

SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Supplemental Draft EIS Comment Form

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.

**Please enter your contact information below. (Last name and zip code are required to save comment.) If you would like to be added to the project mailing list, please fill out the rest of the contact information and check the box below.**

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Do you have any comments on the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

I-120-001

Having attended the South Lake Union hearing on February 23, 2010, I want to add my voice to several ideas I heard repeated many times.

I-120-002

2. No part of the highway should be built any wider than necessary to accommodate six travel lanes. We should not be building, nor paying for, extra pavement that could be used to create additional lanes in the future. Even with the minimum pavement necessary for six lanes, the new facility will have a much larger footprint than the existing one.

I-120-003

3. Two of the lanes on the new highway (i.e., one eastbound and one westbound lane) should be immediately designated as transit-only lanes that are designed to accommodate possible light rail in the future. Mixed transit/HOV lanes are a failure because (1) the HOVs invariably slow down the movement of transit vehicles and (2) such lanes create an expectation that they will always be available to private vehicles. The transit-only lanes must have exclusive entrance ramps that allow buses quick and unobstructed access.

I-120-004

4. The new facility MUST be designed to maximize convenient connectivity of the various modes of public transit. Transit passengers on 520 ought to be able to transfer quickly and efficiently to existing Montlake-area bus routes AND to the Sound Transit Link light rail line currently under construction. Only through such design elements can we create the incentives for people to choose public transportation.

*These comments will become part of the public record for the SR 520, Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project Environmental Assessment. 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.*

I-120-001

The SR 520, I-5 to Medina project would complete the HOV lane system in the corridor, improving reliability and efficiency for transit and carpools, but would not add general-purpose lanes. Thus, the project is aligned with improving the overall efficiency of the transportation system by creating incentives for people to choose an alternative to driving alone. 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. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS provides further discussion of how the project can accommodate high capacity transit.

I-120-002

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). 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-120-003

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. 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. 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.

However, one of two options for future addition of light rail in the corridor, if the regional decision to add rail were made and funded, would be to convert the HOV/transit lanes to light rail (the other option would be to add light-rail only lanes). A decision to add light rail would need to be planned and programmed by regional land use and transit agencies, funded by a public vote, and evaluated in its own environmental analysis.

The project includes HOV direct access ramps at I-5 and Montlake. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative.

#### **I-120-004**

The Preferred Alternative 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. 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).

The SR 520 program would not adversely affect the current plans by Sound Transit regarding transfers between local bus and U-Link light rail service.