

From: ANNE NELSON [mailto:njonanne593@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2010 12:18 PM
To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS
Subject: SR520 Design

I-295-001

I commented online, but I'm not sure if the online form accepted my comments. So, just in case you didn't get them, here they are plus a couple things added:

The 2nd drawbridge across the Montlake cut will destroy the view of the original Montlake bridge, which is a Seattle historical landmark. The image of the Montlake bridge is a trademark of Seattle and views of it will be destroyed if a 2nd drawbridge is built. This 2nd bridge will also require the removal of some beautiful, older homes. And won't a 2nd bridge require Montlake Blvd. to be widened? There are multiple reasons why a 2nd drawbridge is terrible idea.

I-295-002

The bus connections do not work for bus riders. The existing 520 (with the flyer stops) works. It doesn't make sense to spend billions of dollars on a new 520 that will not work as well as the existing one. The new 520 design discourages people from riding the bus.

I-295-003

The interchange in Montlake is very intrusive on the Montlake area and does not solve any traffic problems. Montlake area residents, businesses, and the arboretum will be negatively affected.

I-295-004

Why are there 6 lanes? When you add lanes of highway, you add more cars. There is not enough room on I-5 and Seattle's streets for all of these additional cars. We should be trying to encourage and motivate (or compel, if necessary, via tolls) drivers to carpool or ride mass transit. The new 520 should solve transportation issues, not make things worse. What is the point of getting across the bridge faster, only to sit in traffic on I-5 or Seattle's streets? The additional traffic in Seattle will have a devastatingly negative effect on Seattle residents and businesses.

I-295-005

What about accommodating light rail? This seems to have been overlooked.

I-295-006

In general, the design for the new 520 has not been well thought out at all and does not solve our area's transportation problems. Please do not spend billions of dollars to build something that is so poorly designed. Go back to the drawing board and come up with a good design.

Thank you,
Anne E. Nelson
206-720-0095

I-295-001

The design of the new bascule bridge would be context sensitive to minimize its effects on the setting and view of the historic Carl F. Gould Montlake Bridge. The design would complement the historic bridge and would not detract from the views of the historic bridge, or of the area surrounding the bridge. Stipulations are provided in the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (Attachment 9 to the Final EIS) to ensure that the proximity of the new bascule bridge does not diminish the integrity of the existing Montlake Bridge.

The Section 106 Programmatic Agreement also provides WSDOT's mitigation for removal of 2904 and 2908 Montlake Boulevard NE, and for the resulting visual impact to surrounding historic properties.

To accommodate the new bascule bridge, Montlake Boulevard would be restriped and reconfigured between SR 520 and the Montlake Cut to include two general-purpose lanes and one HOV lane for improved transit connectivity. The second bascule bridge would benefit traffic flow and improve traffic operations compared to the No Build Alternative by allowing for lane continuity between the Montlake Cut and the SR 520 interchange. Overall delay related to bridge openings would also decrease for all vehicles because the additional capacity would allow congestion to clear more quickly.

I-295-002

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

I-295-003

With the Preferred Alternative, a transit/HOV direct-access ramp would be provided from southbound Montlake Boulevard to eastbound SR 520 via the Montlake lid, rather than including an HOV bypass lane in the eastbound loop ramp. Further, in response to stakeholder input, the Preferred Alternative includes a considerably larger Montlake lid than

any of the SDEIS options. Running from Montlake Boulevard to the Lake Washington shoreline, the lid would provide better pedestrian amenities in the central part of the Montlake neighborhood, enhanced transit facilities, and better connections to the Arboretum, including a pedestrian crossing beneath the lid that would link the Arboretum to East Montlake Park. Running from Montlake Boulevard to the Lake Washington shoreline, the lid would provide better pedestrian amenities in the central part of the Montlake neighborhood, enhanced transit facilities, and better connections to the Arboretum, including a pedestrian crossing beneath the lid that would link the Arboretum to East Montlake Park. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for further description. The Final Transportation Discipline Report demonstrates improved transportation operations with the Preferred Alternative in the Montlake area, compared to No Build. These effects are described in Section 5.1 of the Final EIS and Chapter 6 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report.

I-295-004

Increases in demand for cross-lake travel are a result of growth in population and employment that would occur with or without the project. 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. 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 2-1 and 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 SR 520, I-5 to Medina 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. The HOV lanes would allow for the near-term implementation of bus rapid transit, as called for in the SR 520 High-Capacity Transit Plan. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS provides further discussion of how the project can accommodate high capacity transit.

I-295-005

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, 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. Section 2.4 also 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.

I-295-006

Comment noted.