From: jim.schnitzius [mailto:jim.schnitzius@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 11:25 AM
To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS
Subject: Input to SR 520 bridge project

My two cents…

I-021-001

The goals of the 520 project is to:

1) Reduce congestion by moving more people in the shortest amount of time possible
2) Reduce the impact to the surrounding environment
3) Don't break the bank

I'd like to comment on #1 goal only as I am not aware of all the environmental and cost implications, though some suggestions are meant to reduce environmental impact.

Congestion is caused by traffic having to slow down or stop.
Traffic slows down or stops because:

1) Draw bridges
2) Traffic lights
3) Poor road system design
4) Too many vehicles for road capacity

So the more of the above items you can eliminate, the more successful you will be in meeting the goal.
Assumptions:

- Populations will continue to increase and therefore the need to transport people will continue.
- Light rail to Eastside will be via I-90.

I-021-002

#1) Draw bridge solution:
Use tunnel or tube solution for Pacific/Montlake area for traffic going to SR520 only. Keep Montlake bridge for traffic going N.& S. on Montlake.

I-021-003

#2) Traffic lights solutions:
Via special "exit only lanes", traffic traveling to or from Pacific or Montlake (via tunnel/tube) do not stop at the Pacific & Montlake intersection. I can give you more information on what this design would look like.

I-021-004

#3) Poor road system design solution:
Flow from westbound SR520 to southbound I-5 needs to be improved. Keep current ramp design for transit/carpool, but build a single lane ramp that enters I-5 on the far right side. This will eliminate traffic needing to cut across all lanes of I-5 to exit at Mercer.

I-021-005

#4) Too many vehicles for road capacity solutions:
Increase the use of transit and smaller/narrower vehicles.

I-021-001

The purpose of the project includes improving mobility for people and goods in the SR 520 corridor, not "reducing congestion by moving more people in the shortest amount of time possible" as stated in the comment. The project would meet this purpose by increasing capacity for HOVs on the SR 520 corridor and across the Montlake Cut. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative, and Chapters 5 and 6 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report for complete information on the effects of the project on freeway and local street operations.

I-021-002

The use of a tunnel to connect SR 520 to the areas north of the Montlake Cut was evaluated in the SDEIS as part of Option K. The SDEIS found that Option K would have considerably higher environmental effects than Option A.

Chapter 2 of the Final EIS discusses the reasons that Option M, which was proposed during the legislative workgroup and would have included an immersed tube-tunnel across the Montlake Cut, was not considered a reasonable alternative. The primary reasons for its dismissal were environmental impact and cost. As stated in the findings of the legislative workgroup, "Because the Montlake Cut is an environmentally sensitive area, we believe the permitting of Option M's wetlands impacts will be very risky and very costly to mitigate and we believe there would be a high likelihood of a much longer delay (12 to 24 months) in order to negotiate the permitting issue with the US Army Corps of Engineers." Additionally, the Cost Review Panel was concerned that given the range of probable costs for Option M, it was unlikely to fit within the legislatively established budget for the project.

Under all design options, the existing Montlake Bridge would remain.

I-021-005

Requirements: Bridge must accommodate buses/carpool and slow moving vehicles (i.e. bicycles (both manual and electric) and scooters) in both directions. (Pedestrian traffic is not required))
We need to encourage people to get out of their single occupancy cars and take the bus, carpool or ride a scooter or bike. But to make these appealing we need to make special accommodations for them. Unlike I-5, rush hour is heavy in both directions, so a dedicated carpool lane is needed in both directions, one that you can't buy your way on to.

New electric bicycles are coming to the market that are a great alternative to cars and can travel at 20mph. But nobody will buy them if there are not paths to drive them on. So a dedicated lane for bikes and scooters is needed and since these don't mix with pedestrians very well, pedestrians should not be allowed on the same lane. Ideally Eastbound bike/scooter traffic should be separated from Westbound in some way to avoid head on collisions.

Since bike/scooter lanes can be narrower than car/truck lanes, bike/scooter lanes could be located on the same level as the cars or tucked under elevated sections of the bridge. A third option would be to elevate it over the center of the main bridge deck with an option to have a roof overhead. This elevated section would not need to be as strong as one for the light rail system since the bike and scooter traffic would not have nearly the mass or weight. This elevated option would allow the footprint of the bridge to stay the same. If the bridge continues to be a floating bridge, then where the bike/scooter lanes go could be a combination of all three with the lane being on the side or under the deck at elevated sections and then elevating the bike/scooter lane when the bridge deck is at lake level.

So in summary:

- Six lane bridge option with dedicated transit/carpool lane, plus accommodations for 10mph min to 30mph max bike/scooter lanes.
- Tunnel/tube in parallel with current draw bridge at Montlake
- No stop interchange at Pacific & Montlake to and from tunnel/tube.
- 2 ramps from SR520 to I-5 Southbound, carpool ramp that enters I-5 on far left lane and the another on the far right.

If you would like to talk or meet with me on any of these ideas, please let me know.

Thanks,
Jim Schnitzius

I-021-003

Refer to response to comment I-021-002.

I-021-004

Improvements on I-5 are not included as part of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV project. However, to help improve the connection between SR 520 and I-5, the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project includes a new reversible HOV ramp that will connect to the existing I-5 reversible express lanes south of SR 520. The project will not preclude future modifications to the SR 520/I-5 interchange.

I-021-005

The project would provide HOV lanes across the floating bridge. The addition of HOV lanes to the corridor, with no increase in the existing number of general-purpose lanes, is expressly intended to improve the speed and reliability of transit service, providing an incentive to use transit. As noted discussion of project need on page 1-6 of the SDEIS, the prospect of substantially increased travel times in 2030 "makes it imperative that commuters be provided with travel choices that allow them to avoid driving along, and that the proposed project be built to support increased use of transit and HOVs." As discussed in section 5.1 of the SDEIS, and section 5.1 of the Final EIS, HOV and transit commuters would experience substantial travel time benefits in 2030 with the addition of the HOV lane. Further the project includes The Preferred Alternative includes a 14-foot-wide bicycle/pedestrian path along the north side of SR 520 through the Montlake area and across the Evergreen Point Bridge to the Eastside, connections to existing trails, and additional bicycle/pedestrian improvements in the project area, all of which will contribute to new opportunities for nonmotorized travel and commuting. The bicycle/pedestrian lane on the floating bridge would be on the same level as the vehicle lanes, but would be physically separated from them. See Chapter 2 and the Description of Alternatives

Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 of the Final EIS) for additional information.