

Online Comment by User: sm woods

Submitted on: 10/31/2006 4:28:00 PM
Comment Category: General Comments
Comment Location: Chapter-1, Page-1
Address: , , 98144
Comment:

Re: Public comment on the SR-520 DEIS - Note my comments pertain only to the Seattle side of the SR-520 DEIS; submitted electronically 31 - Oct - 2006.

I-0882-001

Process: Perhaps WSDOT had found in the past that working toward negotiated options with a large stakeholder group produced no results. However, taking the opposite course could equally produce no results. It appears that WSDOT was working almost exclusively with the Montlake group "Better Bridge" in developing the Pacific Street Interchange (PSI) option. I question if this option can be supported by the community of Seattle citizens as a whole, as it appears to be a betterment to the Montlake neighborhood at the expense of taxpayers, i.e., reducing the level of local/regional traffic in the neighborhood (even from today's volumes) and creating a park-like setting with lids.

The process did not include the major stakeholders that would bear the brunt of the impacts for the proposed PSI option, primarily the Arboretum and its visitors and the University of Washington and its visitors, students and faculty. To my knowledge, based upon reviewing the DEIS and the proposed non-motorized facility, non-motorized groups were not included as well.

I am certain that if representatives of U of W, Arboretum, environmental and non-motorized advocates were involved during the scoping process, we would not be reviewing the plans in the DEIS as presented.

I-0882-002

Regional Policies: The Pacific Northwest has many attributes that make it stand out as a unique place on the planet. It is a natural wonder and I'm proud to live in the Northwest. The policies that have been enacted to preserve this region range from recycling programs to the Mayor's policies on global warming. The added capacity on SR-520 ONLY perpetuates sprawl, auto dependence and a degradation of the environment, i.e., more green house gases and the destruction of a unique natural environment. If we continue to improve SOV capacity, people will continue to drive as the economics of cost/time do not outweigh the other factors that encourage alternative modes or more simply housing/job location choices.

To quote Peter Steinbrueck, Seattle City Council: "Looming over all of our decisions about transportation in the Seattle area is the scary reality of climate change. The scientific evidence is irrefutable — global warming is real. In Seattle, nearly 50 percent of the emissions that contribute to climate change come from burning fossil fuels for our transportation system."

I-0882-003

The best solution would involve a 4 lane option in which one lane serves general purpose traffic and the other high capacity traffic. I support the infrastructure for future light rail. This is the preferred "6-lane" option. If we are to have a successful high capacity transit system, this is a critical step.

I-0882-001

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

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

I-0882-002

Comment Summary:

Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning

Response:

See Section 6.4 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0882-003

Comment Summary:

4-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

I-0882-004 Cost: For each of the 3 options, the true costs are not reflected in the estimates, as the mitigation costs are not included. In fact, it is likely the PSI option will have the largest mitigation costs, especially as it affects the arboretum/wetland and U of W. The U of W impacts are significant. The PSI option proposes lowering the roadway and creating a grade separation to reduce the exposure of pedestrians getting hit as significantly more vehicular traffic is directed to a high pedestrian/bicycle intersection. This option also includes reconstructing the bridges over Montlake Blvd NE. There is the issue of a parking structure to mitigate loss of on-site parking at Husky Stadium. What about the costs associated with wetland mitigation? Please present true costs to the public.

I-0882-005 Non-motorized: It also appears that in an effort to reduce costs, although the project presents a unique opportunity to construct a regional, separated, multi-use trail, each option falls short of providing such a facility. Under no circumstances should any facility be constructed without complete access for bicyclists and pedestrians. The need is great in this area with the highest bicycle usage in the City. The project should create non-motorized connections that provide the most level and direct access. The PSI option directs bicyclists up and over the cut at a 7%+ grade. This is simply a discouragement to bicyclists, especially those south of the cut.

I-0882-006 Environmental: The Olmsted designed Arboretum and the unique wetland habitat is not only unique, it is an incredible learning environment that is accessible to citizens of Seattle. On a recent visit, there were many elementary school field trips observing nature at its most splendid. The boardwalk would be almost entirely shaded and noisy with the PSI option. Noise levels truly impact ones experience in a natural environment as the sounds would be drowned out by the roar of traffic. Every effort should be made to minimize these impacts, as once this resource is lost, it is lost forever.

I-0882-007 As a minimum, NO connection for motorized vehicles should be directed though the Arboretum. This is especially a concern with the PSI option where motorists would have a direct link from the intersection of Montlake Bl NE and NE Pacific ST via the SR-520 ramps to the Arboretum, essentially creating a bypass for the Montlake Bridge. This link appears to be beyond the scope of the SR-520 project. What benefit does this provide other than appeasing the group in Montlake at the expense of the experience in the Arboretum? PLEASE evaluate the validity of directing more vehicles (at a significant project cost) through the Arboretum by analyzing the existing capacity particularly at the signalized intersection of E Lake Washington Blvd and E Madison ST.

I-0882-008 Transportation Modeling: PLEASE model the need with tolls on both the SR-520 and I-90 bridges. If automobile costs increase, mass transit is a more attractive alternative. The laws of economic dictate the \$3.50 toll per crossing would significantly reduce demand and thus the need for the 6-lane options. The beneficial impacts of taking people out of their SOV are significant for the region.
Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
SM Woods

I-0882-004

Comment Summary:

Project Costs

Response:

See Section 3.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0882-005

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

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

I-0882-006

Comment Summary:

Arboretum (Concerns)

Response:

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

I-0882-007

Comment Summary:

Arboretum Area (Local Streets)

Response:

See Section 5.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0882-008

Comment Summary:

Tolling Scenarios, Pricing, and Revenue

Response:

See Section 3.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.