

I-1219-001

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

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

From: [Mike Ruby](#)
To: [SR 520 DEIS Comments:](#)
CC:
Subject: Comments on SR520 DEIS
Date: Monday, October 30, 2006 10:07:44 PM
Attachments:

I-1219-001 | These comments are specifically directed to the 4(f) evaluation, contained in an appendix to the DEIS, in particular the 6-lane alternative, specifically the Pacific Interchange proposal. This evaluation says that the 6 lane alternative does not constitute a use or a "constructive use" of the Washington Park Arboretum as none of the noise or visual effects are "so severe". Further it says that there is no "feasible prudent alternative". Although it states there will be "visual intrusion" is also states that there will be "improvement to some views". A series of alternatives was reviewed and found to have insufficient "transportation effectiveness".

The evaluation says that if the 6-lane alternative requires more land than is presently occupied by the bridge in the Arboretum, then other replacement land elsewhere would be identified and that the "potential for" shoreline and wetland restoration "would be examined."

First off, simply replacing new take with other land does not avoid "use". There will be a "use" of Washington Park Arboretum land by the 6-lane alternative. Because there are reasonable and feasible alternatives, which would allow 6 lanes but with much less take, this proposal is an unavoidable conflict with the Section 4(f) intent.

The Pacific Interchange proposal involves the construction of a massive structure above the SR520 mainline and massive ramps in four directions. The structure will be much, much more visually intrusive into the Washington Park Arboretum than the existing already intrusive exit and entry ramps to SR520. Viewed from any angle there is substantially more bulk in the proposed structure. Views north into Union Bay will be significantly degraded, decoupling Washington Park from its northern shoreline.

I-1219-001 | The design of the Pacific Interchange will itself induce added traffic and noise through Washington Park along Lake Washington Blvd., further damaging Washington Park. This is clearly a "constructive use" of the park, contrary to Section 4(f).

The greater number of supporting columns that will be needed for the Pacific Interchange in the vicinity of the park will do greater damage to the lake bottom during construction and disrupt the ecology of the lake shore, doing additional damage to Washington Park.

I-1219-002 | The stated need is to replace the aging floating bridge structure across Lake Washington. This can be done without any need to modify or replace the stationary sections of SR520 from I-5 to the first bridge. If there is a need in the future to replace those portions, they can be separately studied. Such an action would immediately reduce the risk of disruption due to a freak wind storm.

If there is a separate desire to increase traffic capacity, there are several ways that additional lanes can be added to SR520 without the extreme impacts of the Pacific Interchange. The addition of transit only lanes will increase the capacity of the remaining lanes by removing transit from the main travel lanes and by inducing some drivers to switch to transit. The alternative of HOV lanes, rather than transit only lanes, would create even more capacity in the remaining main travel lanes as HOV drivers switch lanes, although it would be less of an inducement for SOV drivers to switch to transit.

One option, that would avoid the need for the proposed braided ramps to carry the HOV traffic out of the center lanes to the outer edge of the ROW would be to install center exit HOV ramps to the Montlake overpass, similar to the ramps that have been installed on I-5 at the Federal Way Transit Center. This would dramatically reduce the bulk of the 4-lane alternative as well as eliminate the need for the Pacific Interchange.

These center westbound exit, eastbound entrance ramps at Montlake could be made to work by making two additional changes to the road design. First, it would be necessary to widen the Montlake overpass to allow the addition of a stacking lane in the middle of the road so buses waiting to make the left turn onto the ramps from the north would not obstruct a lane of traffic. Second, it would be necessary to adjust the signal timing to include a cycle for buses to cross the northbound lanes. This same cycle could be coordinated with greens on the northbound lanes at

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the signals north of the overpass to allow easy entrance of all the buses stacked on the westbound exit ramp.

There would be sufficient room in the existing ROW as there would no longer be a need for the "Montlake Flyer" bus stop. Persons going to the University or transferring from a Montlake bus would change at the Stadium Transit Center. Buses to downtown would not need to stop here as more than sufficient capacity to downtown from this part of the city would be available on Sound Transit light rail vehicles. Persons from the east side could change buses to a University- or downtown-bound bus at the toll plaza on the east side.

Although it would mean closing the west half (west of the existing MOHI bridge) of the residential access road immediately to the south of the ROW at the Montlake intersection, it would be possible to add an eastbound entry from Montlake at that point. This would allow the closure of the two ramps in Washington Park. These ramps are particularly problematic for traffic effectiveness. The existence of two entries to the main line so close together is a large part of what causes the eastbound congestion on SR520 at Montlake. If, instead, all of the eastbound entry traffic merged while on the access ramp and was given adequate distance to come up to main line speed, this congestion point could be almost eliminated.

It would also be desirable to construct a westbound entry to SR520 on the northside of the ROW. This could be done, although it would require a limited amount of additional take at that intersection. But this would substantially improve the flow of traffic both north- and south-bound on Montlake Blvd at this point, which is now severely congested by drivers turning 180 degrees and crossing a lane of traffic to get to the westbound on-ramp from the north.

This is only one of several suggestions that have been made for further modifications to the Montlake intersection that could make it work for traffic and avoid any need for the Pacific Interchange.

I-1219-003 | In short, the Pacific Interchange is a substantial imposition on Washington Park, for which there are prudent and feasible alternatives that can improve the operation or safety of SR520.

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Mike Ruby

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