

I-192-001

VERBAL COMMENT #6

MEREDITH WENGER: It's been my observation that yet, again, Seattle is forsaking the promise of connected rapid transit in the new 520 plans.

We need a plan that includes specific direct and easy connection with mass transit to the north-south light-rail system that we have going in there. And based on what I've seen, we are not thinking properly about a specific way to do that. We're expecting too much from people to walk too far, if we're even thinking about it, at all.

And I want to see a direct specific plan to connect the north-south link light-rail with east-west transit on 520.

And I also want to make sure that we fund 520 in a way that makes light-rail feasible in the future.

(Hearing concluded at 7:00 p.m.)

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Section 2.4 in the Final EIS explains why initial implementation of light rail transit on SR 520 is not planned. The SR 520 High-Capacity Transit Plan, which was endorsed in 2008 by the state, King County Metro Transit, and Sound Transit, found that until at least 2030, demand for transit in the 520 corridor could be satisfied by bus rapid transit that runs in HOV/transit lanes, complementing Sound Transit's East Link on I-90. At the same time, the plan acknowledges that after 2030 significant increases in cross-lake travel may warrant dedicated high capacity transit facilities in both I-90 and SR 520. Therefore, the new SR 520 bridge and associated interchanges will be built in a way that allows the structure to accommodate a two-way light rail line or busway at a future date.

While WSDOT believed that the design of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project already accommodated potential future light rail, the agency worked with the City of Seattle and Sound Transit to identify changes that would enhance the corridor's rail compatibility. The Preferred Alternative reflects these design changes and allows for two potential future rail options:

- Option 1: Convert the HOV/transit lanes to light rail. This approach would accommodate light rail by converting the HOV lanes to exclusive rail use. Trains would use the direct-access ramps at Montlake Boulevard to exit, or could utilize a 40-foot gap between the eastbound and westbound lanes of the west approach to make a more direct connection to the University Link station at Husky Stadium.
- Option 2: Add light-rail only lanes. This approach would allow several connections—via a high bridge, a drawbridge, or a tunnel—to the University Link station.

The Montlake Multimodal Center, which was collaboratively planned as part of the 2008 High Capacity Transit Plan under ESSB 609, 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.