

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

Please use this form to share your comments on the content provided in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement 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 using one of the following methods:

- Complete this form.
- Mail your comments to Jenifer Young, SDEIS 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.
- Speak to a court reporter at an environmental hearing scheduled for 5 – 7 p.m., Feb. 23, at Lake Union Park Naval Reserve Building, 860 Terry Ave. N., Seattle.

1. Name Elizabeth F Weil
2. E-mail lisawe@comcast.net
3. Address: 2417 25th Ave East
4. City: Seattle
5. State: WA
* 6. Zip Code: 98112

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

I-178-001

I live in Montlake on the southwest corner of Calhoun and 25th – just south of the Montlake Bridge. I bought my home here in Montlake back in 1991 so have been here, witnessing traffic patterns, for close to 20 years.

I attended the informational session yesterday at the UW Health Sciences Building and reviewed the three options proposed for the west side of SR 520.

Option A ===== Option A strikes me as appallingly ill conceived. The north / south traffic on Montlake Blvd / 24th Ave East is already highly congested. Currently, on week days between the hours of 3pm and ~6:30pm, a trip through the intersection of Montlake Blvd and SR 520 which normally takes 5-10 minutes, takes anywhere from 40 to 60 minutes. The proposal to remove the existing Lake WA Blvd ramps and feed "all" incoming traffic into the intersection of SR 520 and Montlake Blvd makes absolutely no sense. In fact, your traffic planner at the review session said the assumptions in the plan were that the congestion they anticipate resulting "with this option" will be severe enough that its expected to cause frustrated drivers to circumvent the Montlake exit and use later exits on I5 – making a much longer, roundabout trip. Is that a solution then, or a problem that would occur anyway -- without having to spend \$2B+? This is insanity. Widening Montlake Blvd in the short space between Miller and NE Pacific Street, without creating meaningful outlets for the added traffic load, will only create a very large parking lot of idling traffic waiting to squeeze onto narrow neighborhood streets. The net effect should be more than obvious. The state will end up spending \$2B+ only to exacerbate an existing problem without having developed any kind of resolution for that problem.

I-178-002

Widening a highway, increasing the traffic load, and then widening a bottleneck doesn't make it any less of a bottleneck. It just make it a bigger bottleneck.

Options K & L ===== Options K and L make slightly more sense though neither (as best I could understand it and your state representatives at the session could explain) seems completely thought through.

For starters, its not at all clear to me why its practical or cost efficient for the state to completely remove (versus expanding) the existing Lake WA Blvd exit and entrance ramps. If the goal is to handle the increased (and increasing) traffic loads coming from / heading to the East side, why would the state remove two "functional" ramps that don't impinge on neighborhoods, and transfer the traffic down to a single larger exit / entry ramp that would intrude on a residential neighborhood and impact home owners. How does that make sense either economically or logistically?

I-178-003

Between Options K and L, I'd strongly prefer the tunnel option (K). Seattle is a uniquely beautiful city blessed with lakes, waterways, and mountains in every direction. San Francisco too used to have gorgeous scenic landscapes and vistas. Overdevelopment turned what were once spectacular parts of that metropolis into urban slums which now look more like Newark NJ than the West coast jewel SF once was. I fear this will happen here in Seattle if the city's leaders don't take a longer term view of the city's development. Finally, in any of these plans, I think the state is kidding itself if it doesn't recognize that both NE Pacific Street and Montlake Blvd / 25th Ave East north of the Montlake Cut will also, ultimately, at some point, have to be widened to handle the increased traffic flow. One has to wonder if a certain large state university carries more clout with these decisions and they come at the expense of smaller, private, less powerful, home owners.

I-178-001

Comment noted. WSDOT received a number of comments in support of and in opposition to Options A, K, and L and the associated suboptions. These opinions are summarized in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Summary of Comments (WSDOT, April 2010), available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/SDEIS.htm>.

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has identified a Preferred Alternative, which is similar to Option A but with a number of design refinements that would improve mobility and safety while reducing negative effects. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS describes the Preferred Alternative and Chapters 5 and 6 describe its environmental effects.

I-178-002

The Preferred Alternative would not include construction of any new ramps in the Arboretum. 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. 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.



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1. **Name** Elizabeth F Weil
2. **E-mail** lisawe@comcast.net

Respectfully, Elizabeth F. Weil

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, comments may be made available to anyone requesting them for non-commercial purposes.

I-178-003

The Preferred Alternative evaluated in this Final EIS would improve operations on Montlake Boulevard by providing additional capacity for transit/HOV, bicycles, and pedestrians between SR 520 and the Montlake triangle. Most notably, overall delay related to bridge openings would decrease for all vehicles because the additional capacity would allow congestion to clear more quickly. Chapter 6 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report describes the changes in traffic volumes and operations on the local streets in the Montlake interchange area.

The SR 520, I-5 to Medina EIS describes effects associated with implementation of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project. Widening the streets mentioned in the comment, other than widening of a portion of Montlake Boulevard under the suboption to Option L, are not part of the project and are not warranted based on project effects. However, the project would not preclude future changes to these streets.