



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: Kevin Steffa CommentDate: 4/9/2010 5:51
 2. E-mail: kevinsteffa@gmail.com Comment Source: Online Comment Form
 3. Address: 4715 38th AVE NE
 4. City: Seattle
 5. State: WA
 * 6. Zip Code: 98105

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-245-001** Regarding Transit : All Design Options (Att7_Transportation, pages 2-12 to 2-16)
 1) Fate of Montlake Freeway Station: We need a better solution for the Montlake Flyer Stop. It is one of the most heavily used stops today, and removing it will limit options for future transit riders. It is true that increased U-district service from the triangle can help fill the gap, however, the amount of service provided from the Triangle will not be frequent enough (30 minutes each during peak to Kirkland(540), Redmond(542), and Bellevue(271), or 10 minutes collectively to Evergreen Point during peak times). The claim is further made in the EDEIS that these u-district routes qualify as 'BRT' (bus rapid transit) service. However, this claim is true only as far as Evergreen Point. Very few bus riders actually go to Evergreen Point -- it is really only a transfer station in the middle of nowhere. Thus, the proposed service is not really 'BRT' at all, given the necessary extra transfer. Most bus riders are only willing to make at most a single transfer for a daily commute.
- I-245-002**
- I-245-003** The fact is that there will be many more routes passing through Montlake from I-5 than the U-District (consider route 255,256,242). These access more points on the Eastside than available from the U-district. Also consider that some routes, like the 545, which are already at 'BRT' capacity. The equivalent routes from the U-district could not match this, without adding considerably more busses, with a redundant expense. When we start discussing non-peak hours, the need to access routes from the Montlake Flyer Station becomes even more evident.
- I-245-004** It is really best, for the collective sanity of transit riders, that the Montlake Flyer stop be added into the interchange and lid design. In the Nelson/Nygaard report (issued by the City of Seattle in April 2010), there are several suggestions for configuring the lid design. A suggestion is made, at the very least, for a bus stop 'on top of the lid' for the u-district routes. This is good - at least riders south of 520 will not have to cross the Montlake Bridge twice! However, it would be best to configure this stop as a full-featured Montlake Flyer Stop station. That is, a single stop where one can catch ANY bus, regardless of its origination point. I think it is best to place the station east of 24th, about where the

I-245-001

The Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops were removed in all of the design options considered in the SDEIS, based on a decision making process that was part of Westside mediation. The mediation process was mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6099 and is described on pages 1-17 through 1-19 of the SDEIS. The mediation workgroup consisted of members from adjacent neighborhoods, transit agencies, jurisdictions, and State agencies. Removing the Montlake Freeway Transit Station would minimize the width of the freeway through the Montlake area, reducing the width by up to 40 feet compared to keeping the station. The mediation workgroup did not recommend any design options that included the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops. See Attachment 8 to the SDEIS, Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated, for further discussion of how and why removal of the stops was considered.

The Preferred Alternative includes removal of the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops; however, it also 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 (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative). 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). At the option of the transit agencies, SR 520 buses will be able to exit at the Montlake interchange during the off-peak periods to service passengers to/from the Montlake lid transit stop. University Link light-rail service, expected to be operational in 2016, will accommodate some of the trips that now use the bus stops. 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 expected

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I-245-004 current MOHAI overpass is (the current existing flyer stop or a bit to the east). There should be enough room to weave an HOV offramp into the 'Option A' HOV onramp below the lid level, with a bus-stop at the end. Pedestrians would access it from the lid, and most of the road geometry would be under the lid.

Design notes:

The Nelson\Nygaard report did mention a different alternative for connecting the freeway routes, a 'Cross-Ramp Flyer Stop'. However it proposed ramps west of 24th rather than East of 24th. This idea is rightly rejected, for it needs another stoplight, and a full-height exit ramp as well. This is too expensive and it has too many drawbacks. I am suggesting placing the flyer stop East of 24th, closer to the road level than the lid-level. A bus on 520 would not have to completely exit and rise all the way to the top-level meet the transit stop – it would just weave at the point where the bus-only onramps come down to the lower level. No expensive crossover ramps needed, and no lights needed. The only difference is that the area underneath the lid needs to be made a bit wider to accommodate the geometry of a merge and a stop. With this geometry sunken below the lid, however, this should not adversely impact the Montlake neighborhood.

I-245-005 It is important to note, that Option A originally included the Montlake Flyer Station. However, it was removed during a mediation process which was not open to the public for comment, and neither did it represent the interest of transit riders in the surrounding neighborhoods. Once the basic interchange is selected (option A, K, etc), there should be a separate process to discuss the integration of the Montlake Flyer Stop.

I-245-006 2) Option of Light Rail across 520:
It is mentioned that the pontoons will be constructed to be able to accommodate light rail 'in the future'. However, there is no mention in the EDEIS document of how light rail will potentially connect to the University Stadium station through Montlake. What alignment options will allow tracks to emerge from underground to merge into the bridge at Montlake? This is a footprint issue, much like the freeway station. Even if there is no freeway station, there still needs to be enough room left for potential light rail access for this to be a possibility.

It has been argued that light rail is unsuitable for 520, that 'BRT' is the preferred method of transit. However, without a Montlake freeway station, 'BRT' is unlikely for the U-district/Montlake. If a light rail alignment were included at Montlake, then true 'rapid transit' will be possible, and it would be easier

transit travel times, rider connections, and how future transit would incorporate service currently provided at the stops.

I-245-002

The SR 520, I-5 to Medina project will provide the infrastructure necessary for buses to operate efficiently and on time for many years to come. While WSDOT is not the agency responsible providing transit service, WSDOT has and will continue to coordinate with Sound Transit and King County Metro Transit in designing the project, and WSDOT will continue to work with Sound Transit and King County Metro Transit as they study potential service changes in the SR 520 corridor and on local streets. These agencies have been working closely with WSDOT to identify bus service needs on the SR 520 corridor as part of the 2008 SR 520 High Capacity Transit Plan. That plan identified the need for bus rapid transit (BRT) service in the SR 520 corridor by the year 2016. For more information, please see the SR 520 High Capacity Transit Plan at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/Library/technical.htm>.

The HOV lanes and several other improvements that are part of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project would allow transit providers to implement a BRT level of transit service. Discussions in the SDEIS regarding BRT level transit service are in reference to the planning efforts completed by the State and transit agencies to assess whether BRT service in the corridor would be warranted. One of the findings from the SR 520 High Capacity Transit Plan was that the SR 520, I-5 to Medina and SR 520, Medina to SR 202 projects would need to be constructed before the transit agencies could implement BRT in the corridor.

However, some steps have already been taken by King County Metro and Sound Transit to provide a BRT level of bus service. Through the ST2 program and the Urban Partnership, those two agencies have secured funding for addition bus service to the University of Washington

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I-245-006 | to justify removing the Montlake Flyer Stop.

I-245-007 | 3) Summary
In order to provide better transit options and reduce future congestion by increasing ridership, then either one, or both of the following should be considered: 1) Revisit the decision to remove the Montlake Freeway Station, giving involvement to the proper stakeholders (transit riders). Or 2) Include in the EIS a possible light rail alignment connecting the University Station to the Eastside. Of these two options, I think that a Montlake Flyer Stop is considerably less expensive and more politically feasible.

Thanks for your consideration –
Kevin Steffa 4715 38th AVE NE Seattle, WA 98105

A bit about myself:
I have lived in Seattle my entire life, and for the past 12 years, I have been commuting between NE Seattle and the Eastside using public transit. I have utilized just about every route passing through Montlake, and have been involved in the 520 redesign process since the beginning.

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.

(Route 542) and they have improved service on other routes like the 255 and 271.

I-245-003

Please see the response to comment I-245-001.

I-245-004

With implementation of the Preferred Alternative, bus stops on the Montlake lid would accommodate both eastbound and westbound buses, replacing the current Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops for buses traveling between the University District and the Eastside. The Montlake lid has been enhanced and expanded compared to Option A. The Montlake lid stop would also function as a flyer stop during the off-peak periods so that passengers could access the SR 520 buses traveling between the eastside and downtown Seattle. University Link light-rail service, expected to be operational in 2016, will accommodate some of the trips that now use the bus stops. See Chapter 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report for an updated assessment of how removal of the Montlake Freeway Transit Station would affect transit service, rider travel times, and connections.

I-245-005

Please see the response to comment I-245-001.

I-245-006

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.

Both approaches would require the addition of supplemental floating bridge pontoons to support the additional weight of light rail, should the regional decision to do so be made and funded. Such a decision 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 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 HCT 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. 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, including rider connections with removal of the Montlake Freeway Transit Station.

I-245-007

Please see the response to comment I-245-001.