

To: Paul Krueger, WSDOT
From: Vernon Van Steenkist, Citizen
Date: 09/25/06

Forward:

I-0421-001

First, let me apologize for this long letter. Unfortunately, The olio of 520 bridge proposals has precipitated the length of this e-mail

Second, please allow me to introduce myself. I live in Eastlake in Seattle and I use the 520 every day. I, like many others, commute from Seattle to Redmond every day (West to East in the Morning, East to West in the evening).

Next, please let me express my displeasure at the commenting process. There currently is **NO** single proposal to comment against. There are many proposals (ex. 4 lane, six lane, possible elimination of Montlake Freeway Station, possible Pacific street exit etc.). Since the 520 Bridge replacement proposal represents a moving target, the public should be given an additional comment period once a concrete proposal has been made.

On a positive note, the 520 committee did an excellent job during the public educational seminars. Many people were there to answer questions and most tried educate rather than promote their favorite proposal. I attended the seminar at MOHAI last week. Although it was well attended, I believe the Seattle seminar would have been better attended if people had not received the announcement mailing on the same day of the seminar.

I-0421-002

Based on my conversations with the 520 representatives, I have categorized the 520 bridge replacement into negatives and positives.

Negatives:

- **Neither** the Four or Six lane proposals **will do anything to improve traffic.**
 - When I spoke to the traffic representative, he agreed that replacing the 520 bridge will not improve traffic since the bridge is **NOT** a traffic bottleneck. The traffic bottlenecks occur at I-5 before the bridge going east and at 405 and beyond going west. Once you get to the bridge, the traffic clears up.
 - Although the traffic representative had a good idea of the traffic patterns for an East side to Seattle commuter, he did not have a clear understanding of the traffic patterns for a Seattle to Redmond commuter - which is **MOST** of the traffic.
- Removal of the Montlake Freeway station bus stop
 - Other than some bus stops in downtown, the Montlake freeway station is the bus stop with the most passengers. Any group that would even consider removing this bus stop has absolutely no idea how the King County metro bus system works. The King County bus system uses a "hub and spoke system" (just like airlines have hubs and spokes) to get people to the Montlake Freeway station and then on to the buses going to the East side. Removal of this bus stop would be disastrous to the bus ridership and cause many to go back to driving.
- Automatic Toll Collection

I-0421-003

I-0421-004

I-0421-001

Comment Summary:

Coordination with Other Transportation Projects

Response:

See Section 1.0 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0421-002

Comment Summary:

Methodology (Freeway)

Response:

See Section 5.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0421-003

Comment Summary:

Montlake Freeway Transit Station

Response:

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

I-0421-004

Comment Summary:

Tolling Scenarios, Pricing, and Revenue

Response:

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

I-0421-004

- Tolls are a regressive tax on those that can afford them the least - poor people and independent truckers.
- Automatic tolls collection will have a negative effect on tourists and business travelers trying to get to the east side. Tourists won't have the electronic devices necessary in their cars and it is not clear whether rental companies will equip their vehicles with the transponders necessary for toll collection.
- If collecting automatic tolls on the 520 bridge is such a good idea, let's start doing it now. The cost compared to collections would be minimal and it would give motorists a great idea what driving on 520 bridge would be like in the future.

I-0421-005

- Pacific Street Interchange
 - Most of the 520 bridge traffic is **NOT** going to the University. Most of it is going between the West side and Redmond or to 405. A Pacific street interchange would just cause the University traffic and the East side bound traffic to merge and create a big mess on Pacific.

I-0421-006

- Loss of Park Land.
 - Any proposal will cause at **least** a 1.8 acre **permanent loss** of precious park land. There are beautiful wetlands around the 520 bridge. You can now walk from MOHAI to the Arboretum through the wetlands. It's not clear that any proposal would preserve these trails and the loss of part of the wetlands would be devastating to the wildlife.

I-0421-007

- Cost.
 - Refurbishing the current bridge would cost **at least 1/3 less** than any of the proposals and not incur any of the negatives above.

I-0421-008

- It is not clear who wants a new bridge.
 - During the information meeting, it was stated that the only constituency for the bridge was the executive committee. No polling has been done, let alone an election to see who wants a new bridge. I know that I am not alone in opposing any new bridge. Once others discover the negatives of a new bridge, I fear that the political backlash will be severe. Please note that this proposal has caused me to register to vote.

Positive:

- In theory, a new bridge would be less susceptible to earthquake damage.
 - In practice, no one can be sure how less susceptible the bridge would be to earthquake damage. Certainly no bridge design has been shown immune to earthquakes or other disasters such as a boat colliding with the pillars (this happened in Tampa). In addition, there can always be construction problems ala the Big Dig in Boston.
 - The current bridge has withstood the test of time. It is **not** at the end of its useful life. In the engineering world, we "grandfather in" old designs even though they may not meet current guidelines precisely because the design has withstood the test of time. Time, not guidelines, are the ultimate determiner of success or failure.
 - There has been considerable debate on what constitutes an earthquake resistant design and guidelines have changed as a result of design failures during earthquakes in the past. Why tear down a proven design for an untested one if the earthquake benefits are unclear?
 - Even if the new bridge was more earthquake proof, the surrounding roads are not. If we have an earthquake large enough to take out the current bridge, the bridge will be the least of our problems.

I-0421-005

Comment Summary:

Pacific Street Interchange Option

Response:

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

I-0421-006

Comment Summary:

Park Effects

Response:

See Section 9.1 of the 2006 Draft EIS Comment Response Report.

I-0421-007

Comment Summary:

Alternatives Development

Response:

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

I-0421-008

Comment Summary:

Alternatives Development

Response:

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

I-0421-009

Conclusion:

Based on the above, the "No Build" option is clearly the best choice. The current bridge is not at the end of its useful life and when it is, it should be refurbished. Unfortunately, the 520 committee has stated that will not be submitting a "no build" option.

Hopefully you have had the fortitude to read through this entire e-mail. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, problems or corrections.

Thanks for your time,
Sincerely,



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I-0421-009

Comment Summary:

No Build Alternative

Response:

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