



Queen City Yacht Club

2608 BOYER AVE. EAST SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98102 (206) 709-2000

October 25, 2006

RECEIVED

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SR 520 *1:40 pm KR*
PROJECT OFFICE

Mr. Paul Krueger
Environmental Manager
Washington State Department of Transportation
SR 520 Project Office
414 Olive Way, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98101

RE: Queen City Yacht Club Response to SR 520 DEIS

Dear Mr. Krueger:

We thank the Department of Transportation for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the 520 Bridge Replacement Project.

We would like to comment on a number of items in this report that we perceive as impacting our property and comment further on impacts to the environment of Portage Bay. We understand that you have not yet designed this project to any great extent and we hope that you will take these comments into consideration in your design in order to minimize impacts caused by the project.

As discussed in this letter, the Project may have very serious impacts on the Queen City Yacht Club. If our concerns are considered in moving forward with the design however, we believe that many of those impacts could be materially reduced, if not eliminated, without adverse impact on either the cost or the functionality of the Project. Ignoring our concerns may have its own cost implications on the Project. We strongly encourage the Project team to work with us as the design progresses so that the Project can move forward in a manner that is maximally satisfactory to all.

1. Background. Queen City Yacht Club was founded more than 90 years ago, in 1916, making it one of the oldest civic organizations in the City of Seattle. The founding premise was that it was a club for boaters of moderate means, who wanted the sport of boating without unnecessary frills. That attitude has prevailed to date.

Our Club is actively involved in numerous civic activities of importance to the community, as well as providing boating opportunities, social events and recreation for our members and their families. Today we have more than one thousand members.

In 1934, Queen City Yacht Club was able to purchase the property on Portage Bay at 2608 Boyer Avenue East. This unique property has been integral to the growth and development of the Club. The Club's property is irreplaceable, because in addition to owning the uplands, we own the submerged lands on which our moorage is built. These conditions would be difficult if not impossible to recreate anywhere in the Seattle area.

Our Portage Bay facility consists of our main clubhouse, landscaped grounds, paved parking lot and three docks containing 230 mooring slips. The clubhouse is a three story building containing approximately 9800 square feet of improved interior space. It was constructed by our members in the 1930's. In 1999, our members raised more than two million dollars in pledges from our membership to fully renovate the Clubhouse.

Our 230 slip moorage facility was largely built by our members. Our members perform almost all of the maintenance on the moorage. The moorage facility is one of the Club's most significant assets. It not only generates annual moorage rental revenue, but is a significant recruiting incentive for new members to join our club. The moorage at Queen City is known area-wide, as one of the best deals in boating.

Queen City Yacht Club is a non-profit organization which devotes its resources to serving the needs of its members, and providing boating education to the young people in our community. In order to meet its annual expenses, the Club depends upon the revenue obtained from dues from current members, revenue generated by moorage, and the revenue derived from attracting new members. The loss of any portion of our facilities caused by your project will have a severe and material impact on the survival of our organization. The impact from loss of use during the construction of your project could similarly hurt us. Thus we are most concerned about the amount of our property that the Project will require, and particularly its impact on Dock 3, our parking, and the clubhouse.

What we can see in your plans is that in each scenario you have moved your bridge any where from sixty to ninety feet north of its present alignment, which moves it directly onto and over our property. This portends the potential loss of our southernmost dock (Dock 3), a portion of our parking lot at least during construction, and a permanent impact on our facility by having the bridge nearer, if not over, our facility. A permanent loss of Dock 3 and significant portions of our parking lot will wreak havoc on both our immediate and long-term finances, and will permanently cripple our ability to regenerate membership which is vital to our long term survival.

C-023-001

2. Consideration of Other Alignments and Properties. It appears to us that significant vacant or less-developed property lies to the south of your proposed alignment all the way from the west shore of Portage Bay to Interstate 5. However, the DEIS does not appear to give any consideration to an alternative alignment to the south, which could use that vacant or less-developed property and spare the Club's property, particularly Dock 3. If a more southern alignment has been considered, the DEIS does not disclose what specific consideration was given and why it is not presented as an alternative in this report.

The DEIS does comment on a desire to "straighten" the portion of the roadway that crosses Portage Bay. However, the diagrams on page ES1-14, suggest that the roadway jogs north at the Queen City Yacht Club, and would be straighter if the roadway were moved to the south, instead of to the north. In any event, the absence of assessing the impacts caused by the decision to move the roadway northward seems to ignore the weighing and balancing process that should be occurring at the DEIS stage.

We ask the State to remember, that you are building the Project in an urban environment where curves and alignments are frequently impacted by the need to deal constructively with project impacts. If there are benefits to the road alignment from it being pushed further north as you propose, those benefits should be compared to the cost and impact, including the impact that by potentially taking Dock 3, the Project may imperil the continued survival of the Club. The public and decision makers should be the ones to decide which impacts are most significant and which impacts should be avoided. But without the information, they can't do so.

The report also does not discuss what alternatives may exist to narrow the bridge at Portage Bay to avoid or lessen the impacts to our Club and to the environment. Is it essential to have full ten-foot shoulders at this location? It appears from the diagram on page ES1-14 that the east and west roadways are separated by some number of feet at the point of the Queen City Yacht Club. Is that truly necessary? Why? Because moving the Project even a few feet to the south could have the effect of preserving Dock 3, it is critical to the Queen City Yacht Club that there be a full consideration of all the alternatives that could move the alignment further south.

The assumed bridge alignment described in your report does not consider whether the existing alignment and right of way of the bridge could be utilized as the permanent alignment for the new bridge by the creative use of traffic detours and construction staging during the construction of the Portage Bay portion. Again, if that would be possible it could result in the maintenance of Dock 3, with significantly lower adverse impacts on Queen City Yacht Club.

C-023-001

Comment Summary:

Property Acquisitions

Response:

See Section 6.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-001 We do not understand why a decision to move the roadway to the north by 60 feet, which clearly causes such damage, is necessary or desirable and see no discussion of the relative value impacts you considered in reaching this decision. Again, because of the lack of detail in your report, we cannot tell what will occur beneath the bridge and whether you intend to pursue design considerations that will restore our facilities after completion of your project, thus mitigating the impacts of the Project on our use. We certainly urge you to do so, and will be willing to work cooperatively and creatively with you to minimize the long-term impact on Queen City Yacht Club, even if the construction impacts are necessarily more significant.

C-023-002 3. Actual State Land Needs. The DEIS itself seems to suggest that the Project intends to take all of our Dock 3 lands, although all that may be needed is a construction easement, particularly if the final design occupies a smaller footprint and is located further south. See, page ES2-47. Appendix K, pp. 59-66 is not much more enlightening. We urge the Project team to very carefully analyze whether it can get by with only a construction easement, and to engage Queen City Yacht Club in discussion on how we can access our property during construction and thereafter. As we explained above, a blanket taking of Dock 3 guts the Club's ability to generate revenue and threatens our existence. It is essential that the Project approach the designation of the area to be acquired carefully and with a full dialog with us. Additionally, the report fails to analyze and distinguish the state's actual land needs for construction purposes, as well as its actual needs for land acquisition in perpetuity. The report does not appear to consider or justify a partial construction taking, either, nor has it engaged us in discussions as to how we can access this northernmost portion of our property during construction and thereafter. Further, the report does not consider the impact of its taking on the Queen City Yacht Club's ability to rebuild its dock, or in the alternative, gain access to its property north of the construction zone during the Project.

C-023-003 4. Irreplaceable Property. The report's recommendation that the state condemn the Yacht Club's property fails to consider that this taking eliminates an irreplaceable piece of fee-owned aquatic property, one of the few parcels of lake bottom remaining around the Portage Bay, Lake Union and Lake Washington areas that is not encumbered by a DNR lease. Few, if any, options for replacing this invaluable land exist for Queen City Yacht Club. The report fails to consider less intrusive options such as taking DNR parcels of land to the south and positioning the bridge in that direction.

C-023-004 5. High Revenue-Generating Property versus Lesser Revenue-Generating Property. Additionally, the report fails to consider the overall economic impact of taking a high revenue-generating piece of property over lesser revenue-generating properties, and even non-revenue generating properties, to the south. In addition to the severe loss of revenue to our club, our long-term financial survival is jeopardized by the loss of existing members who will leave the Club as a result of the loss of moorage. Moreover, our ability to attract new members as existing members die or move away will be crippled by the fact that we will have less moorage available as an incentive to membership. In sum, The Queen City Yacht Club's ability to survive the taking of our property is in serious doubt if Dock 3 is taken.

C-023-002

Comment Summary:

Recreational Boating

Response:

See Section 9.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-003

Comment Summary:

Property Acquisitions

Response:

See Section 6.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-004

Comment Summary:

Property Acquisitions

Response:

See Section 6.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-005 | 6. Concrete Piling Placement and Access to Property. The report fails to identify construction and design alternatives that would minimize the impacts of the final project on our club.

C-023-006 | 7. Existing and Future Environmental Damage. The DEIS also fails to address the environmental damage created by the existing structure on the sediment levels of Portage Bay. As a long term resident organization on the Bay, our Club has observed that the sediment levels have risen since the construction of the existing bridge. This has steadily made the bay more shallow, diminished water-quality levels in the Bay and made our property less accessible, impacting our ability to maneuver boats within our property and near the existing bridge. The report does not address how the state will remedy the existing sedimentation problem or mitigate and eliminate further silting of the surrounding properties during construction and in the final design of the new bridge.

C-023-007 | 8. Mitigation of Width of Bridge through Portage Bay. The report does not clarify the actual width of the bridge as it passes through the Portage Bay corridor. At present, the report appears to construct the bridge with shoulders that would be appropriate for wide open stretches in eastern Washington, but this design fails to consider narrowing the shoulders and width of the bridge through this area to mitigate harm to the environment and to the surrounding properties. Narrowing the shoulders and overall width would potentially avoid our property altogether.

C-023-008 | 9. Impact on Remaining Property. The bridge designs depicted in the DEIS significantly impact the value of our remaining property, for it builds the bridge nearly adjacent to our newly renovated clubhouse and diminishes the overall waterfront footprint of our property. We would encourage the Project to consider design and construction that mitigates or eliminates these impacts to our facilities.

C-023-009 | 10. Construction Sequence of Bridge. The report is silent on the impact of the construction sequence of the bridge as it relates to the Portage Bay corridor. Moreover, it fails to consider or discuss alternatives that would lessen the impact upon our property. Specifically, the DEIS appears to consider a construction process that fabricates a 30-foot wide temporary construction bridge and a new 60-foot wide bridge all to the north of the existing to allow traffic to flow during construction of the permanent bridge. This method of construction disallows a straightening of the bridge at the west end of the Portage Bay viaduct. This method displaces the greatest amount of private property, especially that of Queen City Yacht Club.

A method that would mitigate the impact to our property would be to reconsider the alignment across Portage Bay to the south, and adopting a construction sequence that uses temporary roadways and detours in conjunction with the existing structure, to minimize impacts on our property. Other construction sequencing alternatives would appear to exist, including building portions of the new structure, diverting some of the traffic onto the new structure and then building the remaining structure.

C-023-005

Comment Summary:

Recreational Boating

Response:

See Section 9.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-006

Comment Summary:

Water Resource Effects During Operation

Response:

See Section 15.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-007

Comment Summary:

6-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

C-023-008

Comment Summary:

Recreational Boating

Response:

See Section 9.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-009

Comment Summary:

Schedule

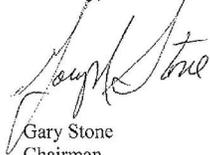
C-023-010

11. Support for Pacific Street Interchange Option. Finally, Queen City Yacht Club values its neighborhood and endorses measures to enhance the quality of life in the Montlake and Portage Bay communities. In concert, we also recognize the importance of a regional transportation solution. Our review of the options as set forth by the state lead us to the conclusion that the Pacific Street Interchange Option improves traffic flow through the Montlake community better than any other option. Traffic is managed at the point of congestion instead of backing up onto the bridge. Additionally, moving more of the traffic off the bridge at a Pacific Street Interchange would enable the designers to look again at the real needs for capacity over Portage Bay.

In conclusion, the state's proposed bridge plan, as depicted in the DEIS, may cripple and materially impact Queen City Yacht Club's ability to exist. The bridge plan further fails to mitigate the impact on revenue-generating property and on the environment.

We look forward to a positive dialogue with your designers, engineers, and land use teams to resolve these issues and make this project a win-win for all parties involved.

Sincerely,



Gary Stone
Chairman
Queen City Yacht Club
520 Mitigation Committee

cc: Robert Yates, Commodore
William McGillin, Vice Commodore
Past Commodore Jeff Ewell, Chairman, Board of Trustees
Elaine Spencer, Graham & Dunn
Scott Grimm, Past Commodore

Response:

See Section 4.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-023-010

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

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