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From: Kevin Steffa [mailto:kevinsteffa@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2010 11:54 PM

To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS

Subject: Comments on draft EIS

I-281-001

Here are my comments regarding the Montlake Interchange design options. I have submitted more general comments on transit 'BRT' connections, but these comments here are more specific to alternatives A and K.

A bit about myself. I have lived in NE Seattle my entire life, and I have commuted regularly from the Bryant Neighborhood to the eastside for the past 12 years. I have used just about every form of transit connection in the Montlake area, as well as bicycle and vehicle options.

In the document, it is stated that option K will offer the best general traffic flow, as well as the best potential restoration of green-space through the Montlake corridor. Here are the points which I think are further missing from the discussion:

I-281-002

- Montlake bascule bridge opening effects on off-peak travel. While the bridge will generally be down during rush-hour, the possibility of it being up can cause a large disruption at any other time. This is a regular issue today, and the traffic times and gridlock this causes in non-peak times do not appear to be analysed in the traffic statistics.

Option K is the only plan to address this.

I-281-003

- Stadium events which can cause gridlock are likewise not mentioned in the document. Currently, an evening event just at the smaller Hec-Ed facility, can easily cause enough congestion to spill across Montlake, and back up 520 itself. A Husky stadium event can cause congestion all the way to I405 and I5. Option K presents an opportunity to more efficiently direct stadium traffic to its final destination, which will reduce this possibility of gridlock spilling over. The effect of this on travel times is not analyzed, and would give option K more favor over option A.

- Stress levels on all parties travelling through Montlake under Option A. Option A puts all the competing traffic, cars, busses, pedestrians, cyclists in one corridor. Simply packing that much commotion together will increase stress on all parties, which has a lasting cumulative effect from repeated exposure. This is beyond just the time lost in travel due to gridlock. This relative societal 'cost' for stress exposure should be added onto the overall cost of option A. Since option K separates local traffic from highway ramps, as well as creating a more continuous park space in the corridor, it will have significantly less stress to travellers. This is a net positive societal effect in addition to faster travel times, regardless of their destination. I think that the document does not properly

I-281-001

Comment noted.

I-281-002

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has developed 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.

The effect of Montlake Bridge openings on traffic operations during the off-peak hours was included in the analysis performed for the Preferred Alternative. Please see Chapters 6 and 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report.

I-281-003

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has developed 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.

Refer to Chapter 5 of the Final EIS and Chapter 6 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) for a description of how the No Build and Preferred Alternatives would affect local traffic.

The Final EIS transportation analysis continues to focus on the effects of the No Build and Preferred Alternatives on weekday peak period traffic operations in the year 2030. This provides a comparison of relative effects between the alternatives. The only exception is the evaluation of the effects of Montlake Bridge openings on traffic operations during the off-peak hours that has been added to the comparison between the No

Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative. Please see Chapters 6 and 8 the Final Transportation Discipline Report.

I-281-003 | account for the effect of travel-stress in the cost-benefit process - it only evaluates travel time and relative 'parkland acreage' loss/gained. A much better metric would be a traveller's exposure over time to each element along the path and its relative stress cost.

I-281-004 | - Cost of options A vs K. K is generally considered 'too expensive', however, this also includes the cost of more extensive lids, which when compared to Option A, are less expensive. If both options are to be evaluated for cost vs effectiveness, then Option A should be given the full set of lids as well. This includes a larger cover at Montlake, a Pedestrian crossing at Pacific St, and a Foster Island lid. The options for each lid should be considered independently of A vs K, as well as their cost. If A is selected, for example, the lid over Pacific Street should still be considered. Likewise, K should not be rejected solely on the basis of higher cost, as with all the lids, it comes with a good deal more in addition to just the tunnel vs second bridge.

I-281-005 | - Transit operations on Montlake Boulevard North. This has been left out of the discussion. It is assumed that transit riders all come from the U-district. In general, there is inadequate transit service from NE Seattle (through Bryant/Ravenna/Laurelhurst) to Montlake. This is because transit agencies cannot put bus lines along Montlake Boulevard due to the gridlock from non-transit users. Regardless of which option is selected, transit service should be added from NE Seattle through Montlake Boulevard. This will require an HOV lane southbound from the U-village to the Triangle. This option is missing from the DEIS completely, yet it is an integral part of the picture. This should be considered in the project regardless of Option A vs Option K. Option K however gives more efficient flow from the north, so future transit in this corridor would also get a better boost from this design. This analysis is missing from the transit-specific attachment discipline.

Thanks for your time and consideration -

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I-281-004

Options A, K, and L are design options with very specific project elements identified for inclusion by mediation participants. Lids and pedestrian crossings included for each design option are uniquely designed and engineered for the option specifically, and are not considered independent elements as suggested by the comment. Project costs for each design option are estimated to include all project components, and to provide a basis for comparing the options. Option K was not rejected solely based on the higher cost, as asserted in the comment. Rather, WSDOT identified a Preferred Alternative that minimizes effects on the various elements of the built and natural environment, and which costs fall within the \$4.65 billion dollar program range identified by the legislature.

I-281-005

The SDEIS transportation analysis showed that, while person-trip demand would grow between now and 2030, vehicle-trip demand across the 520 floating bridge in 2030 would be lower with Option A than with the No Build Alternative. This is because the proportion of person-trips using HOVs would increase compared to the No Build Alternative, because of tolling on SR 520 and because completion of the HOV lane system in the corridor would improve HOV speed and reliability, providing an incentive for people to choose alternatives to driving alone. These changes in demand are described in Section 5.1 of the SDEIS and Chapter 6 of the Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the SDEIS).

Openings of the existing and new bascule bridges would be synchronized, and the new bascule bridge would allow for lane continuity between the Montlake Cut and the SR 520 Montlake interchange, which

would improve traffic operations compared to the No Build Alternative. The bridge would provide additional capacity for transit/HOV, bicycles, and pedestrians, across the Montlake Cut. 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 Transportation Discipline Report describes the changes in traffic volumes and operations on the local streets in the Montlake interchange area. As illustrated in Chapter 8 of the Transportation Discipline Report, all of the SDEIS 6-Lane Alternative design options would provide a travel time benefit during the off-peak periods when the Montlake drawbridge opens as compared to the No Build Alternative.

Completing the 6-Lane Alternative or any of the design options would not preclude the City, State, and/or transit agencies from moving forward with design and implementation of HOV lanes on Montlake Boulevard as you have described.