

From: [Jim Horn](#)
To: [SR 520 DEIS Comments](#)
CC:
Subject: Comments on the SR 520 Bridge Replacement DEIS
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2006 3:59:50 PM
Attachments: [Krueger ltr re SR-520 DEIS.pdf](#)

Mr. Krueger;

C-036-001

Please accept our comments from the Eastside Transportation Association on the subject DEIS documents. Our members are very concerned that the DEIS evaluate all feasible solutions to our cross-lake transportation problems and not exclude, for political reasons, options that offer congestion relief, more throughput, and reduced tolls.

Sincerely,



Jim Horn
Chairman
Eastside Transportation Association

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C-036-001

Comment Summary:

Alternatives Development

Response:

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

Eastside Transportation Association

"Dedicated to improving our quality of life and environment by reducing congestion through increased mobility"

P.O. Box 50621
Bellevue, WA 98015

October 31, 2006

Paul Krueger
Environmental Manager

Re: Comments on the SR-520 Bridge Replacement DEIS

Dear Mr Krueger:

C-036-002

The WSDOT SR-520 Bridge Replacement Draft EIS summarizes results of the 8 years of the corridor planning process thus far. Page ES1-2 states that: *"The ... Project is one of the region's highest transportation priorities. Transportation congestion needs to be addressed and traffic safety and reliability improved."* Unfortunately *congestion relief* was a critical element that has been largely ignored.

During the PM peak period, the "Montlake Mess" has traffic backed up from the SR-520 eastbound on-ramp to as far back as Sand Point Way, and from the Lake Washington Blvd eastbound on-ramp halfway back through the Arboretum. Westbound backups on the Eastside typically extend to Bellevue Way and often all the way to I-405 and beyond. The DEIS does not describe these intolerable existing traffic congestion conditions, nor do its alternatives address any congestion relief for these existing conditions.

The only action proposed for non-HOV congestion relief will be the imposition of tolls in the hopes that tolls will drive some of the excess non-HOV and commercial/ freight vehicle traffic away from the corridor. The 6-lane alternative that adds a transit/HOV lane in each direction would provide minimal relief for non-HOV drivers (one and two-occupant vehicles) and commercial freight traffic using the corridor whose diverse travel patterns do not have reasonable transit or higher-occupancy HOV options.

C-036-003

The Bridge Bottleneck

The totally unaddressed issue for the SR-520 corridor is that over one-third of the trans-lake bridge traffic enters and exits mid-corridor between Montlake and Bellevue Way – and that occurs even though those ramps are heavily metered during peak periods. That means that a proper balance for corridor traffic demand would require an additional GP traffic lane each way between Montlake and Bellevue Way. With an added eastbound GP lane east of Montlake, the Montlake and Lake Washington Blvd ramp meters could be greatly relaxed or even eliminated.

Not only would that relieve the Montlake Mess and Arboretum backups, but it would shift even more eastbound traffic between northeast Seattle and the Eastside from I-5 to the preferred local access routes via Montlake. This shift is even better accommodated by the new "Pacific Interchange" subalternative with a new crossing of Portage Bay to relieve the Montlake Bridge – an option that we believe is supported by the Montlake Community.

C-036-002

Comment Summary:

Freeway Operations (I-5 Area)

Response:

See Section 5.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

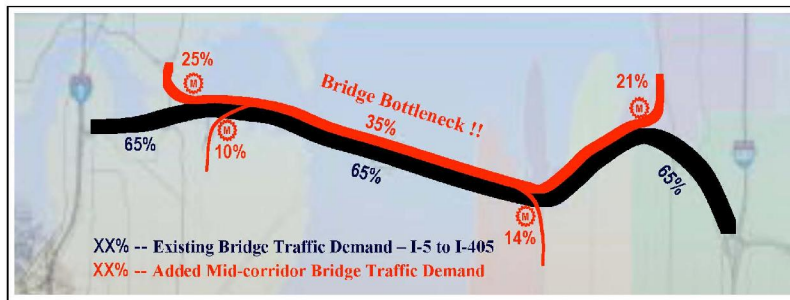
C-036-003

Comment Summary:

Freeway Operations (I-5 Area)

Response:

See Section 5.2 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.



C-036-004 “What happened to the 8-Lane Alternative?”

The WSDOT project team studied the 8-lane alternative. Its models found that when the bridge bottleneck was relieved by the addition of two GP lanes on the bridge, bridge traffic to/from I-5 was reduced – not increased. Up to 45% of the bridge traffic to and from Seattle have origins and destinations east of I-5. The percentage of bridge traffic to/from Montlake Blvd increased from 25% to 35%, and bridge traffic to and from I-5 decreased to 55%.

However, the reduction of bridge traffic on I-5 and the Portage Bay Viaduct allowed the model to more than offset the bridge traffic reductions with even greater traffic increases from northeast Seattle. Traffic accessing I-5 at its NE 45th/50th ramps merely shifted to Montlake and the Portage Bay Viaduct for a short hop to I-5 via SR-520 and the new metered westbound on-ramp from Montlake. Under strong pressure from the City of Seattle to exclude any GP capacity expansion of SR-520, the study team has erroneously reported the traffic increase on the SR-520 approach to I-5 a result of the added GP capacity on the SR-520 bridge. It used this interpretation to maintain its prior decision to exclude an 8-lane alternative from further consideration.

C-036-005 **A 6/8-lane Hybrid Alternative**

The ETA has proposed consideration of what we call a 6/8-lane Hybrid alternative. It strongly endorses the 6-lane Alternative from Foster Island through Montlake to I-5. It further strongly endorses the relocation of the Montlake Interchange to the new “Pacific Interchange” with a new overcrossing of the waterway to relieve the Montlake Bridge and the Montlake Community of SR-520 bridge traffic. We further propose metering of the westbound on-ramp from Montlake (or from the new interchange) to prevent more northeast Seattle traffic from overloading the I-5/SR-520 interchange. This would eliminate the condition that the project team has used as the reason to eliminate the 8-lane Alternative from further consideration.

Our proposal then focuses on relief of the existing bridge bottleneck condition that is unevaluated in the DEIS. From 35 to 45% of the bridge traffic desires to enter the corridor eastbound via the heavily metered Montlake and Lake Washington Blvd on-ramps, but with no added capacity on the bridge to absorb this major traffic inflow. To relieve the so-caused eastbound bottleneck, we propose addition of a third eastbound GP lane that would run from the Montlake (or new Pacific Interchange) on-ramp to 108th Avenue NE where it would interface with the four existing eastbound lanes on SR-520. This added GP lane would significantly reduce the Montlake Mess and traffic backups through the Arboretum (not addressed by the study team).

C-036-004

Comment Summary:

8-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

C-036-005

Comment Summary:

8-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

C-036-005

In the westbound direction, only 65% of the bridge traffic comes from the east of Bellevue Way via two GP lanes and the limited HOV lane. The other 35% of the bridge traffic that enters from the Bellevue Way and 84th Ave NE on-ramps must merge into these same lanes, causing the westbound corridor traffic backups often into Redmond. To relieve this westbound bridge bottleneck condition, we propose addition of a third westbound GP auxiliary lane from the four lanes east of 108th Avenue NE to the Montlake or Pacific Interchange off-ramp.

In summary, our 6/8-lane Hybrid alternative in conjunction with the new Pacific Interchange option would not only reduce bridge traffic impacts on I-5 compared to the No Build, 4-Lane and 6-Lane alternatives, it would also address and largely mitigate the existing bridge bottleneck condition of the corridor that has been unaddressed by the study team and its DEIS documents.

The 6/8-lane Hybrid would add little cost to the SR-520 Bridge Replacement project. The 6-lane Alternative would already require a complete rebuild of SR-520 and all of its over/under crossings from I-5 to I-405. The bridge pontoons are being planned for maximum width that could accommodate four lanes in each direction. The 6/8-lane Hybrid would require no further widening west of the new Pacific Interchange, and only an additional 24 feet of roadway width over water and thru the Points communities on the Eastside to 108th Avenue NE where SR-520 already has three to four GP lanes in each direction. The increased throughput more than offset the additional costs resulting in a lower toll of \$.75 per trip.

C-036-006

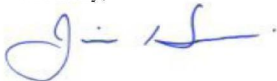
The primary corridor problem now and in the future is constraints to traffic flow out of Seattle in the morning and its return in the afternoon. When the bridge bottleneck causes westbound traffic backups beyond I-405 in the afternoon, it causes total breakdown of a large proportion of our Eastside street and highway system. This will become a normal daily occurrence in the future under the 4 and 6-Lane Alts.

We believe it will be embarrassing to the WSDOT if we spend \$3 billion on a total corridor rebuild between I-5 and I-405 yet provide no congestion relief for non-HOVs and freight traffic. It will add insult to injury for those same unbenefitted bridge users if they are to be charged tolls with no congestion relief. Tolls would likely cause some traffic diversion from the SR-520 lake crossing; but to where would that traffic divert? At the same time that WSDOT is proposing no congestion relief for SR-520, Sound Transit is trying to eliminate traffic use of the I-90 center roadway to allow its exclusive use by rail transit.

C-036-007

We respectfully request full consideration of our 6/8-lane Hybrid alternative in the FEIS and full disclosure of the bridge bottleneck that has been ignored in the presentation and evaluation of the 4 and 6-Lane Alternatives.

Sincerely,



Jim Horn, Chairman
Eastside Transportation Association

C-036-006**Comment Summary:**

8-Lane Alternative

Response:

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

C-036-007**Comment Summary:**

8-Lane Alternative

Response:

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