



InterOffice Memo

To: Mayor Michael McGinn
From: Michael Killoren
Date: April 14, 2010
Subject: Comments for the SR 520 SDEIS

L-012-001

The Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs and the Seattle Arts Commission expresses its strong recommendation to prioritize the urban framework and urban space in the design and planning of the elements of the State Route 520 expansion. We urge all parties to consider the impacts these projects will have on the urban fabric, and encourage its project designers to provide thoughtful, appropriately scaled placemaking strategies and innovative design. We hope that the projects will include the thinking of artists in the state-funded components.

The SR 520 expansion that occurs within the city of Seattle should express the highest level of design excellence and green development befitting the city's status as an international city. We recommend that the same requirements expected of projects funded by the city of Seattle be applied to the SR 520 expansion. These include strict adherence to the recommendations of the Seattle Design Commission as well as accommodation of percent-for-art requirements. Artist involvement on the design teams for these projects is essential and should be mandated outside of the percent-for-art legislation at the state level.

We encourage your commitment to design that incorporates principles of human-scale placemaking, environmental stewardship, coherent approach to future expansion, clear expression of function, sophisticated design and incorporation of artistic thinking.

Please consider us, and the Seattle Design Commission, as your resource for guidance of these design processes. We have experience managing large scale, high profile transportation projects, and would welcome the opportunity incorporate art and the ideas of artists into the design and construction of the SR 520 expansion.

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Since the SDEIS was published, FHWA and WSDOT have identified a Preferred Alternative that is similar to Option A, but incorporates design refinements that respond to community and stakeholder reaction to the alternatives and design options analyzed in the SDEIS. Please see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the planning process and the Preferred Alternative. See Section 5.5 of the Final EIS for a list of design features that avoid or minimize effects on visual quality. The project team for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina Bridge Replacement and HOV Project includes urban design specialists who have coordinated with the City of Seattle, other local cities and jurisdictions, and local communities to develop the visual aspects of the project design.

WSDOT has developed an urban design plan to promote continuity of architectural features of the SR 520 transportation facility throughout the project limits, which includes opportunity for community and stakeholder input to the design of the two lids, and outreach. Please see the Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report Addendum in Attachment 7 of the Final EIS which includes information about the Urban Design Guidelines and Plan.

In early 2010, the Washington State Legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392, which directs WSDOT to work with regional agencies to refine components of the Preferred Alternative. The recommendations from the ESSB 6392 workgroup include design refinements. Through the workgroup WSDOT, the Seattle Design Commission, City of Seattle, University of Washington Architectural Commission, Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Seattle neighborhoods collaborated to expand and refine an aesthetic vision; establish goals; and suggest design treatments for urban design and streetscapes within the project area. For more details on urban design and streetscape recommendations, please see the ESSB 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup

Recommendations Report (Attachment 16 to the Final EIS). As acknowledged in the workgroup report, WSDOT will work closely with the Seattle Design Commission and the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs as design development progresses.