Washington State Department of Transportation

SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program

I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

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 Matthew Whitney

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3. Address: 6745 3rd Ave NW

4. City: Seattle

5. State: WA

*** 6. Zip Code:** 98117

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-179-001

Once again, Washington State Department of Freeways has, at the behest of politicians with their heads buried in the sand, ignored the realities of climate change, foreign oil economies, and livability by proposing this alternative, which locks our region into automobile-only transport for decades to come. The current alternative, the so-called "A+" option, maintains car capacity while making transit less competitive, devastating wetlands in the Seattle Arboretum, and destroying neighborhoods with massive car interchanges and freeway widening. Are we as a region going to resemble Copenhagen and its focus on people-oriented environments which promote healthy living and business-friendly climates, or Detroit and its decaying, deserted auto-centric landscape?

I-179-002

I find this plan unimaginative and unacceptable. The fact that the plan has no transit connections at Montlake to the currently planned Husky Stadium light-rail station is simply appalling. Plans for the 520 bridge should promote transit alternatives, such as the light-rail, HOV, and single occupancy configurations being recently promoted by the City of Seattle and several State legislators. If we are to move our region where we want it to go, towards a climate-friendly, people-friendly, and ultimately business-friendly environment, then you need to go back to the drawing board on this and work with Seattle leaders to make this a truly viable transportation link for all users.

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-179-001

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 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 project would also add a bicycle/pedestrian lane to the corridor and provide other improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities and connections (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS and Chapter 7 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report in Attachment 7 to the Final EIS).

A bridge with fewer than 6 lanes is not proposed, because it would not meet the mobility portion of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project's purpose and need; this was confirmed with updated transportation analysis in 2010 (see Table 2-1and also Sections 2.3 and 2.4 in the Final EIS). Section 5.1 of the SDEIS and Final EIS provide further description of how the project would benefit mobility.

The addition of a dedicated lane for transit and HOV, along with the reduction in general-purpose demand achieved by tolling, would provide benefits regarding greenhouse gas emissions. As discussed in Section 5.9 of the Final EIS, the Preferred Alternative would result in a 4 percent reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the project area compared to the No Build Alternative, with a corresponding 4 percent reduction in annual fuel consumption. The reduction in VMT results in a reduction of approximately 10 percent in GHG emissions compared to the No Build Alternative, which is consistent with state legislation calling for such reductions and would contribute to other regional and national reduction

efforts. It should be noted that this estimate does not take into account the estimated 60 percent increase in transit ridership that would be achieved if bus rapid transit is implemented in the corridor as part of the SR 520 High Capacity Transit Plan.

The project would not devastate wetlands and destroy neighborhoods as characterized by the comment. In response to public and agency comments, the Preferred Alternative includes a number of design refinements that address public and agency comments regarding parks and neighborhoods. These refinements include a considerably expanded and enhanced Montlake lid which would provide connectivity in the Montlake neighborhood, a landscaped median on the Portage Bay Bridge, and a number of noise reduction strategies which would improvement noise levels compared to both existing and no build conditions. 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.

Mitigation for wetland effects would be provided consistent with applicable regulations (see Section 5.11 of the Final EIS and the Conceptual Wetland Mitigation Plan and in Attachment 9 to the Final EIS).

In accordance with Engrossed Senate Substitute Bill (ESSB) 6392, WSDOT worked with the University of Washington, City of Seattle, and Arboretum Botanical Garden Committee to identify appropriate mitigation for the project effects on the Arboretum. This 8-month coordination effort resulted in the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, which is included in Attachment 9 of the Final EIS.

See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative, and Chapter 5 of the Final EIS for a description of the projects effects, and how it would avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative effects. Also see the Conceptual Wetland Mitigation Plan and Arboretum Mitigation Plan (both in Attachment 9 to the SDEIS).

I-179-002

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. Section 2.4 in the Final EIS explains why initial implementation of light rail transit on SR 520 is not planned. However, 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. The project would allow for future potential light rail to connect to the University Link station at Husky Stadium. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS provides further discussion of high capacity transit in the corridor, including bus rapid transit which is proposed for the near-term to operate in the HOV lanes.

The Montlake Multimodal Center, which was collaboratively planned as part of the 2008 High Capacity Transit Plan under ESSB 6099, will serve as a major transfer point between the University Link rail station, the proposed SR 520 bus rapid transit lines, and local bus service. The Preferred Alternative also responds to the concern expressed in the comment regarding transit connections in the Montlake area. In accordance with the requirements of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, WSDOT has worked collaboratively with Sound Transit, King County Metro Transit, the City of Seattle, The University of Washington, and other stakeholders to develop design refinements for transit connections in the Montlake area. The workgroup considered bus stop locations and pedestrian access among other things. Its recommendations are described in the ESSB 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup Recommendations Report

(Attachment 16 to the Final EIS). Chapter 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) provides updated information regarding the Montlake Multimodal Center and the effects of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project on transit connections in the Montlake area.

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 adding light-rail-only lanes. 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.

WSDOT designers have incorporated light rail options under several future bridge configurations.