

I-088-001

MS. FOWBERT: I've been working on this for about eight years on behalf of the Sierra Club and the Seattle Community Council Federation and the Olmsted Parks. My strong support for -- the full environmental review now provides more helpful findings than when we began the process. There's more information on the building materials and how the project would produce mitigating effects to preserve the Olmsted Parks and the University of Washington campus.

I-088-002

The design options for your consideration must protect the Foster Island and the Portage Bay wetlands from the previous proposal. We are glad for getting rid of the underground tunnel. The final EIS review rejects the tunnel solution and focuses WSDOT's responsibility for updated information and evaluating workable alternatives to any kind of Arboretum on- and off-ramps. We're are opposed to all and any Arboretum on- and off-ramps.

I-088-003

The ongoing process generated more analysis and, hopefully, the electronic tolling and funding support for possible Metro HOV lanes and for, eventually, possible commuter fast rail seem to be closer to a workable solution now.

I-088-004

Now, the A-Plus option has actually developed a higher capacity transit plan for less cost to the public and to better accommodate University of Washington traffic impacts. Thank you.

(End of comment.)

**I-088-001**

Comment noted.

**I-088-002**

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has identified a Preferred Alternative that would improve mobility and safety while reducing negative effects. The Preferred Alternative does not include a tunnel design. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS describes the Preferred Alternatives and Chapters 5 and 6 describe its environmental effects.

Under the Preferred Alternative, the impacts to Foster Island have been reduced. The Preferred Alternative includes a narrow footprint across Foster Island, with reduced right-of-way acquisition in the Arboretum compared to the SDEIS options.

Additionally, Foster Island is a recognized Traditional Cultural Property and a culturally significant place to area Native tribes. WSDOT has engaged in negotiation with the affected tribes to minimize the impact to Foster Island from the new structure. During these discussions, the tribes indicated a preference for the raised bridge design over the island. For these reasons, WSDOT has proceeded with a pier and span bridge across Foster Island.

As stated in the Ecosystems Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) effects to wetlands from the Preferred Alternative are similar to Option A. However, there is less clearing and more shade with the Preferred Alternative than with Option A. The Preferred Alternative would shade somewhat more wetlands than Options A and L, but less than Option K. The increase in shading is due to the shift of the alignment south in Union Bay to accommodate potential future light rail.

**I-088-003**

The Preferred Alternative would not include construction of any new

ramps in the Arboretum, and would remove both the existing Lake Washington Boulevard ramps and the R.H. Thomson Expressway ramps. The Preferred Alternative includes a number of design refinements that minimize the effects presented in the SDEIS. These refinements respond to comments made on the SDEIS and to WSDOT's work with many project stakeholders under Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, which was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2010. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the planning process and the Preferred Alternative.

One of WSDOT's key efforts under ESSB 6392 was to work with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABCG), of which the Arboretum Foundation is a member, to identify appropriate mitigation for the impacts of the I-5 to Medina project on the Arboretum. This work involved review of the Arboretum Master Plan and commitments by WSDOT to provide funding toward a number of projects in the plan. This 8-month coordination effort resulted in the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, which is included in Attachment 16 of the Final EIS.

#### **I-088-004**

In an effort to improve the SR 520 I-5 to Medina Project's transit functionality and future compatibility, several design modifications were developed for the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is a design that includes several transit specific features such as the following:

- Rail compatible for several potential rail alignments
- Transit stop on the new Montlake lid
- Full SR 520 bus access to Montlake lid transit stop during off-peak hours
- HOV lanes on Montlake Boulevard
- Transit signal priority compatible

These options were developed and refined through the 6392 workgroup process that included stakeholders from the State, City of Seattle, University of Washington, and the transit agencies.