

SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Supplemental Draft EIS Comment Form

Please use this form to share your comments on the content provided in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement document. WSDOT will consider all comments received between Jan. 22 and April 15, 2010 in making its final decision in the environmental review process. Thank you for your comments.

You can provide comments using one of the following methods:

- Complete this form.
- Mail your comments to Jenifer Young, SDEIS Environmental Manager, Washington State Department of Transportation, 600 Stewart Street, Suite 520, Seattle, WA 98101.
- E-mail your comments to SR520Bridge_SDEIS@wsdot.wa.gov.
- Speak to a court reporter at an environmental hearing scheduled for 5 – 7 p.m., Feb. 23, at Lake Union Park Naval Reserve Building, 860 Terry Ave. N., Seattle.

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 5. State: WA
 * 6. Zip Code: 98133
 CommentDate: 4/15/2010 20:28
 Comment Source: Online Comment Form

7. Do you have any comments on the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

- I-325-001** | Mitigation must be in place to protect the Arboretum by reducing the traffic on Lake Washington Blvd to 4,000 cars per day, the amount of traffic the Olmsted Brothers designed it for.
- I-325-002** | There are two important steps to take to make this a reality: A traffic management plan to reduce the traffic on Lake Washington Blvd. Elimination of the SR 520 ramps connecting to Lake Washington Blvd. Lake -Washington Blvd. is a park road and its use as a long on-and-off ramp to the highway puts a continuous stream of traffic through the park that severely damages the quiet enjoyment of much of the Arboretum, especially places adjacent to the road like the Japanese Garden.
- I-325-003** | Minimizing the damage to the wetlands and Foster Island is the second highest priority. There should be minimal taking of park land all along the SR520 corridor, including the Arboretum wetlands and Foster Island. The State should tudy a narrower, four-lane roadway with traffic management through tolling and enhanced transit. Current highway traffic across Foster Island and onto Lake Washington Blvd. has severe noise impacts on the Arboretum. Option A+ will impose even more noise. The SDEIS makes clear that there are no plans for noise mitigation in the Arboretum. This must be remedied. The WSDOT traffic studies do not adequately model the traffic around the Arboretum or the measures that could be taken to manage traffic flow if the Lake Washington Blvd. ramps were removed. The Council should make sure that these studies are done so that the ramps can be eliminated.
- I-325-004** | If a six-lane roadway is built now, it must be light-rail ready. Option A+ is not designed to accommodate light rail. It is too narrow and its pontoons have neither the load-bearing capacity nor stability to carry light rail. That means that future light rail could only be built at a future time by adding more width. How much more of the Arboretum will we lose? Are we going tear apart the landscape again in 15 to 20 years to do a major rebuild? Can't we get it right, right now?

I-325-001

WSDOT has found no way to accurately estimate the capacity for which the Olmsted Brothers originally designed Lake Washington Boulevard and cannot determine whether the comment characterizes the design capacity correctly. However, the Preferred Alternative would reduce effects on the Arboretum, compared to the No Build Alternative, by physically removing the existing Lake Washington Boulevard eastbound on-ramp and westbound off-ramp 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. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for additional information. The result of this and other features of the Preferred Alternative is a reduction in the trip volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard in the Arboretum compared to the No Build Alternative. Under the Preferred Alternative in 2030, a.m. peak hour volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard through the Arboretum would be 1,330 vehicles per hour, compared to 1,950 vehicles per hour with the No Build Alternative. P.m. peak hour volumes would be 1,410 vehicles per hour compared to 1,730 with the No Build Alternative. See the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) for further discussion of trip volumes.

As part of the Arboretum Mitigation Plan, WSDOT has also committed to fund traffic calming measures along Lake Washington Boulevard and to work with the Seattle Department of Transportation on further measures to m manage traffic in the Arboretum.

I-325-002

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. Because the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps already exist, none of the alternatives or options evaluated in the SDEIS showed

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1. Name Barbara Guthrie **CommentDate:** 4/15/2010 20:28
2. E-mail bguthrie@nwhea.org **Comment Source:** Online Comment Form

These comments will become part of the public record for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Personal information is voluntary and will become part of the public record if provided. The Washington State Department of Transportation is a public agency and is subject to the State of Washington's Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). Therefore, comments may be made available to anyone requesting them for non-commercial purposes.

“greatly increased” traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard when compared with the No Build Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would reduce average volumes traffic in 2030 on Lake Washington Boulevard in the Arboretum compared to the No Build Alternative. See the response to Comment I-325-001.

I-325-003

Since the SDEIS was published, WSDOT has identified a Preferred Alternative that is similar to Option A, but with a number of design refinements to further reduce negative effects. As demonstrated in the Recreation Discipline Report Addendum (Attachment 7 of the Final EIS), the Preferred Alternative reduces the overall temporary and permanent acquisition of recreational resources, compared to the options evaluated as part of the SDEIS.

The Preferred Alternative reduces effects on the Arboretum by eliminating the existing Lake Washington Boulevard eastbound on-ramp and westbound off-ramp and the R.H. Thomson Expressway ramps, which would reduce traffic volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard in the Arboretum compared to the No Build Alternative. Westbound SR 520 traffic would be able to access Lake Washington Boulevard via a new intersection located on the Montlake Boulevard lid at 24th Avenue East. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS provides additional information on this design feature.

In early 2010, the Washington State Legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392. ESSB 6392 directed WSDOT to develop a mitigation plan for the Washington Park Arboretum. As part of the Final Arboretum Mitigation Plan, WSDOT has committed to funding traffic calming measures along Lake Washington Boulevard and to work with the Seattle Department of Transportation on further measures to manage traffic in the Arboretum.

Under the Preferred Alternative, a number of noise reducing strategies would be implemented throughout the corridor, including 4-foot concrete traffic barriers with noise absorptive coating, noise absorptive materials around lid portals and a reduced speed limit on the Portage Bay Bridge. Updated noise modeling for the Preferred Alternative indicates that these measures would reduce noise levels along the corridor, compared to the No Build Alternative. In the Arboretum area specifically, the higher profile of the Preferred Alternative provides further noise reduction. Information on noise modeling results for the Preferred Alternative can be found in the Noise Discipline Report (Attachment 7 of the Final EIS) and in Section 5.7 of the Final EIS.

In 2010, based on SDEIS comments regarding a transit-optimized 4-lane alternative or a 4-lane alternative with tolling for congestion management, WSDOT evaluated these potential alternatives using an updated traffic model. The results showed that these alternatives would provide substantially lower mobility benefits than the 6-Lane Alternative for both general-purpose traffic and transit, and therefore would also not meet the project purpose and need. Section 2.4 of the Final EIS provides more information on the analysis of these alternatives.

I-325-004

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).

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.