

Seattle Department of Transportation

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Date: July 30, 2011
To: Rebecca Deehr, Office of the Mayor
From: Stephanie Brown, Regional Project Coordinator
Subject: SDOT Comments on SR 520 FEIS

Below are comments from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. The purpose of this memo is to highlight significant issues that should be addressed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) as the project moves toward a Record of Decision this summer.

In addition, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle City Light, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the Seattle Department of Planning and Development have submitted FEIS comments to me; those comments are attached to this memo.

Project Scope

The scope of the Preferred Alternative (PA) for the SR 520 project lacks WSDOT commitments to fund implementation of key bicycle and pedestrian improvements between the new regional shared use path and the Burke Gilman Trail. As noted in the FEIS, bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Montlake Boulevard, Shelby Street, Hamlin Street, and 24th Avenue East were identified through the ESSB 6392 Workgroup. However, responsibility for design and construction of these improvements has been left to SDOT. These connections are a critical element of the PA for non-motorized users, and SDOT is concerned by their exclusion from the project scope.

Range of Alternatives

SDOT disagrees with WSDOT's conclusion that the 4-lane alternative does not meet the project purpose of improving the movement of people and goods across SR 520. The updated analysis included in Appendix 19 of the FEIS shows that the movement of people and goods increases under the 4-lane alternative.

Project Phasing

The phased construction plan described in the FEIS does not include an interim Westside connection for the new pedestrian and bicycle path identified in the PA. This connection must be completed at the same time as an interim connection for vehicles and will impact the timing of other pedestrian and bicycle improvements that connect the SR 520 regional path with the Burke Gilman Trail and other non-motorized facilities in Seattle. SDOT would appreciate the opportunity to work with WSDOT to better define and document the interim connection.



Mitigation Commitments – Local Traffic

The FEIS states that under the PA, “travel patterns on local streets in the area would change due to the direct-access HOV ramp from SR 520, the removal of the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps, and the addition of a new bascule bridge adjacent to the existing bridge on Montlake Boulevard.” SDOT believes that these operational changes to city streets require mitigation. To begin addressing the anticipated operational impacts, SDOT and WSDOT are jointly developing a neighborhood traffic management plan. SDOT appreciates WSDOT’s involvement in this effort, but requests a funding commitment from WSDOT to implement this plan and appropriately mitigate changing travel patterns on local streets.

Additionally, the description of mitigation of transportation impacts is not specific enough for SDOT to determine whether the impacts of the project on Seattle streets, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists have been appropriately addressed. SDOT requests additional description of the potential design modifications that WSDOT plans to explore with SDOT.

Mitigation Commitments – Construction

SDOT believes that the length and intensity of construction for the SR 520 project requires the use of demand management and alternative transportation systems to reduce the construction-related impacts. WSDOT should make a stronger commitment to transportation demand management efforts during construction—moving beyond communication and coordination with existing successful programs—and potentially include funding for additional transit service in mitigation commitments.

Additionally, SDOT requests that WSDOT commit to develop (in coordination with SDOT staff), fund, and implement an intelligent transportation system (ITS) program on Montlake Boulevard and 23rd Avenue prior to construction of the Westside improvements.

Mitigation is also needed for the temporary closure of key bicycle and pedestrian routes (e.g., 24th Avenue East bridge, Bill Dawson Trail), particularly due to the fact that pedestrian and bicycle access may be restricted to one side of Montlake Boulevard during construction. SDOT will work with WSDOT to identify appropriate mitigation for pedestrians and bicyclists.