Washington State Department of Transportation

SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program

I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Supplemental Draft EIS Environmental Hearing Comment Form – Feb. 23, 2010

Welcome to the environmental hearing for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Please use this form to share your comments on the content provided in the Supplemental Draft EIS document. WSDOT will consider all comments received between Jan. 22 and April 15, 2010 in making its final decision in the environmental review process. Thank you for your comments.

You can provide comments through one of the following methods:

- **Complete this form** and place it in one of the comment boxes during the meeting. Please write clearly.
- **Mail** your comments to Jenifer Young, SR 520, I-5 to Medina Environmental Manager, Washington State Department of Transportation, 600 Stewart Street, Suite 520, Seattle, WA 98101.
- **E-mail** your comments to SR520Bridge_SDEIS@wsdot.wa.gov.
- **Visit the Web page** at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge.

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These comments will become part of the public record for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Personal information is voluntary and will become part of the public record if provided. The Washington State Department of Transportation is a public agency and is subject to the State of Washington's Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). Therefore, meeting comments may be made available to anyone requesting them for non-commercial purposes.

Do you have any comments on the Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

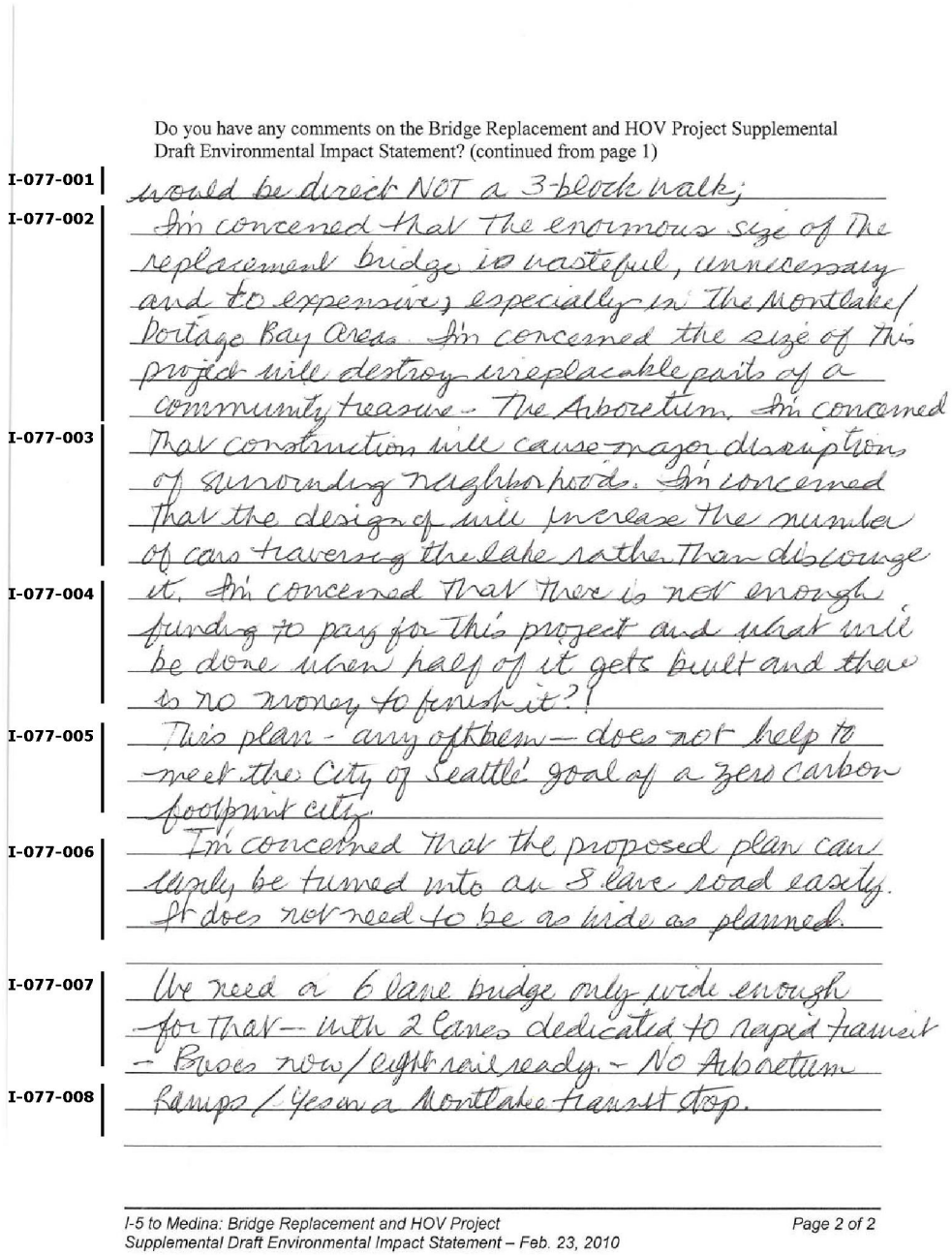
I-077-001

Yes. I have the following concerns:
The lack of emphasis on decreasing auto traffic over Lake Washington – To help solve that issue, the third lane could be Transit ONLY; and connection between transit traffic + light rail

I-077-001

ESHB 6392 specifies that the HOV lane will be available only for vehicles with 3 or more passengers. This assumption was evaluated in the Draft EIS, SDEIS, and Final EIS, and has been shown to result in free flow operations in the HOV lane with bus service levels near 600 vehicles per day. The State's HOV lane operations policy would be used to identify when the HOV lanes' operational thresholds were met and when an adjustment to the occupancy requirement would be recommended. Because ESSB 6392 specifies the HOV lane vehicle occupancy of 3 or more people, the State would need to request legislative approval to make any modifications.

The lane Transit/HOV lane occupancy requirement would not affect the walking distance between the closest bus stop and the U-Link light rail station. As found in the Transit Connections: Bus Stop Locations white paper that was developed as part of the ESSB 6392 transit connections and design refinements workgroup process, the longest walking distance between the closest bus stop and the U-Link rail station would be just over 900 feet. Pedestrians would be able to cross over Montlake Boulevard via a new pedestrian bridge being built as part of the Sound Transit U-Link station design. See the white paper at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/6392workgroup.htm.



Do you have any comments on the Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement? (continued from page 1)

I-077-001 would be direct NOT a 3-block walk;

I-077-002 I'm concened that the enormous size of the replacement bridge is wasteful, unnecessary and to expensive; especially in the Montlake/Portage Bay areas. I'm concerned the size of this project will destroy irreplacable parts of a community treasure - The Arboretum. I'm concerned

I-077-003 that construction will cause major disruption of surrounding neighborhoods. I'm concerned that the design will increase the number of cars traversing the lake rather than discourage it. I'm concened that there is not enough

I-077-004 funding to pay for this project and what will be done when half of it gets built and there is no money to finish it?!

I-077-005 This plan - any of them - does not help to meet the City of Seattle goal of a zero carbon footprint city.

I-077-006 I'm concerned that the proposed plan can easily be turned into an 8 lane road easily. It does not need to be as wide as planned.

I-077-007 We need a 6 lane bridge only wide enough for that - with 2 lanes dedicated to rapid transit - Buses now / light rail ready. - No Arboretum

I-077-008 Ramps / Yes on a Montlake transit stop.

I-077-002

Comment noted.

I-077-003

The Preferred Alternative would reduce effects on the Arboretum, compared to No Build Alternative, by physically removing the existing Lake Washington Boulevard eastbound on-ramp and westbound off-ramp and the R.H. Thomson Expressway ramps. The Preferred Alternative would not include construction of any new ramps in the Arboretum. Access to Lake Washington Boulevard by westbound SR 520 traffic would be moved to a new intersection located on the Montlake Boulevard lid at 24th Avenue East. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for additional information. The result of this and other features of the Preferred Alternative is a reduction in trip volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard in the Arboretum compared the No Build Alternative. Under the Preferred Alternative in 2030, a.m. peak hour volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard through the Arboretum would be 1,330 vehicles per hour with the Preferred Alternative, compared to 1,950 vehicles per hour with the No Build Alternative. P.m. peak hour volumes would be 1,410 vehicles per hour compared to 1,730 with the No Build Alternative. See the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) for further discussion of trip volumes.

I-077-004

Presently, full funding for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project has not been secured. The project purpose and need focuses on both safety in the SR 520 corridor, and the reliability of moving people and goods through the corridor. Therefore, even though the most vulnerable parts of the project are currently identified to be replaced first, followed by the less vulnerable components, WSDOT and the SR 520 program are developing a financing plan to pursue full funding for the entire corridor in order to complete all project construction.

I-077-005

It is difficult to determine the contribution of SR 520 towards Seattle's carbon emissions because the project extends beyond the boundary of the city. The agency continues to work with our partners, including local jurisdictions to reduce transportation sector emissions.

I-077-006

The Preferred Alternative has been designed to minimize SR 520's footprint as much as possible while allowing room for HOV lanes and the shoulders required to satisfy current safety standards regulated by FHWA and the Association of American State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). As described in Section 1.8 of the SDEIS and in Attachment 8 of the SDEIS, Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated, the transportation analysis performed for the Draft EIS showed that while a 4-lane alternative would improve safety by replacing vulnerable structures and widening lanes and shoulders, it would not satisfy the project purpose of improving mobility in the SR 520 corridor. In 2010, based on SDEIS comments regarding a transit-optimized 4-lane alternative or a 4-lane alternative with tolling for congestion management, WSDOT evaluated these potential alternatives using an updated traffic model. The results showed that these alternatives would provide substantially lower mobility benefits than the 6-Lane Alternative for both general-purpose traffic and transit, and therefore would also not meet the project purpose and need. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS provides more information on the analysis of these alternatives.

The width of the new 6-lane SR 520 corridor and the width of the new floating bridge would not allow conversion to eight lanes without physical widening of the roadway. This would result in a new project that would need to undergo separate environmental review.

I-077-007

The Preferred Alternative evaluated in the Final EIS minimizes the footprint of project wherever possible while complying with safety and operational standards. The SR 520, I-5 to Medina project includes an HOV lane for vehicles with 3 or more passengers, as specified by ESHB 6392. This assumption was evaluated in the Draft EIS, SDEIS, and Final EIS, and has been shown to result in free flow operations in the HOV lane with bus service levels near 600 vehicles per day. The State's HOV lane operations policy would be used to identify when the HOV lanes' operational thresholds were met and when an adjustment to the occupancy requirement would be recommended; however, the State would need to request legislative approval to make any modifications.

The SR 520, I-5 to Medina project would result in immediate benefits for transit speed and reliability in the corridor by providing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes across the floating bridge and better HOV connections at the Montlake and I-5 interchanges (see Section 5.1 of both the SDEIS and Final EIS). The HOV lanes would allow for the near-term implementation of bus rapid transit, as called for in the SR 520 High-Capacity Transit Plan. Making the lanes transit only would not have reduced their footprint.

While WSDOT believed that the design of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project already accommodated potential future light rail, the agency worked with the City of Seattle and Sound Transit to identify changes that would enhance the corridor's rail compatibility. The Preferred Alternative reflects these design changes and allows for two potential future rail options as discussed in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS.

I-077-008

The Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops were removed in all of the design options considered in the SDEIS, based on a decision making process that was part of Westside mediation. The mediation process was mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6099 and is described on pages 1-17 through 1-19 of the SDEIS. The mediation

workgroup consisted of members from adjacent neighborhoods, transit agencies, jurisdictions, and State agencies. Removing the Montlake Freeway Transit Station would minimize the width of the freeway through the Montlake area, reducing the width by up to 40 feet compared to keeping the station. The mediation workgroup did not recommend any design options that included the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops. See Attachment 8 to the SDEIS, Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated, for further discussion of how and why removal of the stops was considered.

The Preferred Alternative includes removal of the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops; however, it also includes a modified Montlake Boulevard interchange and lid. Modifications include a full lid from Montlake Boulevard to the Lake Washington shoreline, and bus stops on the lid for both eastbound and westbound buses (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative). The intent is to provide greater pedestrian amenity in the central part of the Montlake neighborhood while simultaneously providing a better location and environment for the regional bus stops incorporated in the transit/HOV direct access ramps (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS). At the option of the transit agencies, SR 520 buses will be able to exit at the Montlake interchange during the off-peak periods to service passengers to/from the Montlake lid transit stop. University Link light-rail service, expected to be operational in 2016, will accommodate some of the trips that now use the bus stops. Chapter 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) provides further discussion of expected transit operations with the Preferred Alternative, including expected transit travel times, rider connections, and how future transit would incorporate service currently provided at the stops.