

C-003-001

MS. MILLER: I'm Paige Miller. I'm speaking on behalf of the Arboretum Foundation. Recent polling has confirmed that the public on both sides of the lake, east and west, care deeply about two things related to SR 520: making it work for high-capacity transit, including light rail, and minimizing the harm to the Arboretum.

Option A-Plus does neither one. It eliminates the Montlake Flyer stop and doesn't connect all the bus riders to the new Sound Transit station at the University, and it plans for a roadway across the lake and the Arboretum that is far wider than it needs to be.

The current four-lane roadway is about 55 feet wide. It should never have been built across the Arboretum in the early 1960s, but there it is. So okay. Now we must accept the addition of two more lanes for transit and perhaps high-capacity vehicles, but why does that mean that the road needs to be nearly tripled in width, to 150 feet?

Triple the width to add two more lanes? Or is all of this width simply a way to make the roadway concrete-ready for eight or even 10 lanes in the future. We believe the road does not need to be more than 100 feet wide, plenty for six lanes but not restripable for eight.

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The SDEIS proposes a viaduct across the lake, double-deck, to handle through traffic above and maintenance vehicles below. It will create a wall near and across the Arboretum. It needs to be lower and less obtrusive across the lake and across Foster Island.

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The SDEIS shows the noise from the new roadway in the Arboretum will be even more intrusive than it is today but states that noise walls are not cost-effective. We need quiet pavement as a design feature,

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Since the SDEIS was published, FHWA and WSDOT have developed a Preferred Alternative that is similar to Option A, but with a number of design refinements that respond to comments received from agencies and the public. The Preferred Alternative has been designed to minimize SR 520's footprint across Foster Island to the maximum extent possible while accommodating potential future light rail through the corridor. Lane and shoulder widths have been reduced as much as possible to keep the footprint of the bridge as narrow 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) (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS). Footprint in the Arboretum has been refined, with right-of-way acquisition reduced compared to the SDEIS options. 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.

Through coordination with Sound Transit, WSDOT has designed the Preferred Alternative to have enhanced compatibility with potential future light rail compared to the SDEIS design options. Light rail could be accommodated either by converting the HOV lanes for rail use or by constructing the rail alignment between the eastbound and westbound west approach bridges. Since rail transit in the SR 520 corridor is not programmed in current regional transit plans, any future project to add rail in the corridor would need to undergo an extensive planning and environmental review process by the responsible transit agency prior to implementation.

Modifications in the Preferred Alternative also include changes to the Montlake Boulevard interchange and lid to accommodate transit better. Bus stops on the lid would serve both eastbound and westbound

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not more noise and not noise walls that visually cut the Arboretum off from the water.

C-003-004

Option A-Plus or Sub A will continue to use Lake Washington Boulevard as a long on- and off-ramp through the Arboretum. We need an option that moves traffic off the historic Park Boulevard and over to the four-lane city arterial of 24th and Montlake, where it belongs.

C-003-005

And finally, we need a roadway that is built transit-ready within the promised six lanes so that we don't face a process like this in another few years to make the roadway even wider to retrofit light rail onto it. This is the only way to truly protect the State's only recognized Arboretum, and it can be done and within the scope of the SDEIS.

In short, make it narrower, lower, no ramps, and less traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard, and transit-ready, not a recipe for more concrete later.

Thank you very much.

(End of comment.)

buses that travel between the University District and the Eastside. Buses that travel between Downtown Seattle and the Eastside would also be able to stop on the lid during off-peak hours. University Link light rail is expected to be operational in 2016 and will accommodate many of the riders who now use the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops. People traveling between the Montlake area and downtown Seattle who today use the Montlake Freeway Transit Station would not be able to use the same bus routes as they currently do in the future because the freeway station would be closed during the peak periods. However, once the University Link light rail is open, these commuters will have several options. One option would be for them to take light rail with improved travel times. Another option would be for them to use the other bus routes (Routes 43, 48, and 25). A third option would be for them to catch one of the Seattle bound buses at the new Montlake lid stop during the off-peak periods. 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 how future transit would account for service currently provided at the stops and expected transit travel times.

#### C-003-002

All of the alternatives and design options analyzed for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project have included a single-deck floating structure in which the bridge deck is raised above the pontoons. This structure would include an area for bridge maintenance below the roadway deck; however, the maintenance area would not be available for use by the public. In response to community concerns expressed during the SDEIS comment period, the Preferred Alternative's bridge would be approximately 20 feet above the water level, approximately 5 to 10 feet lower than the SDEIS design options. The west approach structure traveling through the Arboretum would be a single-level bridge deck elevated between 11 and 35 feet above the water, or about 9 to 18 feet higher than it is today. This bridge would have fewer columns than the

existing bridge, which in combination with its increased height would create more open views than those that currently exist. Please see the Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report Addendum for visual simulations of the proposed floating bridge and west approach bridge. As described in that report, WSDOT is continuing to work with project stakeholders to develop a context-sensitive design for the entire SR 520 corridor.

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The results of the noise analysis conducted for Options A, K, and L in the Arboretum were presented on pages 98 through 100 and in Exhibits 31 and 41 of the Noise Discipline Report. These results are summarized in SDEIS Table 5.7-1. The number of receivers in the Arboretum approaching or exceeding the FHWA noise abatement criteria would have been reduced under Option A (and Option A with suboptions) compared to both existing conditions and the No Build Alternative. As described on page 5-105 of the SDEIS, noise walls were not proposed as mitigation in the Arboretum because they did not meet WSDOT's reasonableness and/or feasibility criteria.

Even where noise walls are warranted and meet the criteria, comments on the SDEIS indicated that their use was controversial for aesthetic reasons. As a result, design features in the Preferred Alternative include noise reduction measures throughout the corridor, such as 4-foot concrete traffic barriers with noise-absorptive coating. Updated noise modeling for the Preferred Alternative indicates that with the Preferred Alternative, noise levels would be reduced along the corridor to the point that noise walls are not recommended in the Seattle portion of the project area, except potentially along I-5 in the North Capitol Hill area where the reasonableness and feasibility of a noise wall is still being evaluated. In the Arboretum area specifically, the higher profile of the Preferred Alternative provides further noise reduction. As a result, noise levels in the Arboretum in the areas closest to SR 520 would be reduced

by several decibels compared to the No Build Alternative. This noise reduction approach would also avoid the aesthetic impacts of noise walls in this natural area. Information on noise modeling results for the Preferred Alternative can be found in the Noise Discipline Report Addendum and in Section 5.7 of the Final EIS.

Quieter concrete pavement is included as a design feature for Option A, Option K, and the Preferred Alternative; however, because it is not an FHWA-approved mitigation measure and because future pavement surface conditions cannot be determined with certainty, it is not included in the noise model for the project.

#### **C-003-004**

The Preferred Alternative would reduce traffic volumes in the Arboretum, compared to the 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. 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 to 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, 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. As part of the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, WSDOT has also committed to fund traffic calming measures along Lake Washington Boulevard and to work with the Seattle Department of Transportation on further measures to manage traffic in the Arboretum.

**C-003-005**

Please see the responses to comment C-003-001, C-003-002, and C-003-004 regarding future light rail accommodation, bridge height, and Lake Washington Boulevard access ramps. The 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. 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, as well as for eventual addition of light rail if proposed by regional transit agencies and approved for funding by the public.