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April 15, 2010

Jenifer Young
Environmental Manager
SR 520 Program Office
600 Stewart Street, Ste 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Comment on Supplemental Draft EIS for SR 520

Dear Ms Young:

C-043-001

On behalf of SWAMP – Save the Wetlands of the Arboretum from Multitudes of People – we write to comment on the Supplemental Draft EIS for SR 520. This comment supplements SWAMP's earlier comments of September 22, 2006 and October 30, 2006 on the Draft EIS. As stated in our prior correspondence, SWAMP is an organization of residents within the Madison Park and Montlake communities dedicated to protecting the Arboretum and its wetlands from further desecration, and in particular from further impacts from a widened SR 520.

We have reviewed the Supplemental Draft EIS for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement, and in particular, Chapter 7, related to non-motorized facilities, and the provisions related to recreation trail connectivity. We are pleased to see that the Supplemental Draft does not include an additional pedestrian/bicycle connection to Madison Park through the wetlands of the Arboretum, as once proposed in a separate technical memorandum.

Rather, the Future Trail Connectivity Options at Figure 29 within the Recreation Discipline Report shows three other bicycle/pedestrian path connections: at McCurdy Park (Option A); at Foster Island and Montlake (Option K); and at Montlake (Option L). From the perspective of protecting the resources of the Arboretum, Options A and L would be preferable. Option K would be acceptable if the access to Foster Island were limited to pedestrians. Foster Island currently is limited to pedestrian access and the current trails on Foster Island provide access to the marsh trail. SWAMP would be concerned that the addition of bicycle ramps at Foster Island would encourage bicycle use through this sensitive area, including use of the marsh trail.

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The project scope and preliminary design have changed considerably since the Draft EIS stage of the project, and since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has identified a Preferred Alternative which is similar to Option A, but with a number of design refinements. The trails on Foster Island will not be changed to bicycle trails as a result of the SR 520 project. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative.

Note that in early 2010, the Washington State Legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392. ESSB 6392 directs WSDOT to develop a mitigation plan for the Washington Park Arboretum. Final recommendations from the workgroup include design modifications to minimize facility effects on the Arboretum and traffic management ideas. An Arboretum Mitigation Plan (Attachment 9 of the Final EIS) was also developed as a result of ESSB 6392, and identifies projects that could mitigate for project effects on the Washington Park Arboretum.

There are no bicycle/pedestrian paths proposed for 37th Avenue or 43rd Avenue. Please see Attachment 13 of the Final EIS for the response to comments on the Draft EIS.

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We also have had an opportunity to review the City Council's Draft SR 520 Project Enhancement Report of March 2010. While the report itself is not part of the Supplemental Draft EIS and exists only in draft form, SWAMP would observe that these comments and its prior positions are fully consistent with the City Council's desired outcomes, including the improvement of the pedestrian and bicycling environments and the Arboretum. We would encourage the State Department of Transportation to embrace these outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration of these additional comments. As before, SWAMP requests to be listed as a party of record. Further correspondence may be directed to this office.

Sincerely yours,

ARAMBURU & EUSTIS, LLP

Jeffrey M. Eustis
Cc: SWAMP