

From: Greg Walton [mailto:gbwalton@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2010 5:01 PM
To: SR 520 Bridge SDEIS
Cc: 'Jenn dela Cruz'
Subject: SR 520 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement comments

To WSDOT,

My name is Greg Walton, I am writing on behalf of my wife, Jennifer dela Cruz and myself. We live at 2810 Montlake Blvd E in Seattle WA, 98112

Following are my comments related to the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

I-305-001

Montlake Bridge

The current A+ design is flawed in that it amplifies a major existing problem. During boating season highway 520 currently backs up in both directions as the Montlake bridge raises and lowers. I have often seen the eastbound traffic back up onto Interstate 5. WSDOT projections show traffic increasing markedly over the next decades. Traffic volume will increase but the duration and frequency of bridge opening remain constant. Adding a second bridge does little to increase throughput; the traffic backups during boating season will be egregious. A tunnel under the cut, while more expensive, is the long term solution because it removes this bottle neck.

I-305-002

Truck Haul Routes

Current WSDOT plans show the spoils/excavation from the McCurdy Park area being trucked up and down Shelby and Hamlin streets. These are narrow streets in a small residential neighborhood full of children. Our 2 year old attends daycare in the neighborhood and we cannot accept the safety issues generated by large trucks rumbling through down our streets. Moreover, the neighborhood is landlocked between the Montlake Cut and Highway 520 and parking is an issue. Any parking restrictions (which, given the width of the street would have to be enacted to accommodate the width of haul trucks) would place a severe burden on the residents, as most of the garages in the neighborhood are one car and street parking is used extensively. The better solution is to barge the excavations/spoils. Given the physical proximity to the water, barging is an obvious answer that does not place the burden of hauling on any of the local neighborhoods. Work should begin immediately on lining up the proper permits and permissions for barging these materials.

I-305-003

520/Montlake Blvd Interchange

One of the great wrongs introduced with the original 520 design was placing a freeway interchange in the midst of an urban neighborhood. Besides the visual

I-305-001

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 Final Transportation Discipline Report indicates that with the Preferred Alternative, transportation operations would be improved in the Montlake area compared to the No Build Alternative. The second bascule bridge would create 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 and would provide bicycle lanes across the Montlake Cut. Most notably, overall delay related to bridge openings would decrease for all vehicles because the additional capacity would help clear congestion more quickly. Please see the Final Transportation Discipline Report, Chapters 6 and 8, for additional information regarding the effect of Montlake Bridge openings on traffic operations during off-peak hours.

I-305-002

Since the SDEIS was published, WSDOT has revised the potential haul routes. East Shelby and East Hamlin streets were identified as potential haul routes only for Options K and L and continue to be identified for those options in the Final EIS; they are not identified as potential haul routes for Option A or the Preferred Alternative. See Chapter 3 of the Final EIS for additional information about potential haul routes identified for construction of the Preferred Alternative. Your comments about the condition of both streets, parking restrictions, and the potential burden on residents are noted. Chapter 3 of the Final EIS also provides clarification about barge use for materials hauling. WSDOT assumes that barges would be used as described by this comment, though such trips cannot yet be fully characterized.

I-305-003

and sensory blight, the area is a treacherous field for pedestrians and bikers. We now have the opportunity to right that wrong, but none of the current plans do that, instead they propose a similar freeway interchange. The design should be modified to make this an urban intersection by tightening up the footprint so that it has a more human scale, including eliminating the large slip lane ramps. The target should be an urban scale intersection friendly to pedestrians and bikers.

I-305-004

Light Rail Capable

Two things are not going to change in the future; first - neighborhood resistance to widening the bridge footprint and second – continually increasing concerns and restrictions on work in environmentally critical areas. With those two givens in mind, it is highly unlikely that the bridge and Westside approach will ever feasibly be allowed to widen. Consequently, the current design needs to have the flexibility to allow for rail transit to be added within the original footprint at some point in the future.

Thank you for your consideration,

Greg Walton and Jennifer dela Cruz
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I-305-003

Since publication of the SDEIS, WSDOT has identified 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. These include a nearly 1,400 foot lid over the Montlake interchange and additional design refinements to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in the Montlake interchange area. The Preferred Alternative and its design refinements were developed in coordination with the University of Washington, King County Metro, Sound Transit, and the City of Seattle.

Chapter 2 of the Final EIS describes the Preferred Alternative. Please see Chapters 7 and 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report for a description of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connection improvements and their effects on users in the Montlake interchange area. Also refer to the Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report Addendum, for more information regarding the Preferred Alternative's effect on visual quality in the Montlake Interchange area.

I-305-004

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.

Without a specific light rail transit alignment and service plan for the SR 520 corridor, the design options accommodate a number of potential configurations. However, full build out of light rail transit in the corridor would require modifications provided as a future project, including the addition of supplemental floating bridge pontoons to support the additional weight of light rail under either option. Since rail transit in the SR 520 corridor is not programmed in current regional transit plans, any future project to add rail in the corridor would need to undergo an extensive planning and environmental review process by the responsible transit agency prior to implementation. It is clear that there would be a need for construction and additional costs to add light rail to the SR 520 corridor, but the costs and risks associated with such an addition have been minimized by the design elements included in the Preferred Alternative. Section 2.4 in the Final EIS provides additional information on planning for high capacity transit in the SR 520 corridor.