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Comments:

I-253-001

I am not in favor of the present design for the 520 bridge. My preference is for four lanes of auto traffic and two lanes for light rail, the green transportation of the future for King County and the region. Redesigning the bridge to include light rail is the logical and smart thing to do. I hope this idea will be embraced by all government agencies concerned. I favor Mayor Mike McGinn's plan to include light rail for the bridge replacement--make the new bridge ready for light-rail. I support the Arboretum Foundation's position on measures for protecting the

I-253-002

Arboretum from the impacts of the new 520 bridge. I support the positions taken by the surrounding neighborhood community associations and councils and their recommendations for removing the Arboretum ramps to Lake Washington Boulevard and allowing the entire area to revert to Arboretum use according to the historic Olmsted design. Do the right thing for Seattle and the region, the environment, the State of Washington, the world. Spend the time and money to come up with a design that includes light-rail-ready lanes and preservation of our beloved Arboretum. Designing a bridge which encourages automobile commuter traffic is an outdated concept and definitely not green. No government agency or official should encourage automobile commuter traffic. Not including light rail in the design encourages our dependence on the automobile and fossil fuels and adds pollution, noise, and toxic runoff into our inland waterways and Puget Sound. This design will have a **NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE ARBORETUM.**

I-253-003

Great parks are what make a city desirable to live in and ultimately increase property values. The Arboretum is a large close-in green space used by all citizens of King County. Visitors come from all over the world to see the heritage plants. The wetlands are used by many protected migrating species and are home to countless creatures we need to protect. Traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard, which runs through the Arboretum should not be used as an access road for the new bridge. Traffic should be held to a minimum on this historic tree-lined boulevard which runs directly by the Seattle Parks Japanese Garden. Noise coming from the Boulevard now is high. The road should not be used as a thoroughfare for highway commuter traffic. Remove access from this Boulevard to the new bridge. The Montlake Interchange is too big and will adversely impact the wetlands and surrounding neighborhoods. Looking at pictures of the site from above makes me believe there is just not room enough for all that is in the current plan. Governor Gregoire has vetoed provisions limiting the proposed

I-253-005

Comments:

**I-253-001**

WSDOT policy supports the notion that people should be able to easily and efficiently move through congested intercity corridors using many transportation options. Section 2.4 in the Final EIS explains why initial implementation of light rail transit on SR 520 is not planned. The decision to locate Sound Transit's initial east-west light rail transit corridor on I-90 rather than SR 520 has been made through extensive regional deliberation (see Table 2-2 of the Final EIS). 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 (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS). Please also see the responses to comments from the City of Seattle Mayor's Office, in Item L-007, regarding high capacity transit.

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.

**I-253-002**

Since the SDEIS was published, FHWA and WSDOT have identified a Preferred Alternative that is most similar to Option A, but includes a number of design refinements that minimize the effects presented in the SDEIS. These refinements respond to comments made on the SDEIS and to WSDOT's work with many project stakeholders under Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, which was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2010. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the planning process and the Preferred Alternative.

One of WSDOT's key efforts under ESSB 6392 was to work with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABCG), of which the Arboretum Foundation is a member, to identify appropriate mitigation for

I-253-005

height of the designed brige to 20' allowing the current bridge height as designed to 30'. The period for citizens to comment on the design is not even over?

I-253-006

Microsoft and its coalition of business from the East side of Lake Washington are in favor of the current design and have been running full-page and half-page ads in the Seattle Times favoring going ahead with the present design. Their drawings show hardly ANY traffic on the new bridge. I don't believe that that will be the traffic situation if we go with the auto only bridge with no light rail. I would say that the East side of Lake Washington 520 bridge is very different from the Seattle side of the bridge. The East side is modern and full of wide streets which accommodate automobile traffic. There are businesses with big parking lots, big box stores, strip malls, and rambling housing developments and condos, all which generate a huge amount to auto traffic. I have found it difficult as a pedestrian to get around on the East side. The Seattle side, on the other hand, is full of old and established residential neighborhoods, with mostly two-lane streets, and the highway bridge now goes right through the green space and wetland of the Arboretum. Montlake Boulevard is a four-lane street but already carries more traffic than it should. I wonder where all this increased auto traffic from the East side on a 6 lane auto bridge is going to go once in Seattle? A 1950's style interstate running through historic Seattle is not a good thing. Rome or Paris would never allow this. When are we going to start preserving the historic nature of our urban cities such as Seattle and our urban parks such as the Arboretum. New York city would not allow this kind of highway project through Central Park. Finally, this bridge design, I think, is not very attractive, especially at 30' high. There is no noise abatement either. Please allow a redesign.

I-253-007

the impacts of the I-5 to Medina project on the Arboretum. This work involved review of the Arboretum Master Plan and commitments by WSDOT to provide funding toward a number of projects in the plan. This 8-month coordination effort resulted in the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, which is included in Attachment 9 of the Final EIS.

#### **I-253-003**

See the response to Comment I-253-001. Proposed tolling also creates an incentive for people to choose alternatives to driving alone. The project would result in improvements in air quality and water quality compared to No Build (see Sections 5.8 and 5.10 of the SDEIS and Final EIS). The existing bridge has no system to treat stormwater runoff, and the new bridge would provide water quality treatment. Noise conditions would also improve compared to No Build. The Preferred Alternative includes a number of noise reduction strategies that would reduce noise in the project area compared to both existing and no build conditions. These strategies include but are not limited to a reduced speed limit on the Portage Bay Bridge, and 4-foot traffic barriers with noise-absorptive coating (see Chapter 2 and Section 5.7 of the Final EIS).

#### **I-253-004**

These design refinements in the Preferred Alternative respond to comments made on the SDEIS and to WSDOT's work with many project stakeholders under Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, which was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2010. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the planning process and the Preferred Alternative.

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. 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.

**I-253-005**

In March 2010, Governor Gregoire signed Senate Bill 6392 into law. However, she vetoed the section of the legislation that specified a 20-foot height limit above Lake Washington for the floating part of the bridge. Governor Gregoire did not want to restrict the height of the bridge, which could affect the state's ability to comply with navigation regulations. However, based on public and agency comments, the height of the floating bridge under the Preferred Alternative would be approximately 20 feet above the water at midspan.

In addition to the navigation concerns expressed by the governor, in the west approach area a lower bridge profile would increase the effects to wetland and aquatic habitat.

The Montlake Interchange is located in an area where there are no wetlands nor aquatic habitat; therefore, there would be no effects to wetlands or aquatic habitat in this area. See the Ecosystems Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS).

**I-253-006**

See the response to Comment I-253-001 regarding light rail, the addition of HOV lanes, and incentives for people to choose an alternative to driving alone. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS explains how the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project can accommodate future high capacity transit, such as proposed bus rapid transit or potential future light rail.

The project is a replacement of an existing highway, not addition of a new highway. However, in response to public and agency comments, the Preferred Alternative analyzed in this Final EIS includes design refinements in the Montlake area, including a considerably expanded and enhanced Montlake lid, and a landscaped median on the Portage Bay Bridge. 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 a description of the Preferred Alternative.

WSDOT has analyzed effects on cultural and historic resources consistent with applicable policies and regulations. Please see Sections 5.6 of the SDEIS and Final EIS, the Cultural Resources Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the SDEIS) and Final Cultural Resources Assessment and Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) for more information.

#### **I-253-007**

With the Preferred Alternative identified in this Final EIS, WSDOT has identified a floating bridge height that addresses community concerns with while providing for bridge maintenance needs. The height of the floating bridge with the Preferred Alternative would be approximately 10 feet higher than the existing bridge, and approximately 5 to 10 feet lower than previous designs considered in the DEIS and the SDEIS. It would be about 10 feet higher than the existing bridge.

With any build alternative, noise mitigation, such as noise walls, would be provided where it both meets WSDOT and FHWA criteria for reasonableness and feasibility and is wanted by the community. However, the Preferred Alternative includes a number of noise reduction

strategies that would reduce noise levels in Seattle to the point that noise walls would not be recommended, except potentially along I-5 in the North Capitol Hill area where the reasonableness and feasibility of a noise wall is still be evaluated. See Chapter 2 and Section 5.7 of the Final EIS for more information.