

I-306-001 SR520 PLAN A+ - COMMENTS - April 15, 2010:

At the time I moved to Seattle in 1978, Washington residents called out “don’t Californicate Washington” when they noticed my California auto license plates. So, perhaps my moving here from southern California is partially to blame for this unacceptable bridge proposal. I compare this auto-centric bridge option to what California did in the 1950’s and 60’s, laying down miles of twisted concrete with complicated interchanges which attempted to move cars from one end of the city to the other and succeeded only in creating end to end back ups at most times of the night and day. However, in the past few years, LA has managed to get new MetroLink rail lines which move people like the trolleys they had in the 40’s. They see rider-ship on mass transit increase every year. And, they also have a master plan to rid the LA riverbeds of concrete in an attempt to return them to a more natural state, while we persist in adding more concrete to Lake Washington. The LA Riverbeds project is an *example of undoing mistakes from previous poor planning at a huge expense to the taxpayers.*

So now in 2010 WSDOT is Californicating Washington with the old 1950’s *highway building mentality.* By building another highway across lake Washington and the wetlands, twice as big as the current one, *calling it 6 lanes, when it is really eight lanes in size* is not progressive 21st century design. There is no accommodation for future light rail as was implied by WSDOT. Future light rail will require additional bridge and corridor widening as well as pontoon augmentation to accommodate the light rail so necessary to real transportation. The costs will, no doubt, make adding light rail prohibitive in the future and leave open the possibility of re-striping the corridor to 8 lanes of cars which is totally unacceptable.

I-306-002 The bridge – according to my understanding of the Nelson and Nygaard report commissioned by the City of Seattle is:

- now 60’ wide
- current plan without light rail is 115’ wide
- Designed for light rail now it would be approx.125’ wide,
- With light rail later it will possibly be 150’

It has been noted that I-90 in preparation for light rail will have much narrower shoulders, HOV and bicycle lanes than the current PLAN A+ proposal. So, it is questionable as to whether today’s planning for light rail would require the full 125’ It also calls into question the necessity of additional width in HOV lanes, bicycle lanes and shoulders indicated in the Plan A+. There is more width than necessary in the Plan A+, particularly if Light Rail will not be accommodated in the future without an additional widening of the structure as Nelson and Nygaard report suggests.

If light rail is delayed until some time in the future this bridge could be 2.5 times the width of the current configuration! This is not progressive transportation planning, it’s the transition to urban blight. We now have a substandard design with the current SR520 bridge, today’s solution should be better, perhaps more expensive, but a much more successful option than PlanA+.

I-306-001

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. The project is a replacement of an existing highway, not addition of a new highway. The proposed corridor is six lanes wide. Standard engineering terminology includes only through lanes, not ramps or shoulders, in describing the number of lanes in a facility. Section 2.2 of the Final EIS explains when and why an 8-lane alternative was dropped from further evaluation. The Preferred Alternative has been designed to minimize SR 520’s footprint as much as possible while allowing room for HOV lanes and the shoulders required to satisfy current safety standards regulated by FHWA and the Association of American State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Further, the Preferred Alternative includes a managed shoulder rather than an auxiliary lane on the Portage Bay Bridge. See Chapter 2 for a description of the Preferred Alternative.

The addition of HOV lanes to the corridor, with no increase in the existing number of general-purpose lanes, is expressly intended to improve the speed and reliability of transit service, providing an incentive to use transit. The SR 520 High-Capacity Transit Plan, which was endorsed in 2008 by the state, King County Metro Transit, and Sound Transit, found that until at least 2030, demand for transit in the 520 corridor could be satisfied by bus rapid transit that runs in HOV/transit lanes—complementing Sound Transit’s East Link on I-90. At the same time, the plan acknowledges that after 2030 significant increases in cross-lake travel may warrant dedicated HCT facilities in both I-90 and SR 520. Therefore, the new SR 520 bridge and associated interchanges will be built in a way that allows the structure to accommodate a two-way light rail line or busway at a future date.

I-306-003 | If the budget constraints are one of the major considerations for the current pressure to build now, then we should be studying an enhanced 4 lane option which would be less expensive, and would keep the footprint smaller, particularly if light rail is to be added at a future date. Alternatives to PLAN A+ require more study to eliminate the taking of park lands, excessive noise in residential and recreational areas, visual and physical blight from unnecessarily high and wide bridge design. The options offered by WSDOT did not reflect the real possibilities. WSDOT offered a scaled down 4 lane option to use it as a *straw man* in the choices, forcing the 6 (really 8 lane alternative) to the default position. The SDEIS is incomplete/flawed because it failed to identify all Federal Section 4f properties and evaluate alternatives to avoid damage to the quality of life for residents, to wildlife habitat, existing park lands and recreational uses.

I-306-004 | PLAN A+ PROBLEMS

The "State preferred" Plan A+ bridge replacement :

- Will create two new merge problems for transit both eastbound in the AM and westbound in the afternoon forcing transit to cross general purpose lanes to merge to I-5 or merge with Montlake onramp traffic. (According to WSDOT studies, the congestion at I-5 cannot be alleviated – cost prohibitive.) A traffic flow analysis is required to determine if the Portage Bay Bridge could be reduced to 4 lanes. The additional lanes in PLAN A+ may not be cost effective or prove to be of any advantage.

I-306-005 |

- Creates unnecessary noise and pollution at Portage Bay viaduct and other areas along the corridor with the increased footprint and traffic. This will result in reducing quality of life for nearby residents. It's unlikely, according to recent Nelson/Nygaard consultant reports, for noise problems to be solved by sound walls alone, SDEIS does not adequately address the sound issue and more studies need to be done. As we have heard from the consultants, parallel noise walls on 520 may make sound worse and they increase the height of the structure; thereby adding to the visual blight. Creative methods such as roadway coatings, sound insulating materials on the underside of the bridge and traffic speed management must be implemented and maintained over time to reduce noise in this corridor. It is understood that current approved methods include only sound walls. This issue must be studied further. Excessive noise during construction to nearby residents need to be addressed and mitigation has not been discussed in the SDEIS

I-306-006 |

- Will cause visual and noise blight to the parks, wildlife and urban wetlands particularly around Portage Bay and the arboretum. It fails to address Seattle's very own plans for the Bands of Green (and previous Olmstead "string of pearls") a continuous greenbelt or pathway connecting to a recently restored natural area with viewpoints overlooking Portage Bay, adjacent to Montlake playfield called South Portage Bay Reclamation. This natural area has a series of trails intended to connect to the Arboretum. The pathways at South Portage Bay connect to the Bill Dawson Trail, (future plan) to continue along the shoreline in front of NOAA to West Montlake Park, further to the Ship Canal Trail leading into the Arboretum Waterfront Trail.

Ramps cut right through the greenbelts of PLAN A+ and the loop ramp has not been removed from the plan! In addition, it appears that wetlands adjacent and contiguous with this trail will be taken, reduced or disturbed by PLAN A+. There is

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. Light rail could be accommodated either by converting the HOV lanes for rail use or by adding light-rail only lanes. 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.

WSDOT intends to operate SR 520 as a 6-lane corridor and has no plans to restripe it in the future. The width of the new 6-lane SR 520 corridor and the width of the new floating bridge would not allow conversion to eight lanes without physical widening of the roadway. This would result in a new project that would need to undergo separate environmental review.

I-306-002

See the response to Comment I-306-001 regarding how the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project could accommodate potential future light rail transit,

I-306-006

an opportunity now to make these connections part of the plan, because they may never happen in mitigation due to budget constraints. The City of Seattle Parks Department has a South Portage Bay Master Plan for a portion of the area, and the other portion is within the Bands of Green Plan. Recognition of the health benefits of exercise, the aging of the population and public health concerns about the importance of exercise, have expanded public interest in walking, jogging, cycling, kayaking and other forms of exercise. All of these factors place greater stress on our City's parks and trails. It is apparent that they are more heavily used today than ever before, and that our park system must continue to grow, and not be lost in order to keep pace with these changes. Codify and guarantee that any disturbance of park lands, wildlife, and recreation areas identified as 4f must be mitigated and all the lids on SR520 be built as part of the plan and include park connections. It is not OK to give these items a low priority and drop them later due to the insufficient funding of the project. [WSDOT's OWN OBSERVATION -"Mitigation and enhancements in the affected communities would be critical to gaining support from local communities."](#)

(Note: Excerpt on final page, - From Bands Of Green 2007 - Seattle Parks Foundation)

Make accommodations in the SR520 plan to protect and augment urban walking, boating and biking trail connections and protect parks especially along shorelines and open spaces, including the Arboretum. All of these lands must be properly identified in the SDEIS and efforts made to minimize or mitigate harm.

I-306-007

- Requires a better design for light rail on the corridor so it can be easily added without any unnecessary widening of the footprint. There are indications that enough residents on both sides of Lake Washington, including employees of Microsoft, who would benefit by the addition of light rail for the region. We need better transit and rail connections to the UW station in all cases. WSDOT has not been transparent about the ability of the PLAN A+ to accommodate light rail now or in the future.

I-306-008

- Will cause more traffic congestion, I-5 has NOT gotten any wider lately and it will NOT accept this increased traffic flow without causing considerable backups. The result will create more cut through traffic problems in the neighborhoods which are already pressured by traffic at the critical times of the commute. These problems should be addressed in the design solution and needs further study.

I-306-009

- Has an unacceptable off ramp at Lake Washington Blvd, pointing at a residential neighborhood which needs to be redesigned

I-306-010

- Adds a second bascule bridge which obscures an historic feature of the neighborhood, requires demolition of two historic homes and will create more problems requiring dual bridge openings. It was rejected in the 50's and is still an unacceptable option.

I-306-011

- Has not addressed the Montlake Triangle pedestrian safety issues. No grade level crosswalks or signals should be added to an already busy arterial. Solutions should be overhead as in the Sound Transit sky bridge concept or a pedestrian tunnel for safe passage between the UW, UW Hospital and Sound Transit Station. This should be included in the final SR520 plan and coordinated with UW and Sound Transit. From the outset of this project WSDOT and Sound Transit's project co-ordination was questionable and still seems lacking.

and regarding corridor width. The proposed corridor is 115 feet wide across the floating bridge (see Chapter 2); this design is compatible with potential future light rail as described in Section 2.4 of the Final EIS and the response to Comment I-306-002. The width of the bridge if light rail were to be added in new light-rail-only lanes has not been determined at this time. Any added width associated with potential future light rail would be evaluated as part of environmental review for that project.

Highway lanes and shoulders are designed to standards that have been established to protect the safety of drivers. When circumstances warrant a change from these standards, WSDOT must request FHWA's approval of a "design deviation." WSDOT has already obtained approvals for design deviations for both lane and shoulder widths in response to community requests for a narrower roadway footprint. In the interest of safety, FHWA will not approve further narrowing of the corridor. The width of the project has been reduced by a combined total of 16 feet in some locations compared to what was shown in the Draft EIS to respond to community concerns. HOV lanes need to allow for buses, which are wider than most cars. Safety standards also apply to the bicycle/pedestrian lane.

Please also see the responses to comments from the City of Seattle Mayor's Office, in Item L-007.

I-306-003

As stated in Chapter 1 of the SDEIS, the Evergreen Point Bridge is vulnerable to failure in a severe windstorm; fixed bridges along the corridor do not meet current seismic standards and could collapse in an earthquake. In addition, the corridor currently carries nearly twice as many vehicles as it was originally designed for, resulting in extended congestion and impaired mobility. The risk of catastrophic failure and impaired mobility are the major reasons that replacement of the SR 520 corridor is currently under environmental evaluation and why the project is needed now. Budget constraints are not one of the major drivers for

I-306-012

- Does not have adequate funding which will lead to inappropriate design changes during the course of the project. This project should not begin until all the funds to complete it are clearly available, including tolling options which may be subject to Federal scrutiny. The full cost of mitigation including all lids, landscaping, recreational structures, and pathways should be included in this funding.

I-306-013

Yes, the design of the SR520 is a time consuming process which some people have been working toward for the past 12+ years Plenty of people who live in the effected neighborhoods have worked with WSDOT and in a Mediation Group without compensation, for the good of their community, but Governor Gregoire and WSDOT persist in pushing their original plan and worse. The majority of the those neighborhoods feel like the State of Washington is looking only at arbitrary project completion deadlines, is not looking at current and future mass transportation solutions, and is not heeding results of the Mediation Group. The focus appears to be moving cars, not people, at any cost to Seattle's residents, landscape, wildlife and natural beauty.

Please take steps to allow additional design time to get it closer to being the best possible choice. Otherwise, the inevitable neighborhood lawsuits will start dragging the process through the courts adding time and expense to the project.

Be willing to increase the time of the project to get a better result for Seattle and work outside of the current SDEIS. Don't reduce the study of alternatives to alleviate changes to the SDEIS. Environmental Impact Statements are intended to aid the decision making process – bypassing the process is not consistent with legislation.

RCW 43.21C.020

Legislative recognitions — Declaration — Responsibility.

(1) The legislature, recognizing that a human being depends on biological and physical surroundings for food, shelter, and other needs, and for cultural enrichment as well; and recognizing further the profound impact of a human being's activity on the interrelations of all components of the natural environment, particularly the profound influences of population growth, high-density urbanization, industrial expansion, resource utilization and exploitation, and new and expanding technological advances and recognizing further the critical importance of restoring and maintaining environmental quality to the overall welfare and development of human beings, declares that it is the continuing policy of the state of Washington, in cooperation with federal and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations, to use all practicable means and measures, including financial and technical assistance, in a manner calculated to: (a) Foster and promote the general welfare; (b) create and maintain conditions under which human beings and nature can exist in productive harmony; and (c) fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Washington citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns and I hope you will consider your actions as a future investment in Seattle and the region. My wish is that we will ultimately be proud to have weathered the storm in the planning process to steer this project to a successful conclusion.

building the bridge in the upcoming years, as suggested in this comment.

The 4-Lane Alternative evaluated in the Draft EIS was designed as a “minimum footprint” alternative and included four general purpose lanes with wider shoulders to meet current highway standards. However, even with the minimum footprint design, the 4-Lane alternative did not eliminate the taking of park lands, or avoid noise and visual change in the project area. Additionally, the 4-Lane Alternative from the Draft EIS would not meet the project purpose and need. While it would improve safety by replacing vulnerable structures and widening lanes and shoulders, it would not meet the project purpose of improving mobility in the SR 520 corridor. Therefore, the 4-Lane Alternative is not considered a reasonable and feasible alternative. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS provides additional information about 4-Lane Alternative and why it was not studied further.

Since the inception of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, WSDOT has evaluated a wide range of project alternatives and options including, but not limited to, a 4-lane alternative, a 6-lane alternative with seven design options that expanded the range of potential choices, an 8-lane alternative, and a tunnel option. Attachment 8 to the SDEIS, the Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated report, described the evaluation process in detail. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS provides a summary of the alternatives evaluation.

In compliance with Section 4(f), WSDOT has evaluated whether there were feasible and prudent alternatives that would avoid the use of Section 4(f) properties. This evaluation was done both for the corridor as a whole and on a resource-by-resource basis, and was described on pages 121-133 of the Draft Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) Evaluation in Attachment 6 to the SDEIS. The analysis concluded that there were no feasible and prudent alternatives to the use of Section 4(f) resources. Moving forward with a 6-lane alternative, the design of the Preferred

I-306-013 Sincerely,

Karen Wood
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Seattle, WA 98112

I-306-014 AREAS FOR MITIGATION



New Boat Launch



Wetland habitat to enhance and protect

Below is excerpted from Seattle Parks Foundation – Bands of Green

“On the south shore, a network of walking trails extends from the Arboretum across Foster and Marsh Islands, along the Montlake Cut, under the University Bridge and through West Shelby-Hamlin Park, under Highway 520 and along the Bill Dawson Trail to the Montlake playfield.” [and now include SOUTH PORTAGE BAY RECLAMATION and boat launch]
“The University of Washington is working to create a similar trail on the north shore beginning on Boat Street and following Columbia Road to connect with a gravel path that leads along the Montlake Cut to Union Bay, where the route continues through the University’s sports fields via Walla Walla, Canal and Clark Roads, connecting to Mary Gates Boulevard at the Center for Urban Horticulture.
Eagle’s nest on Foster Island Bridge from the Arboretum Foster Island wetlands
The upcoming 520 Bridge project will have a significant impact on this loop. All alternatives include new trail connections to Montlake and some include a new trail up to 10th Ave. E. and Roanoke. We suggest the City make every effort to assure that the 520 Bridge project is designed to enhance – rather than damage - this portion of the open space network.”

NOTE: This potential connection from South Portage Bay Wetland Reclamation to the end of the Arboretum is a 5 mile urban trail which requires a greenbelt connection along the shore from the Bill Dawson Trail at the Montlake Playfield to West Montlake Park. From West Montlake Park a trail exists along the Montlake cut which connects to the Arboretum Waterfront Trail leading directly into the Arboretum. Current lid configurations and ramps do not enhance these possible trail connections

Alternative includes a number of design refinements to minimize harm to Section 4(f) properties. It has been determined to result in the least net harm to Section 4(f) resources compared to any of the SDEIS design options.

Since the SDEIS was published, and after review of public comment, WSDOT has conducted further research and evaluation of the project’s Section 4(f) properties. For example, WSDOT revisited its analysis of Lake Washington, and upon completion of additional research, determined that Lake Washington Boulevard, from Madison Street to Northeast Pacific Street, is a historic property. Please see the Final 4(f) Evaluation (Chapter 9 of the Final EIS) for updated discussion, findings, and evaluation of additional Section 4(f) properties.

I-306-004

A traffic flow analysis was completed for the Portage Bay bridge. That analysis showed that the westbound Portage Bay bridge would need an auxiliary lane between the Montlake on-ramp and the I-5 off-ramps as described in chapter 5 of the SDEIS Transportation Discipline Report. Through the ESSHB 6392 workgroup process, the width of the Portage Bay bridge was reduced compared to what was shown in the SDEIS, thus reducing the affects of the Preferred Alternative. Further analysis is provided in the Final Transportation Discipline Report.

I-306-005

The Preferred Alternative includes a number of noise reduction strategies, such as 4-foot concrete traffic barriers with noise-absorptive coating; noise-absorptive materials around the Montlake and 10th Avenue East/Delmar Drive East lid portals; and encapsulating expansion joints. The noise reduction strategies included in the Preferred Alternative would reduce noise levels along the corridor to the point that noise walls are not recommended in the Seattle portion of the project area, except potentially along I-5 in the North Capitol Hill area where the

reasonableness and feasibility of a noise wall is still be evaluated.

Quieter concrete pavement is included as a design feature for Option A, Option K, and the Preferred Alternative; however, because it is not an FHWA-approved mitigation measure and because future pavement surface conditions cannot be determined with certainty, it is not included in the noise model for the project.

Information on noise modeling results for the Preferred Alternative can be found in Section 5.7 of the Final EIS and the Noise Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS).

I-306-006

Of the options evaluated in the SDEIS, Option A had the least impact on park and recreational resources. As a result of the SDEIS analysis, direction from the Legislative Workgroup, and input from the community and agencies, FHWA and WSDOT identified a Preferred Alternative that is similar to Option A but with a number of design refinements to further minimize effects. The Preferred Alternative has the fewest impacts on the environment of any alternative studied that meets the purpose and need for the project.

The Preferred Alternative reduces the visual effect in the Portage Bay area from those of Option A, due to a narrower bridge cross-section, a planted median on the bridge, and inclusion of aesthetic treatments. In an effort to reduce the visual change in the Arboretum, WSDOT has shared visualizations of the Preferred Alternative with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) and has committed, as part of the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, to work with the ABGC on aesthetic enhancements at the Foster Island crossing. Visual quality in the Arboretum would benefit in other areas, primarily from the removal of the Lake Washington Boulevard and R.H. Thomson ramps, where these existing features are visible from the Arboretum.

The Recreation Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) finds that there would be no negative noise effects to the recreation resources around Portage Bay and the Arboretum from operation of the Preferred Alternative. The Final EIS noise analysis supported this conclusion by demonstrating that the Preferred Alternative would reduce noise in the corridor compared to existing conditions. The noise-reducing strategies included as part of the Preferred Alternative, such as lower posted speed limits across the Portage Bay structure, 4-foot noise-absorptive traffic barriers, and noise-absorptive materials at the lid entrances, were the primary reasons for this reduction. This noise reduction in the corridor would benefit adjacent parks and recreational resources.

The Preferred Alternative would provide for continued connectivity to other parks from the south Portage Bay area via the existing Bill Dawson Trail at the Montlake Playfield. The Bill Dawson Trail connects to Montlake Boulevard from which East Montlake Park and the Ship Canal Waterside Trail and the Arboretum Waterfront Trail can be accessed. This connection would be maintained by detours during construction and replaced after construction. The SR 520, I-5 to Medina project would further enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the region, with the introduction of the regional bicycle and pedestrian path along SR 520, and the additional bicycle and pedestrian paths recommended through the ESSB 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup Recommendations Report.

The estimated costs for natural environment and built environment mitigation have always been included in program-level cost estimating. In accordance with federal regulations, including NEPA and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, WSDOT has included mitigation as an integral element of project development and the NEPA process.

Specific mitigation measures have been developed through a number of venues, including, but not limited to the Regulatory Agency Coordination process, technical working groups, community construction management planning, the Section 106 consulting party process and the Section 4(f) process. WSDOT's mitigation commitments will be documented in the Record of Decision.

I-306-007

See response to Comment I-306-001 regarding how the SR 520, I-6 to Medina project can accommodate potential future light rail, and how demand until 2030 can be met by bus rapid transit. Also see Section 2.4 of the Final EIS for further discussion of both these topics.

I-306-008

The SDEIS Transportation Discipline Report contained analyses of traffic operations and several I-5 interchanges with the SDEIS design options and with the No Build Alternative. The report stated that several bottlenecks along the I-5 corridor limit the amount of traffic that can access SR 520 (page 5-1). It also stated that I-5 traffic demand would increase up to 20 percent with the No Build Alternative (page 5-9) and that none of the SDEIS options would be able to serve all of the forecasted traffic demand because of congestion on I-5 and I-405 (page 5-21).

Exhibit 5-3 of the Transportation Discipline Report showed that daily vehicle demand volume on the SR 520 in 2030 would be 135,000 with the No Build Alternative, 131,000 with Option A, and 132,400 under Option A with suboptions (Option A+). Existing volumes are 115,000. Thus, vehicle trip demand would increase with or without the project, and Options A and Suboption A would result in less demand than the No Build Alternative. The effects of background population growth are not caused by the project; they are presented as part of the No Build Alternative analyses for 2030 and are not considered direct or indirect

effects of the project.

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. The Preferred Alternative reduces the effects of cut-through traffic because it reduces the effects of freeway congestion on local roadways leading to and from freeways. See Chapter 5 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report for more information regarding the effects of the No Build and Preferred Alternatives on SR 520 freeway operations, including the effects of congestion at I-5. See Chapter 6 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report for more information regarding changes in local traffic patterns, traffic volumes and traffic operations in the Montlake interchange area related to the Preferred Alternative.

I-306-009

The Preferred Alternative would not include construction of any new ramps in the Arboretum, and would remove both the existing Lake Washington Boulevard ramps 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.

I-306-010

WSDOT has acknowledged that the new bascule bridge could have a visual quality effect on the historic Montlake Bridge that would diminish its integrity, an effect on historic properties with a view of the new bridge that would diminish their integrity, and would require removal of two residential properties that contribute to the Montlake Historic District. However, the new bascule bridge would not obscure the view of the original Montlake Bridge, and the context-sensitive design would help to minimize the effects on the historic bridge by decreasing the visual impact of the new bridge. The Programmatic Agreement (Attachment 9

of the Final EIS) stipulates that the new bridge design must be in keeping with National Parks Service guidelines to minimize effects to the historic bridge and includes other stipulations to ensure mitigation of effects resulting from the new bascule bridge and its proximity to the existing Montlake Bridge. See the Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report and Addendum, and the Final Cultural Resources Assessment and Discipline Report, both in Attachment 7 to the Final EIS, for further information.

The Final Transportation Discipline Report demonstrates improved transportation operations with the Preferred Alternative in the Montlake area, compared to No Build. The second 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 the Final Transportation Discipline Report describes the changes in traffic volumes and operations on the local streets in the Montlake interchange area. Chapter 7 describes the effects of the Preferred Alternative on nonmotorized transportation facilities and connections. Chapter 8 describes the effects of the Preferred Alternative on transit service, facilities, ridership, travel times, and rider connections.

I-306-011

In accordance with the requirements of ESSB 6392, WSDOT worked collaboratively with Sound Transit, King County Metro, UW, SDOT, the City of Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board to develop design refinements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. These include design refinements for pedestrian and bicycle access in the Montlake Triangle area. The resulting design refinements

are included in the 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup Recommendations Report (Attachment 16 of the Final EIS) and described in Chapter 7 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report.

I-306-012

As discussed on pages 1-31 through 1-33 of the SDEIS, and in Chapter 1 of the Final EIS, WSDOT has not currently identified full funding for the SR 520 program, and does not currently have full funding for the entire SR 520, I-5 to Medina project. The costs disclosed for the project (page 1-32 of the SDEIS, and Chapter 1 of the Final EIS) include costs for lids, landscaping, recreational structures, and pathways, as indicated by the comment. Costs also include mitigation cost estimates.

The justification to proceed with the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project despite not having secured full funding for the entire corridor is to address the growing safety concerns with the floating bridge and other vulnerable structures along the SR 520 corridor. Please see page 1-4, Section 1.3 "Why is the project needed now?" for a complete discussion about how structures along the SR 520 corridor are vulnerable to catastrophic failure during an earthquake or windstorm.

Regarding the comment about a lack of funding leading to design modifications, small design changes are expected during the life of a project in order to address changing conditions and discovering new information that may require a shift in thinking or design. If any design changes result in an increase in effects, or any changes in effects to the surrounding environment, WSDOT would be required to re-evaluate the effects of the modified design under NEPA. If any design changes occur that ultimately result in a change to the alternative identified, WSDOT would be required to disclose these changes under NEPA, which may result in new analysis and a new, supplemental EIS.

I-306-013

WSDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the co-lead agencies for the project and environmental process, continue to serve as project proponents. Other federal, state, and local agencies and tribes identified as cooperating agencies have continued to provide input since publication of the SDEIS through a variety of forums. Exhibit 4 of the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report Addendum provides a list of the agencies and tribes involved in the SR 520, I-5 to Medina Project, along with the forums in which they participate.

Public involvement is an integral part of the SR 520 project, and a substantial number of meetings and presentations have occurred since its beginning. They include meetings with groups, individuals, elected officials, and the media. The costs of every individual meeting have not been separately tracked. However, the overall project expenditures have been, and they are available for review on WSDOT's website. Citizens, neighborhood organizations, the University of Washington, the local jurisdictions, and regional resource agencies have all been and will continue to be constructively and collaboratively engaged in the design process and construction planning, and continue to actively work toward reaching broad consensus on all aspects of the SR 520 Project. The Westside mediation process along with a list of participants is described on pages 1-17 through 1-22 of the SDEIS and pages 36-43 of the SDEIS Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report. The Arboretum Foundation, affected neighborhoods (several of which include floating home communities), and the boating community, among others, were invited to participate in the mediation process that followed publication of the DEIS. See pages 36-43 of the SDEIS Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report.

I-306-014

The Preferred Alternative maintains connectivity of the trails discussed in

the excerpt from the Seattle Parks Foundation - Bands of Green. The connection from south Portage Bay to West Montlake Park and on to the Arboretum would be maintained by way of the Bill Dawson Trail, Ship Canal Waterside Trail, and Arboretum Waterfront Trail. After crossing under SR 520, on the Bill Dawson Trail, the same access as today would be available to both West and East Montlake Parks and to the Washington Park Arboretum.

The Preferred Alternative maintains the connectivity of area parks and also enhances open space and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity through the proposed lid features. The Montlake lid was specifically designed to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between areas north and south of SR 520. A workgroup convened to fulfill the requirements of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, and recommended features to be incorporated into the final design that would further enhance these connections. Please see the ESSB 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup Recommendations Report (Attachment 16 of the Final EIS) for more detailed information.