



## MEETING SUMMARY

### Montlake Project Signage Workgroup – Meeting #3

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 | 2-4 p.m.  
2345 Eastlake Avenue E., Seattle, WA 98102  
Hybrid meeting format

**Facilitator:** Angie Thomson, Thomson Strategic

**Speakers:** Dave Becher, SR 520 Director of Construction  
David Goldberg, SR 520 Community Liaison and Ombudsman  
Todd Harrison, Director of SR 520 Project Development (online)  
Suryata Halim, SR 520 Disciplines Manager

#### Participants:

##### **WSDOT – SR 520 Program**

- Cassie Manetas (online)
- Chelsey Funis
- Ron Paananen (online)
- Tony Black

##### **WSDOT – Northwest Region**

- Christina Strand (online)

##### **WSDOT – Headquarters Traffic**

- Trevor McCain (online)

##### **Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)**

- Tom Le
- Amanda Tse (online)

##### **Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD)**

- Lyle Bicknell

##### **Seattle Design Commission (SDC)**

- Valerie Kinast

##### **U District Partnership**

- Katy Ricchiuto

##### **Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)**

- Maureen Elenga

##### **Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks (FSOP)**

- Kyle Capizzi (online)

##### **Neighbor representatives**

- Bruce Balick, Montlake
- Gayle Seely, Montlake
- Erin Baebler, Montlake
- Rachel Ben-Shumel, Montlake
- Michael VonKorff, Arboretum
- Peter Haley, Eastlake
- Steve Beaudry, Montlake

#### Meeting materials (see Appendix A):

- Meeting agenda
- Follow-up Q&A from workgroup meeting #2

#### Welcome and agenda review

Angie Thomson welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. Angie noted the goal of today's meeting is to come to a final consensus on Sign Location #1 and gain consensus on sign locations #2 and #3.

#### Finish discussion and consensus for Sign Location #1

Angie recapped workgroup meeting #2 where members came to majority-agreements on recommendations for Sign Location #1. These included:

- Replace the existing sign bridge with a new mast arm (a thinner pole over the roadway; like a traffic signal pole).
- Install smaller signs (the smallest signs allowable per the MUTCD).
- Install advance signing at 24th Avenue E.

Angie briefly summarized the responses WSDOT provided to questions from the previous meeting held on Dec. 13 (see page 12). WSDOT sent the response to workgroup participants prior to the meeting.

1. Can the new mast arm be moved further north from the current location of Sign Bridge #1?
  - a. Yes. It is feasible for the sign structure base to be moved further north by approximately 10 feet or less.
2. Can the advance signs at 24th Avenue E go on an existing pole?
  - a. No. The existing electrical service pole is not in an appropriate location for the advance signs.
3. What wayfinding signs exist in the current sign design plans for UW/UWMC/U District?
  - a. None currently. However, WSDOT and SDOT have agreed to reinstall the original wayfinding signs for UW and the Arboretum that were in place prior to the start of Montlake construction.
4. What are the dimensions of the sign bridge base plate vs. a mast arm base plate?
  - a. The base plate for the sign bridge is 30 inches by 39 inches. The base plate for the mast arm is 18 to 22 inches by 18 to 22 inches. See the graphic on page 13 for more detail.

**Workgroup member comment:** I'm debating if we need the sign bridge or mast arm at all at location #1. People are familiar with this intersection. The new HOV direct access ramp is a nice addition, but all the people living in the neighborhood are familiar with that movement. So, the only difference in traffic movements will be how northbound drivers get onto westbound SR 520. This will be even easier than making the odd U-turn at East Hamlin Street. I still think the signage is over-engineered. I don't think we need signs at Sign Location #1. Sign Location #2 is where everyone is trying to go.

**Answer** I appreciate the feedback but respectfully disagree with you. When we originally designed the signage, our goal was not to over-design it. Our engineers wanted it to be very clear and efficient for drivers. We did not design the signage based on what existed; we designed it for the new roadway and ramp configurations being constructed based on guidance from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). We are signing this area for people that are not familiar with the area, not for people who already know where they're going. We understand that this location is close to residential houses. We want the signs to be clear and not overkill but still meet the minimum requirements, which is something we think we've accomplished as part of this process so far.

Additionally, the signs at this location are especially important for tolling reasons. During construction we've received a lot of complaints from drivers who did not mean to get onto eastbound SR 520; they then have to pay a toll and ask us for a refund, which is difficult to do. So, it's really important to have signs here that alert drivers they are entering a tolled facility.

**Workgroup member comment:** I've gone to Medina, Tukwila and other nearby cities. I can't find another similar example to the signage here in Montlake. Do you have an example of places where the signage looks like it does here?

**Answer:** We need the signs to be clear for all users and we're trying to find the right balance without going beyond what is necessary. This specific interchange is unique for a few different reasons. The new Montlake lid – which cuts through a residential area – has nine travel lanes and a lot of different movements to convey. On top of that, we're adding new HOV on- and off-ramps in the middle of the lid. The complexity of the interchange requires signs to be over the traffic lanes.

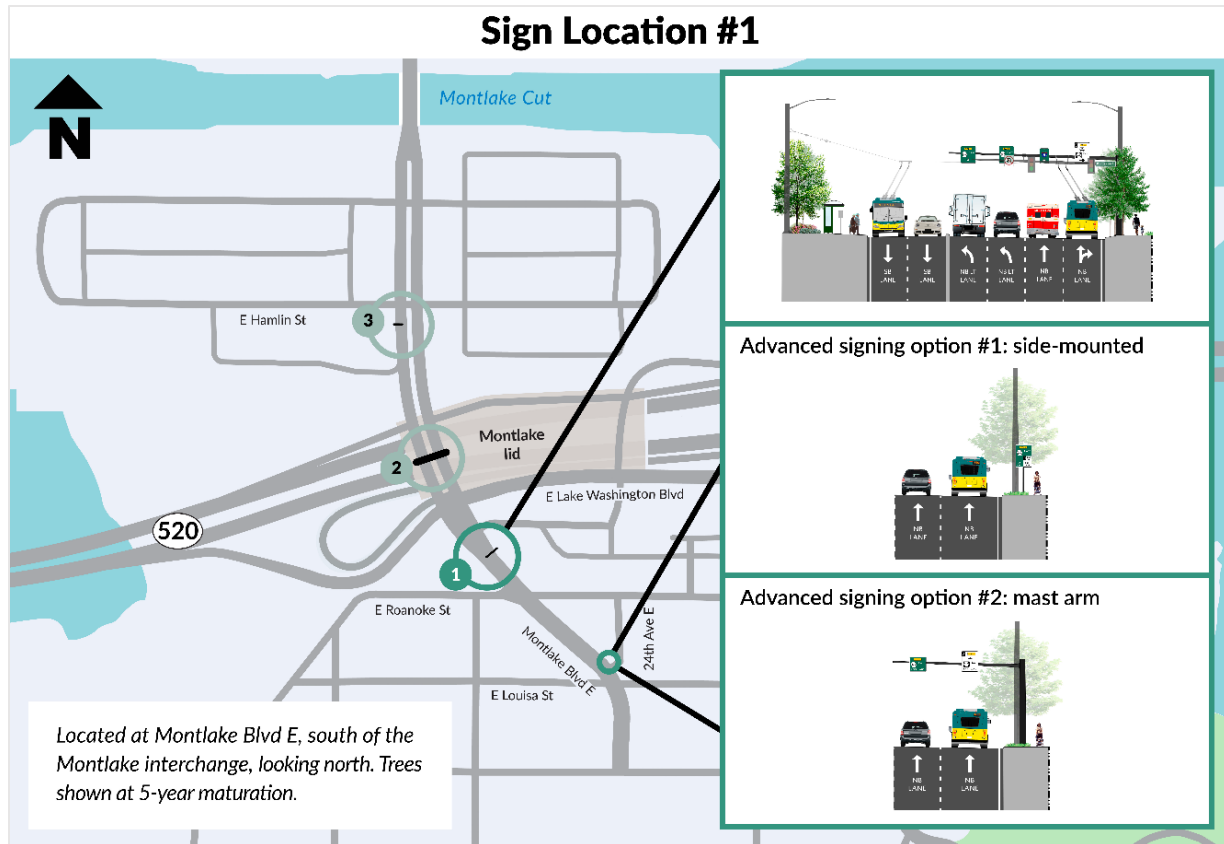
**Workgroup member question:** Could you move the base of the proposed mast arm for Sign Location #1 from the east side of Montlake Boulevard to the west side?

**Answer:** No, this is not feasible for a couple reasons:

- The mast arm would not span far enough east to reach the correct lanes.
- Per the city (as stated by Lyle Bicknell), there is the potential for residential growth on the west side of Montlake Boulevard. Moving the mast arm to the other side of the road would leave potential neighbors in a similar situation the eastside neighbors have now.

## Advance signing options at 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue E

The group reviewed the new graphics showing what the advance signing options at 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue E would look like. Option #1 would mount the signs on a post on the side of the road. Option #2 would mount the signs overhead on a new mast arm (see images below).



Angie polled the group to get final consensus about whether they preferred the advance signing at 24th Avenue E to be on a mast arm or side mounted. Initially, a majority recommended via a straw vote side-mounted signs because some workgroup members were concerned the mast arm would promote a “freeway” effect for drivers and may encourage speeding. Members shared other concerns about how the structure would impact the visual aesthetic of the neighborhood. Members also made comments about reducing the size of side-mounted signs, however, the technical team noted that the signs and the text size are already as small as allowable per the MUTCD.

After further discussion, Angie repolled the group. A majority of workgroup members voted in support of the side-mounted signs. However, all workgroup members voted in support of a mast arm.

**The final consensus was for the advance signs at 24th Avenue E to be installed on a new mast arm. A new mast arm with smaller signs was also recommended to replace the existing sign bridge at Sign Location #1. In addition, the technical team agreed to look at the potential for moving the new mast arm further north than the 10 additional feet originally discussed. This is not a guarantee from WSDOT and the workgroup acknowledged this.**

**Workgroup member question:** How long will the sign bridge at location #1 remain in place? The community is concerned that if you put signs onto the existing sign bridge it will never come down.

**Answer:** First, we need to get funding during this legislative session to change these structures. Then the new mast arm needs to be designed and fabricated. There’s also the potential for needing a contract and bidding process since the timing likely won’t line up for Graham – the current Montlake Project contractor – to do this work. So that will also add time. All that said, the sign bridge will likely need to remain in place for at least another year or more.

**Comment from David Goldberg:** We recognize the community wants some assurance that the sign bridge will come down. If there is a directive for WSDOT in Sen. Pedersen’s proviso, WSDOT follows that directive.

### Sign Bridge #3: Technical team review of options – feasibility & regulatory compliance

The group transitioned to discussing Sign Location #3 – near E Hamlin Street – due to its similarities to Sign Location #1. Todd Harrison reviewed the analysis sheet from the technical team (see image below).

As a reminder, green circles meant the team evaluated the option. A star meant the option was both feasible and recommended by the technical team. A crossed-out option meant it was not technically feasible and/or did not meet the goals and priorities of the workgroup.

Of the 27 options, the following options were recommended by the technical team (see full analysis sheet below):

- #3: Add additional advance signing further north on Montlake Boulevard.
- #6: Smaller signs mounted on mast arm.
- #7: Smaller side-mounted signs.

#### Montlake Project signage ideas

*Feedback received via email, the community survey and/or the community meeting on 10/26/2023  
Ideas reorganized into groups by the workgroup on 11/29/2023*

#### Sign Bridge #3: Grouping/categorizing of ideas and technical team analysis

##### *Group 1 – Keep the existing sign bridge with/without some type of modification:*


- ~~1. Keeping the existing signs and sign bridge~~
- ~~2. Move sign bridge to a different location~~
- ~~4. Smaller signs with existing sign bridge~~
- ~~11. Replace with smaller/shorter sign bridge~~

##### *Group 2 – Different signing strategies and ways to support the signs:*

-   3. Add additional signing further north on Montlake Boulevard
-  5. Smaller signs w/ cantilever arm
-   6. Smaller signs mounted on signal mast arm
-   7. Smaller side-mounted signs
-  8. Smaller signs mounted on span wires
- 9. Paint highway shields & directional arrows on the pavement
- 10. Re-install the same signage that was there previously
- 27. Add wayfinding signs on Montlake Blvd for UW/UWMC/Husky Stadium

#### **Legend:**

~~Crossed-out text~~ = Not considered or analyzed by technical team; does not meet workgroup goals & priorities

 = Evaluated by the technical team

 = Recommended by the technical team for implementation because it meets WSDOT & community's goals and priorities

##### *Group 3 – Treatment/camouflage/softening the sign bridge:*

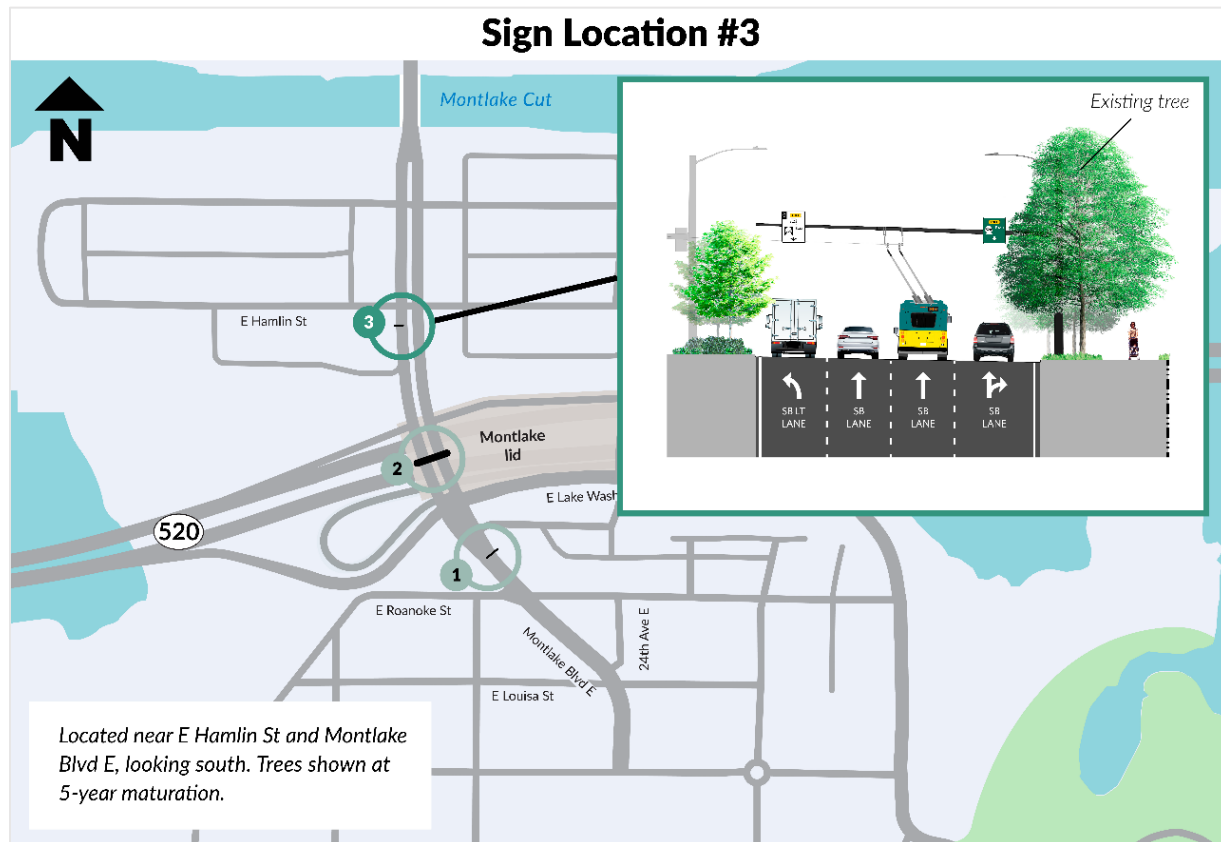
- ~~12. Replace w/ Montlake Bridge style sign bridge/gantry replica (or other more historic-looking structure)~~
13. Apply facing plates like on the bottom trusses of the Montlake Bridge
14. Apply metal faux lattice (replicating Montlake Bridge gantries) on existing sign bridge—historic style
15. Same as no. 14 but contemporary style
16. Paint sign bridge green to match Montlake Bridge
17. Paint sign bridge green and w/ a decorative/lattice type pattern to resemble Montlake Bridge
18. Paint sign bridge gray/silver/blue/brown/other color
19. Add climbing wisteria or other organic elements to the sign bridge
20. Add adjacent trees/shrubs to block/hide the sign structure
21. Use public art funding and/or ask for artis submissions
22. Add artful camouflage on the vertical supports
23. Add decorative UW themed elements to the sign bridge (e.g. flags)
24. Add elements to the sign bridge in recognition of indigenous people who used this land (e.g. tribal canoe)
25. Add elements to the sign bridge in recognition of sports or Portage Bay theme (e.g. secure an old crew shell at the top)
26. Add encased glass art to the sign bridge (similar to the bridge at the Tacoma Art Museum)

Suryata explained how the technical team approached this sign location using a similar thought process and ideas used for Sign Location #1 (i.e., smaller signs, a signal mast arm and advance signs). The technical team recommends a signal mast arm just south of E Hamlin Street with smaller signs (see visualization below), as well as a new advance I-5 sign mounted on an existing pole between E Shelby and E Hamlin streets.

### Sign Location #3: Group discussion and consensus

Angie did a quick vote to determine if the group could reach consensus. The entire workgroup agreed.

**The consensus for Sign Location #3 is a new mast arm over southbound Montlake Boulevard with smaller signs (see graphic below), and an advance I-5 sign mounted on an existing pole.**



**Workgroup member question:** I have concerns and ideas about wayfinding signage for UW Medical Center. It can be confusing for drivers in this area trying to get to/from the medical center.

**Answer:** Wayfinding signage is under the direction of SDOT and would need to be discussed further with our SDOT representatives.

**Workgroup member question:** I also have concerns about additional protections for pedestrian crossings on the Montlake lid.

**Answer:** One of the benefits of this project are the new bicycle- and pedestrian-only connections being built, specifically the new bike/ped bridge over SR 520, as well as the new bike/ped tunnel being built underneath Montlake Boulevard that will connect the SR 520 Trail with the Bill Dawson Trail. These new connections will separate non-motorized users from traffic on Montlake Boulevard. Additionally, all the crossings on top of the lid will be signalized. There likely will be a delay in the walk sign/green traffic light that is becoming more common around the city, but SDOT will need to be a part of those discussions.

## Sign Location 2: Technical team review of options – feasibility & regulatory compliance

Todd recapped the same technical team analysis process for Sign Location #2. Because of the complexity of Sign Location #2 – **both the width of the roadway and the integration between the sign bridge's foundation and design of the Montlake lid** – the technical team only determined one feasible option (see full analysis sheet below):

- #4: Smaller signs with existing sign bridge.

### Montlake Project signage ideas

*Feedback received via email, the community survey and/or the community meeting on 10/26/2023  
Ideas reorganized into groups by the workgroup on 11/29/2023*

#### Sign Bridge #2: Grouping/categorizing of ideas and technical team analysis

##### **Group 1 – Keep the existing sign bridge with/without some type of modification:**

- ~~1. Keeping the existing signs and sign bridge~~
2. Move sign bridge to a different location
- ★ 4. Smaller signs with existing sign bridge
11. Replace with smaller/shorter sign bridge

##### **Group 2 – Different signing strategies and ways to support the signs:**

- ~~3. Add additional signing further south or north on Montlake Boulevard~~
5. Smaller signs w/ cantilever arm
6. Smaller signs mounted on signal mast arm
7. Smaller side-mounted signs
8. Smaller signs mounted on span wires
9. Paint highway shields & directional arrows on the pavement
- ~~10. Re-install the same signage that was there previously~~
27. Add wayfinding signs on Montlake Blvd for UW/UWMC/Husky Stadium

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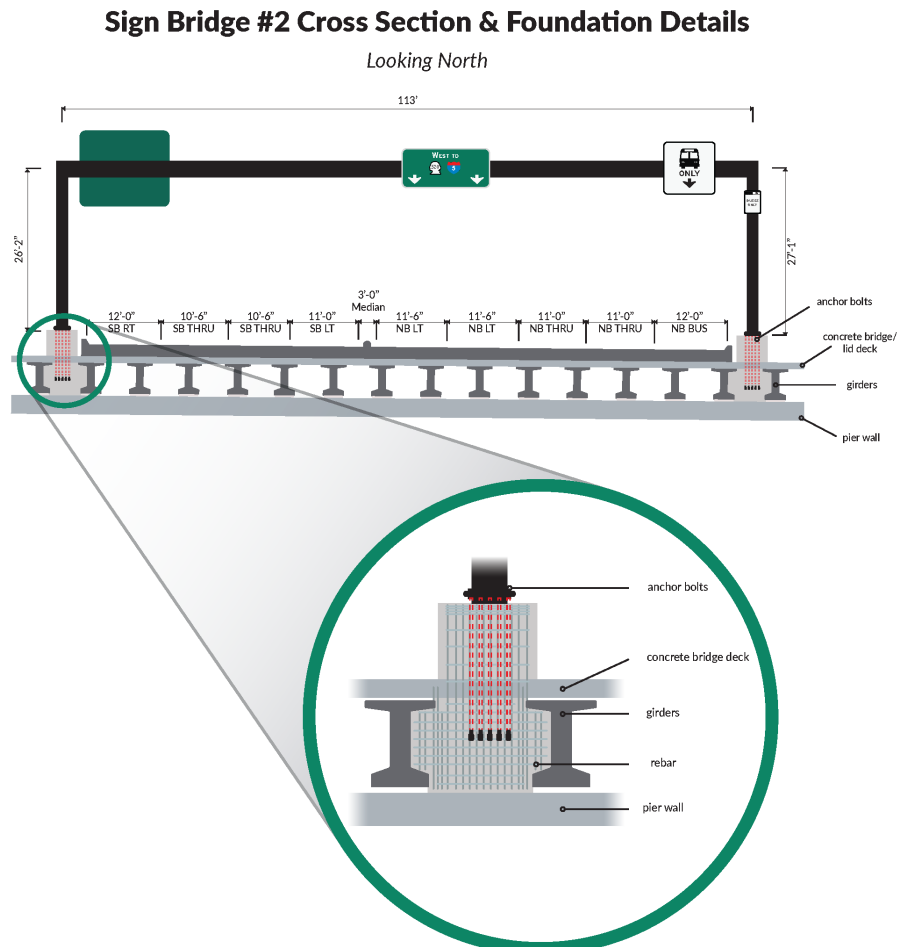
##### **Group 3 – Treatment/camouflage/softening the sign bridge:**

- ~~12. Replace w/ Montlake Bridge style sign bridge/gantry replica (or other more historic looking structure)~~
- ~~13. Apply facing plates like on the bottom trusses of the Montlake Bridge~~
- ~~14. Apply metal faux lattice (replicating Montlake Bridge gentries) on existing sign bridge – historic style~~
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- ~~26. Add encased glass art to the sign bridge (similar to the bridge at the Tacoma Art Museum)~~

*For internal Montlake signage workgroup discussion – Dec. 13, 2023*

Todd explained the difficulties of putting signs over a nine-lane roadway. Per MUTCD requirements at this location, the signs need to be placed overhead (versus mounted on the side of the road). The two left-turn lanes from northbound Montlake Boulevard to westbound SR 520 sit in the center of the lid. A mast arm or cantilever arm would not be able to reach across that many lanes to ensure the signage is directly above those turning lanes. So, the options here are very limited.

One of the other significant constraints here is related to the sign bridge's foundation. This sign bridge, unlike the other sign bridges at location #1 and #3, is not mounted "in the ground" but instead is built into the Montlake lid (see cross section graphic below for details).



## Sign Location #2: Group discussion and consensus

**Workgroup member question:** Will the signs be illuminated at Sign Location #2? Why are there solar panels on the sign bridge?

**Answer:** No, the signs will be reflective and won't have their own lighting. The solar panels on the sign bridge are temporary for construction. They provide power to the traffic cameras and other construction needs while work is ongoing.

**Workgroup member question:** Since the sign bridge at Sign Location #2 must remain in place, what are the ways we can disguise it? Trees?

**Answer:** The trees in the visualization are shown at 5-years of age. Once those trees grow in, they will help disguise the sign bridge. It's also good to keep in mind that there are several other black-painted structures (e.g., luminaire poles, electrical cabinets, signal mast arms, etc.) and landscaping going in that will help create a more cohesive look than what you see right now.

**Workgroup member question:** Given that this sign bridge is going to stay, we need to consider painting it a different color so it blends in better with the neighborhood. I have concerns about how it will look long-term if we leave it black. Is repainting the sign bridge an option?

**Answer:** It is a possibility although there are things to consider like visual continuity with the other all-black elements along Montlake Boulevard, as well as the potential cost and traffic impacts associated with repainting the structure. So, while it's possible, it would require significant planning. We will investigate what it would take to repaint the sign bridge and follow up with the group at the next meeting.

**Workgroup member question:** Does the sign bridge at location #2 need to stay the same size, even with smaller signs?

**Answer:** Yes. The structure needs to span across nine lanes, so the size of the structure is more about the length it needs to span and not just the weight of the signs it needs to hold. The structure needs to be strong enough and bulky enough to support the weight of itself.

**Workgroup member comment and question:** It doesn't feel like we're being offered any options for Sign Location #2, and we're being asked for our recommendations without having a real choice. This feels frustrating and disingenuous of WSDOT. Are there other options for this location or is this discussion closed?

**Answer:** We heard from the community that we could have done a better job about letting people know that these sign bridges were going in. When we conducted the community survey and held our public meeting in October, people expressed concerns about this specific location. So as part of this workgroup, we're owning the commitment we made to the community to go back to the drawing board and see if anything else is possible here. What we found is that other than reducing the overall size of the signs, there isn't anything else that's technically feasible.

Part of the reason we're locked into having the sign bridge is the signage needed for northbound drivers getting onto westbound SR 520. MUTCD requires us to have the signs overhead here, and those turn lanes are in the middle of the nine-lane lid. When the technical team assessed how to sign those two left turn lanes in the middle of the lid, the only possible solution that meets the requirements is the same sign bridge design that's out there now with smaller signs that are allowed by MUTCD.

**Workgroup member question:** Could you use a truss support here?

**Answer:** WSDOT is starting to phase those out because they are prone to maintenance issues and are expensive to maintain.

Angie acknowledged the workgroup's feelings of limited options with Sign Location #2 and asked if workgroup members could live with the technical team's recommendations for Sign Location #2, which includes smaller signs on the existing sign bridge. The entire group agreed.

**The group consensus for Sign Location #2 is for the sign bridge to remain in place due to the width of the roadway and the need for signage to be overhead, as well as the structure's integration with the Montlake lid. The workgroup recommends the smaller signs proposed by the technical team. Given the lack of alternatives at this location, the workgroup did not specifically endorse leaving the sign bridge in place. Regarding the color of the sign bridge, the group agreed to discuss this more at the next workgroup meeting.**

## Next steps and timeline

The group agreed there were a few final items to discuss prior to the community meeting on January 31, including the color of the existing sign bridge and new mast arms. Angie proposed the group meet one more time, likely over Zoom or Teams, to go over some of the final steps and prepare for the community meeting.



# Appendix A

## Montlake Project Signage Workgroup Meeting #3

### Materials packet



# SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROGRAM



## Montlake Signage Workgroup Meeting #3

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 2-4 p.m.  
2345 Eastlake Avenue E, Seattle, WA 98102

**Purpose:** Reviewing Technical Team analysis and building to consensus for each of the sign bridge locations

Time	Topic	Lead	Materials
2:00 p.m. (10 min)	<b>Welcome, agenda review &amp; meeting recap</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda review</li> <li>Summary of where we ended last time</li> </ul>	Angie Thomson	Handout: Meeting agenda
2:10 p.m. (15 min)	<b>Finish discussion &amp; consensus for Sign Location #1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up on workgroup questions</li> <li>Consensus for advance signs at 24<sup>th</sup> Ave E</li> </ul>	Angie Thomson Todd Harrison	Handouts: - Q&A 1-pager - Signal mast arm & advance signage visualization
2:25 p.m. (10 min)	<b>Sign Location 3: Technical team review of options - feasibility &amp; regulatory compliance</b>	Todd Harrison Suryata Halim	Handouts: - List of ideas & technical team analysis - Current sign dimension visualization - Sign alternative drawings - Signal mast arm visualization
2:35 p.m. (15 min)	<b>Sign Location 3: Group discussion &amp; consensus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consensus on look/color of new poles</li> </ul>	Angie Thomson	
2:50 p.m. (25 min)	<b>Sign Location 2: Technical team review of options - feasibility &amp; regulatory compliance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roadway width constraints</li> <li>Lid design constraints</li> <li>Overview of technical team recommendations</li> </ul>	Todd Harrison Suryata Halim	Handouts: - Current sign dimension visualization - List of ideas & technical team analysis - Sign alternative drawings
3:15 p.m. (25 min)	<b>Sign Location 2: Group discussion &amp; consensus</b>	Angie Thomson	
3:40 p.m. (10 min)	<b>Jan. 31 community meeting representatives &amp; coordination</b>	Chelsey Funis David Goldberg	
3:50 p.m. (5 min)	<b>Interim signage plan update</b>	Dave Becher	
3:55 p.m. (5 min)	<b>Next steps and timeline</b> <i>**NOTE: Cars parked on the east side of Eastlake Avenue need to be moved before 4 p.m.**</i>	Angie Thomson	
4:00 p.m.	<b>Adjourn</b>		

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## Attendees

### Facilitator

- Angie Thomson – *Founder of Thomson Strategic*

### Community representatives

- Bruce Balick, Montlake
- Gayle Seely, Montlake
- Erin Baebler, Montlake
- Steve Beaudry, Montlake
- Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Montlake
- Michael VonKorff, Arboretum
- Peter Haley, Eastlake

### WSDOT – SR 520 Program

- Cassandra Manetas – *WSDOT Cultural Resources Lead*
- Chelsey Funis – *SR 520 Program Communications*
- Dave Becher – *SR 520 Program Director of Construction*
- David Goldberg – *SR 520 Program Community Liaison and Ombudsman*
- Suryata Halim – *SR 520 Program Disciplines Manager*
- Todd Harrison – *SR 520 Program Director of Project Development*
- Tony Black – *SR 520 Program Communications*

### WSDOT – Northwest Region

- Christina Strand – *Area Traffic Engineer, King County*

### WSDOT – Headquarters Traffic

- Trevor McCain – *Transportation Signing Specialist*

### Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

- Amanda Tse – *Interagency Project Manager*
- Ganth Lingam – *Interagency Program Manager*
- Tom Le – *Supervisor, Design and Layout, Transportation Operations Division*

### Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

- Lyle Bicknell – *Principal Urban Designer*

### Seattle Design Commission (SDC)

- Valerie Kinast – *Strategic Advisor*

### WA Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

- Maureen Elenga – *Architectural Historian*

### Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks (FSOP)

- Anne Knight – *Advisory Board Member*
- Kyle Capizzi – *Board Member*

### University of Washington (UW)

- Aaron Hoard – *Interim Director, Office of Regional & Community Relations*

### The U District Partnership

- Katy Ricchiuto – *Urban Vitality Manager*

**Montlake Signage Workgroup**  
**Follow-up Q&A from workgroup meeting #2 on 12/13/2023**

**1. Can the recommended mast arm at sign location #1 be moved further north?**

The technical team reviewed whether the mast arm at sign location #1 (located on Montlake Boulevard, south of E North Street) could be moved further north from where the current sign bridge is located. The team determined that it is feasible for the sign structure base to be moved further north by approximately 10 feet or less.

**2. Can the advance signs at 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue E go on an existing pole?**

The technical team determined that, while there is an existing electrical service pole on the east side of Montlake Boulevard north of 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue E (see image below), it is not in an appropriate location for the advance signs. The pole is located too far north to adequately warn drivers ahead of time. Additionally, the team does not believe the existing pole’s foundation is strong enough to accommodate the wind load of the advance signs.



**3. What wayfinding signs exist in the current sign design plans for UW/UWMC/U District?**

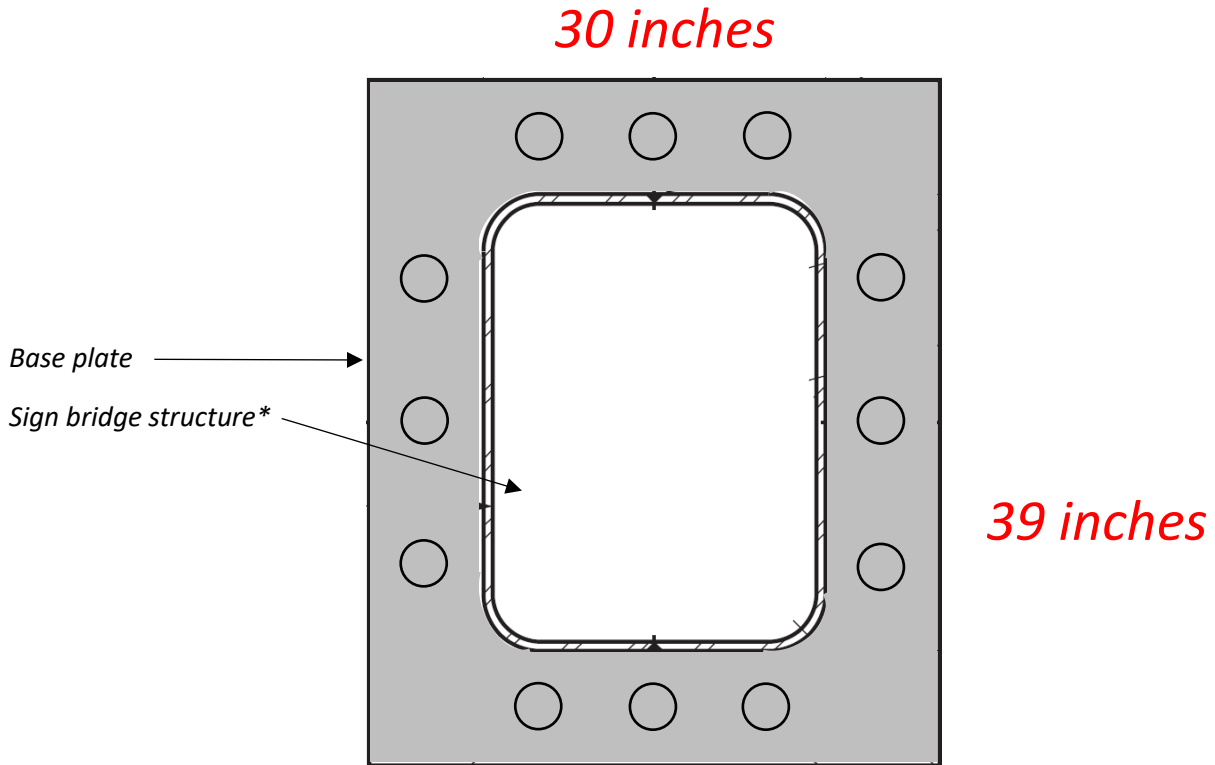
Prior to the start of the Montlake Project in 2019, there was a wayfinding sign on the east side of Montlake Boulevard, south of E North Street, pointing drivers to UW and the Arboretum (see image below). This wayfinding sign was removed during construction and the current sign design plan does not include replacement of this sign. However, WSDOT and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) have agreed to re-install this wayfinding sign if the signage workgroup supports it. In addition, WSDOT and SDOT are supportive of adding a blue wayfinding sign with an “H” to direct drivers to UW Medical Center.



**4. What are the dimensions of the sign bridge base plate versus a mast arm base plate?**

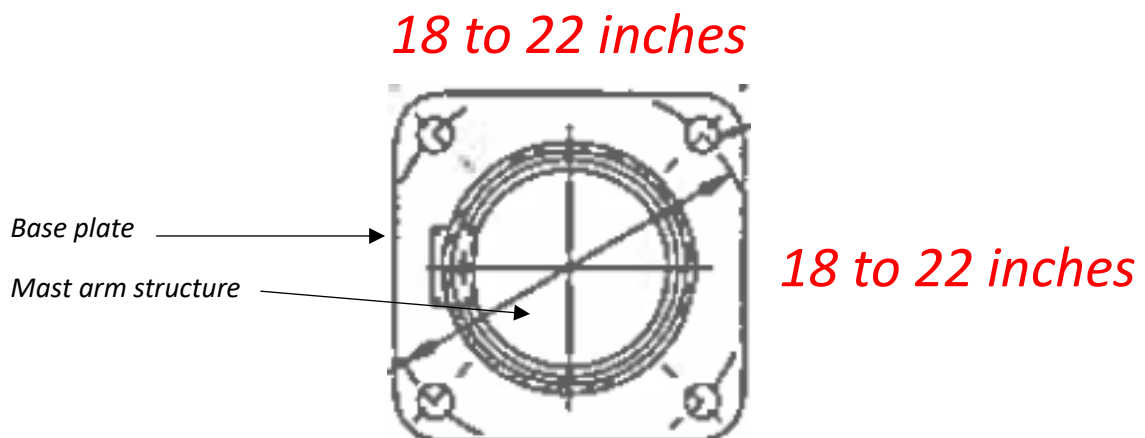
See the graphic on the next page.

## Sign bridge base plate dimensions



(\*Dimensions of the sign bridge structure are 18x27 inches)

## Mast arm pole base plate dimensions



NOTE: Images not to scale