
From: Shannon Boldizar [mailto:sboldizar@bellevuechamber.org]
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 11:36 AM
To: governor.gregoire@governor.wa.gov; Ziegler, Jennifer; Krueger, Paul F; MacDonald, Doug; gdegginger@ci.bellevue.wa.us; ssarkozy@ci.bellevue.wa.us; esser_lu@leg.wa.gov; hunter_ro@leg.wa.gov; tom_ro@leg.wa.gov; weinstei_br@leg.wa.gov; jarrett_fr@leg.wa.gov; clibborn_ju@leg.wa.gov; finkbein_bi@leg.wa.gov; nixon_to@leg.wa.gov; springer_la@leg.wa.gov; reagan.dunn@metrokc.gov; jane.hague@metrokc.gov; kathy.lambert@metrokc.gov
Cc: bnokes@bellevuechamber.org; LeslieL@BellevueDowntown.org
Subject: SR 520 Project DEIS Letter

Governor Gregoire,

Attached is a letter from the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Downtown Association related to the SR 520 Bridge Replacement Project DEIS.

Shannon Boldizar
Government Affairs Director
Bellevue Chamber of Commerce
425-213-1203

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C-024-001
Comment Summary:
8-Lane Alternative

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

October 25, 2006

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Governor
State of Washington
Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: SR 520 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Governor Gregoire:

On behalf of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), we would like to provide comments on the SR 520 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and help guide your decision-making process in selecting a preferred alternative for one of our critical Eastside transportation corridors.

When we met last month to discuss *The Next Washington*, it was no surprise that transportation rose to the top of the list of key concerns for Eastside communities. As you mentioned, we are practically our own economy and consequently, both the Bellevue Chamber and Bellevue Downtown Association are ardent supporters of building a comprehensive transportation system that will move people and freight safely and conveniently through and around Puget Sound's major corridors and urban centers. Our members believe that a balanced, integrated transportation system is critical to our state remaining a vital and competitive global economy and is also an integral aspect to the quality of life we enjoy.

C-024-001 When addressing transportation road projects, our priorities are cost effective congestion relief, increased capacity and general purpose capacity to accommodate future population growth. Both the Chamber and the BDA were disappointed that the 8-lane alternative – the only option that would have accommodated planned future growth – was not fully considered in the DEIS process. Our organizations have long been on record supporting the study of an 8-lane corridor. Now the alternatives before you will do no better than maintain the status quo. It is unfortunate that this option wasn't given the scrutiny it deserves; as a result, our legacy to future generations will be failure to meet their needs.

Polls have shown that the public is willing to support funding for more capacity. Given safety concerns of the structure, current and future traffic patterns, and ongoing traffic delays throughout the corridor, convincing the public that an 8-lane alternative was the wrong option for the region is going to be a difficult task. Studies show that this is critical to both sides of the lake. Traffic volumes are basically balanced with as many commuters traveling to Eastside jobs and vice-versa. We hope you agree that the state should do all it can to accommodate increased traffic on this corridor and urge you to fully incorporate the 8-lane analysis in the DEIS Appendices as project planning moves forward.

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C-024-001 | However, with the 8-lane alternative virtually off the table, we do want to be constructive with our comments. Passing the regional transportation package is a priority for our organizations, as is securing funding for the full SR 520 corridor from I-405 to I-5. We urge you and the WSDOT SR 520 team to consider the following provisions:

C-024-002 | **Pontoon Capacity**
It is imperative that the pontoons on the SR 520 bridge be constructed to accommodate at least 30% more capacity – the equivalent of 8 lanes of traffic and future high-capacity transit. While we question the overall feasibility of some high capacity transit modes on this facility, this number should, at the very least, be maintained, if not increased, to accommodate potential future modifications. Lane striping options should also be preserved (similar to I-90) and flexibility for high capacity transit modes such as HOT lanes, Bus-Rapid-Transit, Bus-Rapid-Transit Convertible, along with light rail should be considered during the design and planning phase of the project.

C-024-003 | **Direct Access Routes**
Providing direct access for transit onto SR 520 from Park and Ride facilities, particularly South Kirkland (108th Ave. NE) and Bellevue, should be a key component when planning for the corridor. In addition, a system-wide approach to HOV connections should be incorporated taking SR 520, I-405, I-5 and the University District into account and ensuring that existing levels of transit service are not compromised.

C-024-004 | **Connection to I-405**
To complement funding from both the Nickel Gas Tax and Transportation Partnership Package, project planning should span the entire corridor and carry beyond 108th Ave. NE to I-405. The SR 520 team should work cooperatively with the I-405 team on the braided ramp(s) project connecting both corridors to maximize our tax dollars.

C-024-005 | **Innovative Construction**
You may recall the Access Downtown Project in Bellevue that was completed two years ago. The NE 8th Street overpass was built across I-405 and “rolled” into place, allowing NE 8th – our main artery to the downtown economic core – to remain open. It was originally slated to be closed for two holiday seasons posing a major setback to our businesses. These types of forward, big-picture thinking along with innovative alternatives and construction methods must be integrated into the design process for SR 520. Eastside transportation leaders are innovative and are working on similar projects all over the world. They bring a wealth of knowledge on best practices that should be incorporated in the EIS process.

Further, we encourage the State to establish a core principle during the design phase of the project that ensures flexibility for any potential future modifications and expansion on the entire SR 520 corridor. If potential constraints are not mitigated now, they will only be more expensive and cumbersome to modify over time.

Another key component of the design process is mitigating the impacts of construction. While we recognize that the Legislature mandated transit mitigation during construction, the expectations for traffic flow, facility closures, etc., should be communicated during the early phases of planning so drivers and businesses can plan accordingly for alternative routes and transportation modes.

C-024-002

Comment Summary:

Light Rail Transit

Response:

See Section 2.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-024-003

Comment Summary:

Eastside Concerns

Response:

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

C-024-004

Comment Summary:

Eastside Concerns

Response:

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

C-024-005

Comment Summary:

Traffic Management (Construction)

Response:

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

C-024-006 Lids, Navigation and Potential Constraints

When planning for lids and navigation, long-term impediments to construction should be reviewed during the design phase so construction can take place with "future potential" in mind to accommodate growth, capacity, transit, etc., along the entire corridor. While lids serve to connect communities, they should not preclude flexibility for future expansion. Consideration should also be given to preserving navigation clearance for watercraft, potential passenger ferry lines and other water-borne modes of transportation. All need to be accommodated without constraint and within the minimum limits established by current regulations.

C-024-007 Tolling

In order to fully fund this facility, toll revenue will be a critical component of the financial equation. Analysis shows that toll revenue would be lower per vehicle on the 8-lane option, yet raise more revenue than higher tolls on the six-lane configuration. Overall, the 8-lane alternative will provide more revenue to fund the facility. In addition, we ask that you maintain support for the state's policy that toll collections be removed once a structure is paid in full. Further, tolls collected on SR 520 should be dedicated solely to this corridor and should be coordinated with potential tolling on other facilities. Over time, we also encourage you to explore how revenue from 520 tolls could be dedicated to implementing an 8-lane facility.

C-024-008 Bicycle/Pedestrian Lane

While we appreciate the need for multi-modal transportation and pedestrian options, priority on the SR 520 corridor should first be given to additional lane capacity. WSDOT cost estimates for the 14-foot wide bike/ped lane are approximately \$90 million. When analyzing the total cost of the overall structure divided by cost per lane mile, the total for the bike/ped lane is closer to \$500 million. Lane costs for mixed-use, two-way traffic should be allocated proportionally with overall lane costs, not separated out. Given the limited funding available on this corridor, constructing a 14-foot bike/ped lane is overkill. Additional lane capacity should be built instead with a significantly reduced width in the bike/ped lane.

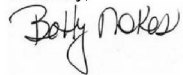
C-024-009 Sound/Noise

Walls to reduce noise impacts throughout the corridor are a vital component in preserving Eastside neighborhoods and quality of life.

We appreciate your recognition of the vulnerability of SR 520. This corridor is a critical component of our economic viability and competitiveness, as well as a valuable asset to our region and our state in terms of capacity and freight mobility. Carrying nearly 102,000 vehicles each day and given the known safety issues, the sooner a decision on a preferred alternative can be made, the sooner WSDOT will be able to move forward with innovative design and detailed cost estimates for the regional ballot measure.

The Bellevue Chamber and the Bellevue Downtown Association commend your leadership on transportation issues and also recognize the challenges that lay before you. We appreciate the opportunity to share our comments and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Betty Nokes
President & CEO
Bellevue Chamber of Commerce



Leslie Lloyd
President
Bellevue Downtown Association

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C-024-006

Comment Summary:

Bicycle/Pedestrian Path

Response:

See Section 2.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-024-007

Comment Summary:

Tolling Scenarios, Pricing, and Revenue

Response:

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

C-024-008

Comment Summary:

Bicycle/Pedestrian Path

Response:

See Section 2.3 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

C-024-009

Comment Summary:

Eastside Concerns

Response:

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

c: Paul Krueger, WSDOT Environmental Manager, SR 520 Project Office
Bellevue Chamber Board of Directors
Bellevue Downtown Association Board of Directors
Mayor Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue
Steve Sarkozy, City of Bellevue
Sen. Luke Esser, 48th District
Rep. Ross Hunter, 48th District
Rep. Rodney Tom, 48th District
Sen. Brian Weinstein, 41st District
Rep. Fred Jarrett, 41st District
Rep. Judy Clibborn, 41st District
Sen. Bill Finkbeiner, 45th District
Rep. Toby Nixon, 45th District
Rep. Larry Springer, 45th District
King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn
King County Councilmember Jane Hague
King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert