

From: [Newstrum, Leonard F](#)
To: [Meredith, Julie; Krueger, Paul W \(UCO\)](#)
CC:
Subject: DEIS Comments
Date: Friday, October 13, 2006 4:23:39 PM
Attachments: [Letter on Lid Rev 10-11-06.doc](#)

I've attached my comments on the SR520 DEIS. They didn't lend themselves well to your e-comment site, but Dave Cooper said that he liked it.

L. F. Newstrum
Town of Yarrow Point Rep. to:
I-405 Corridor Program Steering Committee
SR520 Bridge Replacement & HOV Project Technical Committee,
and Daily Commuter on Both

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I-0979-001
Comment Summary:
Eastside Concerns

Response:
See Section 24.0 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

Leonard Newstrum
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Yarrow Point WA, 98004
13 October 2006

Washington State Department of Transportation
SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project
414 Olive Way, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98101

Attn: Julie Meredith, SR-520 Project Manager
Paul Krueger, Environmental Manager

Subject: DEIS Comments and 92nd Ave NE Lid Issues

I-0979-001

I would like to iterate certain issues surrounding the 92nd Avenue NE lid over SR 520 that is included in the build alternatives studied in the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. These issues are not new, having been communicated to WSDOT during preparation of the DEIS.

From the very beginning of the SR 520 corridor studies the Town of Yarrow Point has supported the state's goal of reconnecting communities, such as Yarrow Point, that were partitioned when the freeway was built. The present crossing – a single narrow sidewalk, unbuffered from the adjacent two-lane arterial – is at best pedestrian and bicycle unfriendly and at worst of questionable safety. A "lid" will definitely help mitigate the original negative impacts of SR 520 on our Town. Such a lid has been described as a 500 foot long landscaped park-like facility. (It does, however, fall short of the three bicycle/pedestrian crossings envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan: one at the east boundary of the town with Kirkland, a second at 92nd Avenue NE, and a third adjacent to the Wethrill Nature Preserve in proximity to the boundary between Hunts Point and Yarrow Point.) While all three Implementations described in Transportation Improvement section D5 would suggest three separate lids, central to our focus is the 92nd Avenue NE R.O.W crossing.

The present Freeway Flyer Stops at 92nd Avenue NE are of significant benefit to the Town's residents, not to mention adjacent surrounding communities. Continuation of those stops in any change to SR520 is desired, but not if it results in insufficiently mitigated adverse impacts.

As the design for this project has progressed, the potential adverse effects of the lid have become more apparent. This is particularly true when considering the "Options" and the possible combinations thereof.

Assuming a six-lane alternative with inside HOV lanes with the options of 1) eliminating the Evergreen Point and/or Montlake freeway transit stops, 2) not implementing one of the options to improve access to the South Kirkland P&R, and 3) the current 92nd Ave NE lid schematic-level lid designs, this lid has become a critical issue, as discussed below.

Lid Configuration

Replacing the current outside lane bus pullouts with a significant transit stop in the SR520 median was not anticipated in the Yarrow Point Comprehensive plan. This location change is preferred by Sound Transit as a logical consequence of moving all HOV lanes to the inside of the freeway. This change brings with it many potential adverse impacts that should be satisfactorily addressed in the EIS and possibly in binding agreements.

What is now two pathways down to the bus stops on the freeway will most likely be replaced by a considerably widened lid covering – in addition to the through GP and HOV lanes and shoulders: two bus loading platforms, two dedicated bus loading lanes, at least one "bus passing lane", and

some amount of concrete walls to separate the transit facility from the through lanes. In the case of the Six Lane Alternative, that would increase the inside dimensions of the lid, for its full length, from 114 feet to 174 feet: a 52% increase.

Atop the lid, access will have to be provided from 92nd Ave NE down to the two loading platforms. This will require a minimum of two elevators and two sets of stairs or ramps. Suddenly the anticipated landscaped lid has two, possibly four or more, structures on it. Undoubtedly covered waiting areas will also be included.

The widened lid will need to have some sort of off-street passenger pickup/drop off area large enough for cars and buses to loiter while awaiting incoming passengers. This would consume even more of the landscaped, park-like area.

This is starting to look, sound, and smell like a transit center that would occupy about a third of the lid.

It is essential that the town of Yarrow Point (both government and citizens) be shown what will be built, as soon as possible. That should include an accurate depiction of the configuration of structures, roadways, walkways, intersection controls, lighting, etc. Architectural features and landscaping are not of significance until a configuration is established and need not be emphasized at this time.

Transportation Issues

Given the possible elimination of the Evergreen Point freeway transit station and its associated park-and-ride lot and/or elimination of the Montlake transit station there will be a dramatic increase in the activity level at the 92nd Ave NE transit facility. (If either of the options to improve access to the South Kirkland P&R are chosen it might provide some mitigation.) Today the number of Evergreen Point boardings is triple the Yarrow Point boardings. By 2030, the catchment area for the Yarrow Point transit facility will include most of west Bellevue. In addition both of the transit stations that are candidates for being dropped are major SR 520 bus transfer points. In short, there will be much increased demand for car and bus loading areas and even pressure to provide park-and-ride facilities.

The Town of Yarrow Point needs to know what the operational plan will be under all combinations of alternatives and options. For instance:

Will there be feeder buses? What will the service frequencies be?

Assuming that feeder buses will be serving the transit facility, how will they turn around without entering the residential areas surrounding the lid? How will their lights sweep adjacent residences when turning around at night? What will be the noise impacts?

How will pedestrian and bicycle traffic flow and interact with the vehicular traffic on the several streets and on/off-ramps that will converge into this area. Will traffic controls such as signal lights be needed? (The latter is briefly mentioned in the DEIS, but its impacts were not considered.)

Based on these data, new traffic and intersection studies are needed. These should not be just "vehicles" but should separately address buses and other out-of-neighborhood vehicles. The streets of interest are that portion of 92nd Ave NE lying between NE 24th St and NE 34 St and that portion of Points Drive NE lying between 84th St. NE and 92nd Ave NE, particularly during peak hours (not averaged over "peak periods"). The impacts should be identified and mitigations proposed.

Other Issues and Potential Mitigations

"Hide-and-Ride" is already a problem within Yarrow Point: it will undoubtedly get worse given the above. What design features or other measures will be taken to control this practice?

Similarly, large trucks and buses seem to get lost regularly while attempting to go to Kirkland via Yarrow Point; which has no exit other than 92nd Ave NE. (This occasionally results in some interesting situations requiring road closures while tow trucks attempt to extricate them.) What measures can be included in the lid plan to keep oversize vehicles from entering northern Yarrow Point (i.e., going beyond the lid).

There are serious questions concerning the Town of Yarrow Point's responsibilities and authority with regard to the lid and the pathways:

Who will maintain and police the various areas on the lid?

Who will maintain the bicycle/pedestrian paths that parallel SR520?

To what degree will the town be involved in the detailed design of the visible elements on the lid (e.g., architecture and landscaping)?

Finally, How will the above features and agreements be documented to ensure that will continue to be considered as firm commitments in perpetuity?

Next Steps

The DEIS (pg 1-18) discusses the timing of the DEIS, identification of the Preferred Alternative, FEIS, and the activities that follow the identification of the Preferred Alternative. I assume that the above 92nd Ave NE transit function and related issues will be addressed in the post-Preferred Alternative / pre-FEIS period. In the interest of moving the project forward as rapidly as possible it might be worthwhile to start considering these problem even before the Preferred Alternative is chosen.

Other issues, comments, and suggestions

Pg 1-19 "How can I be involved?"

Some years ago I was involved in many land-use issues and attended many public hearings on DEISs (SEPA, not NEPA). I was astounded when I started to participate again that these hearings are, arguably, no longer public in that they are no longer in a town-meeting format where people could listen to what other people thought and develop their own positions. Putting sticky-notes on a map and dictating to a court reporter is not the same. Why and how has this happened?

On the plus side, the first paragraph on the page says, "The Final EIS also will include all comments received on the Draft EIS during the public comment period, and the lead agencies' responses to these comments." This is an improvement over other local transportation EISs that simply give a statistical summary and make reference to the comments being available at the agencies office: which, of course, means that nobody ever sees them.

Pg 2-35 Fourth bullet

As noted earlier, the Yarrow Point Comprehensive Plan advocates three specific bicycle/pedestrian crossings of SR520, not just "—advocates pedestrian and bicycle travel." The rationale for deviating from this policy statement should be explained.

Pg 7-8 "Changes in level of traffic congestion"

The fact that only one intersection in the study area went to "severely congested" and the proposal that a signal light could be put in to ensure that vehicles would not back up onto the SR520 mainline was a shock. Either I've been asleep for a long time or that little fact is new. I don't know (and WSDOT certainly doesn't know) what the reaction of Yarrow Point to having a stop-light put at our town entrance will be. This could become an issue and it should be addressed during the post-Preferred Alternative/Pre-FEIS period transit function discussions (pg 1-18) between WSDOT and affected jurisdictions.

Pg 7-23 "Bicyclist, Pedestrian, and Transit Facilities"

This section is woefully deficient. "Transit Facilities" are only discussed in a one paragraph stating that HOV lanes are good. This is supposed to be a detailed comparison of the (Eastside) Alternatives. What facilities (transit centers, etc) does Sound Transit plan to put in for the various alternatives?

Overall, this is very good DEIS. The fact that it has taken so long resulted in the evolution of a much better design than was originally conceived. Now if we can just build it.

Leonard Newstrum
Town of Yarrow Point Rep. to
SR 520 Bridge Replacement and
HOV Project Technical Committee