

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.

1. Name jack whisner CommentDate: 4/16/2010 5:13  
 2. E-mail eddiew@speakeasy.net Comment Source: Online Comment Form  
 3. Address: 8325 11th avenue nw  
 4. City: seattle  
 5. State: wa  
 \* 6. Zip Code: 98117

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

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>I-320-001</b> | Ms. Young,<br><br>Please consider the following comments.<br><br>1. The No Build seems mis-specified, as it does not include tolling. Variable tolling will be implemented in spring 2011 on the existing bridge and its flow will improve. In modeling, it would improve the performance of the No Build.  |
| <b>I-320-002</b> | 2. The state mandate for a six lane facility between SR-202 and I-5 takes the main choice off the table before the environmental analysis.  |
| <b>I-320-003</b> | 3. To preserve north and central Seattle access to bus routes oriented to and from downtown Seattle, especially ST Route 545, the Montlake freeway stop function should be retained.<br>• hybrid with four lanes between Montlake and I-5 and six lanes between SR-202 and Montlake should be considered. It would have lower capital cost.<br>• If six lanes are provided, the inside pair of lanes could be transit only at Montlake interchange, rising to a signalized intersection with Montlake Boulevard NE. On either side of the restricted area traffic would be directed to the outside lanes. So much eastside traffic is oriented to and from the University District that the volumes may match. Tolling would also control demand. The bus stops could be cantilevered out over the mainline lanes and could be east of Montlake Boulevard in both directions (similar to the freeway stops on I-90 at 142nd Place SE). Routes serving the U District could use this intersection to access the center lanes to and from the east.<br>• There is insufficient service subsidy to mitigate the loss of the freeway stops. |
| <b>I-320-004</b> | 4. The state has not evaluated system wide tolling (e.g., all limited access highways in King   |

**I-320-001**

As explained on page 1-37 of the SDEIS, the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project will implement tolling on SR 520 in 2011 for the primary purpose of managing traffic congestion. This toll would remain in place until the construction of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project and would then be replaced with new tolls adopted by the Transportation Commission to provide project funding in accordance with the financing plan. Although the state Legislature has authorized allocation of revenues from the Variable Tolling Project to fund the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project and the SR 520, Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project, the toll would be removed when the bonds for those projects are repaid, which is expected to be before 2030. Therefore, if the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project were not built, there would be no toll in effect in 2030, which is the year used to compare the No Build Alternative and the Build alternatives. This is why the baseline No Build Alternative assumption is that the SR 520 corridor would not be tolled. See Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for additional information.

**I-320-002**

As described in Chapter 1 of the SDEIS and in the Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated Report (Attachment 8 to the SDEIS), an extensive range of alternatives has been evaluated for this project. Alternative corridors, technologies (e.g. tubes and tunnels), and travel modes, as well as many design variations within the existing corridor, were evaluated as part of the Trans-Lake Washington Study and again after the initiation of NEPA review in 2000. Chapter 2 of the Final EIS provides additional information on how alternatives were developed and evaluated, and why some solutions were determined not to be reasonable alternatives. In particular, Table 2-1 explains the history of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina NEPA process and alternatives.

**I-320-003**

The Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops were removed in all of the

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- I-320-004 | County).
- I-320-005 | 5. Could consider providing eight lanes on two draw bridges of A-plus rather than six. It would allow traffic queues to clear faster. It would allow a transit-only lane in each direction.
- I-320-006 | 6. Due to concern over global warming gases, construction should minimize disruption to electric trolleybus routes 43 and 44. This would factor against options that require the lowering of arterials in the triangle, including that suggested by the UW. Also, lowering the Burke-Gilman Trail to go beneath a land bridge seems counterproductive at its maximum load point. It would become a bit of a roller coaster.
- I-320-007 | 7. State should consider delaying implementation of connection between SR-520 and I-5 reversible lanes until after Link is extended to Northgate in about 2020. There are about 3.5 lanes of traffic on the reversibles. The connection will reduce the facility to three lanes and could lead to congestion, harming the flow of more transit serving north King and south Snohomish counties that would be helped serving East King County. The number of bus trips and their average load in higher going north-south than east-west.
- I-320-008 | 8. I-5
  - The SR-520 project could be expanded to help transit go between SR-520 and downtown in the reverse peak direction. It could add a transit lane on the outside of the general purpose lanes between Olive Way and SR-520. This was studied by WSDOT and published in the OUM Central Puget Sound HOV Land Studies, 1997.
  - They also could consider adding a southbound T-ramp between the SR-520/I-5 interchange and Lakeview Boulevard with a traffic signal added to handle west to southbound transit. They could also restrict the Stewart Street ramp connecting with the I-5 reversible lanes to HOV only, as the ramps to the south are restricted. It would likely improve flow on Howell and Stewart streets and Olive Way.
  - The project includes a reversible peak-direction connection between SR-520 and the I-5 reversible lanes. State should verify that transit from and to the north would not be delayed, as the reversible lanes carry more transit trips with larger passenger loads than SR-520. This part of the project could be delayed until after ST Link reaches Northgate and north Seattle bus service is restructured.
- I-320-008 | 9. Could add a southbound transit priority lane to Montlake Boulevard NE between NE 45th Street and NE Pacific Street by taking away the left turn pockets and median. Southbound traffic oriented to

design options considered in the SDEIS, based on a decision making process that was part of Westside mediation. The mediation process was mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6099 and is described on pages 1-17 through 1-19 of the SDEIS. The mediation workgroup consisted of members from adjacent neighborhoods, transit agencies, jurisdictions, and State agencies. Removing the Montlake Freeway Transit Station would minimize the width of the freeway through the Montlake area, reducing the width by up to 40 feet compared to keeping the station. The mediation workgroup did not recommend any design options that included the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops. See Attachment 8 to the SDEIS, Range of Alternatives and Options Evaluated, for further discussion of how and why removal of the stops was considered.

The Preferred Alternative includes removal of the Montlake Freeway Transit Station stops; however, it also includes a modified Montlake Boulevard interchange and lid. Modifications include a full lid from Montlake Boulevard to the Lake Washington shoreline, and bus stops on the lid for both eastbound and westbound buses (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a description of the Preferred Alternative). The intent is to provide greater pedestrian amenity in the central part of the Montlake neighborhood while simultaneously providing a better location and environment for the regional bus stops incorporated in the transit/HOV direct access ramps (see Chapter 2 of the Final EIS). At the option of the transit agencies, SR 520 buses will be able to exit at the Montlake interchange during the off-peak periods to service passengers to/from the Montlake lid transit stop. University Link light-rail service, expected to be operational in 2016, will accommodate some of the trips that now use the bus stops. Chapter 8 of the Final Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) provides further discussion of expected transit operations with the Preferred Alternative, including expected transit travel times, rider connections, and how future transit would incorporate service currently provided at the stops.

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**I-320-008**

Tubby Graves may use signals at NE 45th Street and local roads east of parking lot. This would improve transit access to the ST Link station from northeast Seattle. There is a very long walk for transfers between the ST Link station and Stevens Way.

Thank you

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.

**I-320-004**

Evaluating system-wide tolling is beyond the scope and scale of the SR 520 Program. However, improving mobility and managing congestion in Puget Sound and in Washington State are important goals for WSDOT. For more information about department strategies to fight congestion and improve safety, see WSDOT's Moving Washington investment program website at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Congestion/technology.htm>

**I-320-005**

The addition of a new bascule bridge under Option A and the Preferred Alternative allows for an HOV lane in each direction across the Montlake Cut. The Final Transportation Discipline Report demonstrates improved transportation operations with the Preferred Alternative in the Montlake area, compared to No Build. 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.

**I-320-006**

The University of Washington is responsible for the Rainier Vista Project, which would lower NE Pacific Place and the Burke Gilman Trail. The Rainier Vista Project is not part of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina Project, however WSDOT is coordinating with the university on issues of transit and pedestrian connectivity at the Montlake Triangle.

WSDOT is coordinating with King County Metro Transit to minimize effects to electric trolley buses during construction. As described in the SDEIS, the existing bridges on 10th Avenue East and East Montlake Boulevard will both be reconstructed, which will require temporary shifts of the traffic lanes where trolley buses operate. Relocation of the trolley wires or operation of diesel coaches will be necessary for operation of the affected routes.

**I-320-007**

Earlier this year, the Washington State Legislature passed and Gov. Gregoire signed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392. ESSB 6392 directs WSDOT to work with regional agencies to refine components of the Preferred Alternative, including design refinements and transit connections, and transit planning and financing. The bill also directs WSDOT to develop a mitigation plan for the Washington Park Arboretum. In response to this direction from the Legislature, WSDOT led a workgroup process in collaboration with the City of Seattle, King County, the University of Washington and Sound Transit.

Operations of the I-5 express lanes were described in a white paper produced as part of the ESSB 6392 workgroup process and it found that there would not be a degradation of operations in the I-5 express lanes as a result of the new SR 520 connection. The summary reason for that finding is that either end of the express lanes is capacity limited to fill up the lanes on the ship canal bridge, thus leaving available capacity. More information can be found in the workgroup's white paper titled Roadway Operations: I-5 Express Lanes (available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/6392workgroup.htm>). Further discussion will also be provided in the Final EIS.

**I-320-008**

The SDEIS transportation analysis showed that, while person-trip demand would grow between now and 2030, vehicle-trip demand across the 520 floating bridge in 2030 would be lower with Option A than with the No Build Alternative. This is because the proportion of person-trips using HOVs would increase compared to the No Build Alternative, because of tolling on SR 520 and because completion of the HOV lane system in the corridor would improve HOV speed and reliability, providing an incentive for people to choose alternatives to driving alone. These changes in demand are described in Section 5.1 of the SDEIS and Chapter 6 of the Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to

the SDEIS).

As illustrated in Chapter 8 of the Transportation Discipline Report, all of the SDEIS 6-Lane Alternative design options would provide a travel time benefit during the off-peak periods when the Montlake drawbridge opens as compared to the No Build Alternative. Openings of the existing and new bascule bridges would be synchronized, and the new 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 Transportation Discipline Report describes the changes in traffic volumes and operations on the local streets in the Montlake interchange area. As illustrated in Chapter 8 of the Transportation Discipline Report, all of the SDEIS 6-Lane Alternative design options would provide a travel time benefit during the off-peak periods when the Montlake drawbridge opens as compared to the No Build Alternative. Completing the 6-Lane Alternative or any of the design options would not preclude the City, State, and/or transit agencies from moving forward with design and implementation of HOV lanes on Montlake Boulevard as you have described.