonids, the shading of this popular canoeing area is an impact that cannot be mitigated. The area will be simply lost. The impact of this imposing bridge upon the Union Bay Wildlife Area likewise cannot be mitigated. The character of this area will be completely and forever changed.

Speaking of salmonids, I see WSDOT's note that the PSIO produces a significant impact on both ESA and wetlands habitat. The low ratings from the Screening Evaluations do not effectively convey the degree to which the PSIO can impact the area ecologically. *It is interesting that WSDOT used such low ratings to peremptorily exclude a bridge option in Elliott Bay for replacing the AWW because of the impact upon juvenile salmonids due to bridge shading.* It seems to depend as much upon the stance taken by WSDOT for what might be its preferred alternatives as to the true degree of impact upon juvenile salmonids.

Turning now to impacts of the PSIO on other than the Union Bay environments, I oppose the PSIO for the impacts it *might* have upon traffic circulation in the areas immediately adjacent to the Montlake Blvd. junction at Pacific Street. I live in the single-family area north of the UW known as University Park. When we moved here in early 1967 it was because I wanted to be able to walk or bike to most every place I needed to go. Now, this is becoming increasingly difficult and/or unpleasant. Though it is clear that much of what is proposed for the SR 520 project is designed to benefit the Montlake neighborhood from the impact of drivers going to and from the Eastside, I see little or nothing in the DEIS about improvements that will improve our environments north of the Ship Canal. It almost seems as if WSDOT and its cheerleaders are willing to disregard us to get what they want.

Ironically, we understand the impacts upon Montlake very well and thus support the proposed lidding to mitigate the noise impacts from existing and increased vehicular traffic<sup>1</sup> but supporting lids is a far cry from the environmental destruction that I foresee as a result of supporting the PSIO and its Union Bay bridge. They are far from my idea of solutions to what we concede is a significant problem ... moving people who desire or need to move around the Seattle metropolitan area in general and around the University District and adjacent neighborhoods in particular.

People who want to live in Windermere and commute to Bellevue should have at least one option for how to do it. I believe that a four-lane SR 520 plus two dedicated transit lanes could provide that. Those who are willing to pay the toll for their cars and trucks will have an alternative to public mass transit for their future commuting. Those who

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that all of the six-lane options include three lids while the 4-lane alternative does not include even one. When asked at the 9/18 public exhibit the response was that "executive decision makers" did not deem them necessary or desirable.

**I-0508-009** If not willing to pay the toll or to take public transit will still have a third alternative. They can either move to the Eastside, or they can decide to work on the Seattle side of the lake. These seem no more unreasonable to me than the idea of wrecking decent neighborhood environment in Seattle for the benefit of a relatively small number of commuters.

Thus, I would be willing to support an expansion of the existing four lanes to six for the enhancement of the movement of people and goods *provided that the two additional lanes not be HOV but dedicated transit for buses now, and possibly later for rail rapid transit.* The single biggest failure in the DEIS concerns the absence of any dedicated transit alternatives. In fact, the entire PSIO is plagued by vagueness and lack of detail in how to connect the transit dots. Providing more for transit seems entirely appropriate for the longer term use of the bridge, because for additional lanes such as HOV, the adage applies: "if you build it, they will come". Adding lanes has almost always proved to be an illusion; it is just a matter of time before the new lanes become over-subscribed. The proposed six-lane alternative will be a temporary expedient at best, especially if one takes a longer term view than, say, twenty years.

Whatever is built, additional concern is needed for neighborhoods north of the Ship Canal. There is no mention of traffic that would be spawned by the PSIO. We know that the result of building the Union Bay bridge would be to dump over 1,000 vehicles/day into the University District but there is no discussion of where those vehicles go afterwards and how to get them through nor is there any discussion of what might prove a transportation magnet for eastbound vehicles passing through our neighborhoods en route to the PSIO. To this degree the DEIS is completely unresponsive. Without such data and analysis there should be no further consideration given to the Union Bay bridge and the PSIO.

In summary I support the four-lane alternative augmented by two dedicated transit lanes. I do not support WSDOT's six-lane alternatives, especially with the Pacific Street Interchange Option. I do not regard the HOV lanes as the equivalent of dedicated transit lanes. In the DEIS there is little coherent discussion of how the transit connections will be made, to the extent that there is any discussion of transit at all.

We need to create a real incentive for transit as an alternative method for moving people; it will help the movement of goods as well by relieving stress upon the four lanes of general traffic. The time for just adding lanes is over but not for WSDOT and adding lanes is about all that can be said for almost everything proposed in the DEIS. WSDOT should develop a new 4-lane alternative with transit at its core and lids for Montlake. It could attract nearly universal support if not coupled to the Pacific Street Interchange.

This is submitted as my personal response to the DEIS dated August 18, 2006.

Earl J. Bell, Ph.D.