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From : moz cooper <mozcooper@hotmail.com>
Sent : Tuesday, October 31, 2006 3:53 PM
To : SR520DEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov
CC : Csimon96@aol.com
Subject : Madison Park Community Council's response to the DEIS for the I-520 bridge.

October 31, 2006

To: Washington State Department of Transportation

From: Madison Park Community Council - 1900 43rd Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98112

Re: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed expansion of the I-520 Bridge

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Madison Park Community Council (MPCC) has been actively involved in this project during and since the Trans-Lake Study Committee recommended expansion of the bridge as the primary means of increasing travel capacity across Lake Washington, and, as such, is very familiar with the issues involved in the potential re-alignment and enlargement of the roadway. We therefore submit these comments based on a wealth of background knowledge, and with the fervent hope that this project will do no further harm to our community over and above the negative impacts of the existing bridge.

C-015-001

With the primary "do no harm" goal in mind, we would suggest that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement as issued is largely inadequate as it affects our community, and, in fact, the other Seattle communities adjacent to the west end of the bridge, and would request that a Supplementary Impact Statement be prepared and issued to fully address two main issues, viz:-

(1) Demand for a New Bridge, and (2) Design Options to adequately address the issues raised by a potential expansion/re-alignment of I-520 at the Seattle end of the bridge.

DEMAND FOR A COMPLETELY NEW BRIDGE:

WSDOT has continually stated over a period of many years that the bridge is unsafe and therefore should be replaced. This argument seems to be entirely founded on a politically based motivation to expand the bridge rather than on sound engineering judgement.

Despite many requests by MPCC over a number of years, we have not been provided with, and hence doubt that there exists, an independently commissioned study showing that it is not economically feasible to repair the bridge to meet current seismic standards. We would request that such a study be authorized and included in a Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement.

WSDOT has offered two primary reasons for the purported structural inadequacy of the bridge, but has not addressed the potential to correct these inadequacies.

The first is the potential for collapse of the columns supporting the fixed spans on the Seattle approaches via implosion, explosion or lateral collapse. It would seem that the columns could be filled with concrete to prevent implosion; that they could be wrapped with steel (as per the columns adjacent to I-5) to prevent explosion, and could be extended downward with vertically parallel columns to prevent lateral collapse.

The second is the fact that the bridge currently floats too low in the water because of previous structural reinforcement to sustain the weight of further strengthening measures. It would seem that removal of the existing concrete "jersey" barriers and their replacement with similar barriers made of aluminum (as per recent work on Vancouver B.C.'s Lions' Gate Bridge) would be adequate.

In addition, it is important to note in any environmental impact statement a more accurate discussion of traffic capacity

C-015-001

Comment Summary:

Alternatives Development

Response:

See Section 1.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

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C-015-001 of the existing bridge versus one re-aligned. The current bridge carries 1,400 - 1,600 vehicles per lane per hour. This is much lower than a roadway built to modern design standards because of the existing narrow shoulders and vertical and horizontal twists. A newer bridge would carry 2,100 - 2,200 vehicles per lane per hour. This would evidently give a replacement four-lane bridge some forty percent more capacity than the current bridge. This fact should be noted prominently in the DEIS, and not hidden.

C-015-002 DESIGN OPTIONS FOR THE SEATTLE APPROACHES

The primary planning efforts over many years have been expended on considering how many lanes a replacement bridge should have. Only very recently has significant attention been paid to connecting/re-connecting the Seattle approaches to the freeway. This has led to two poorly considered "solutions". The first is merely to expand the roadway to six lanes, and, essentially, to ignore the dramatic north-south traffic problems that would occur over and around the Montlake bridge. The second is to construct a massive new interchange over Marsh Island, (the poorly-named Pacific Interchange) which would have unacceptable impacts to the Arboretum.

Other options and design solutions are possible, but not partially or fully considered. Two options worthy of note are (1) a tube-tunnel option, or, (2) The Arboretum By-Pass design option, which is likely more practical because it incorporates the Pacific Street connection itself, with its attendant benefits of better transit access, and better north-south traffic flow, but without the destruction of the north end of the Arboretum wetlands.

It is imperative that more time and thought be given to design options for the Seattle approaches or it is likely that the project will reach an impasse because of the close-in Seattle communities' opposition.

C-015-003 Other issues in the DEIS have also not been adequately addressed with respect to the concerns of MPCC. With respect to the use of the bridge itself, we have always supported the addition of shoulders and bicycle lanes, but not carpool lanes. If the bridge is to be expanded to six lanes, it is our belief that the additional two lanes must be reserved for transit/vanpools, in common with standard practice in the rest of the western world, rather than using the two extra lanes for carpools, which merely serve to sort traffic out by occupancy, thus causing congestion due to the weaving traffic, do nothing to encourage carpooling itself, and are quickly convertible and probably to be converted to general occupancy (i.e. single-occupancy car commuters).

C-015-004 The other major issues are related to the excessive height and width of the current proposals in the vicinity of Madison Park. The proposed height will be unacceptably visually intrusive, and will cause the noise impacts of the bridge to be felt by a much greater number of citizens in our community. One rationale given by WSDOT for the height is to improve drainage of stormwater runoff from the bridge. This problem could, of course, be solved by adding more drains in the roadway surface and adding more pipes under the bridge deck instead of letting so much water flow down the roadway.

C-015-005 We are concerned, and opposed to the current proposals to add 14-foot wide roadways masquerading as bicycle lanes down into Madison Park at either 37th or 43rd Avenue East, the former because of the destruction of the wetlands and division of the natural area at that location, and the latter because of the unacceptable visual blight on our waterfront community and the blockage of a passageway for fireboats. In addition, we have not been given the resources to study the safety aspects of the huge anticipated increase in bicycle traffic on our narrow streets.

C-015-006 Finally we do not see addressed the provision of any real substitute access to our community to and from I-520 during the bridge construction period.

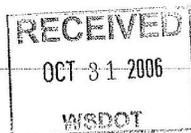
Thank you for your attention to our concerns; we also look forward to your response to our request for a necessary Supplementary Draft EIS.

Sincerely,

Maurice B. Cooper,

President, Madison Park Community Council.

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C-015-002

Comment Summary:

Alternatives Development

Response:

See Section 1.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-015-003

Comment Summary:

Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning

Response:

See Section 2.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-015-004

Comment Summary:

6-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

C-015-005

Comment Summary:

Madison Park Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection

Response:

See Section 24.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-015-006

Comment Summary:

Traffic Management (Construction)

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Response:

See Section 4.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.