

CHAPTER 3 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND TRIBAL AND AGENCY COORDINATION

WSDOT has implemented a public outreach and tribal and agency coordination process for the project. In addition to talking to the general public about the project, WSDOT has specifically worked with minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations to understand their concerns about the project and to obtain information from those groups to help evaluate how the project might affect them. WSDOT has also coordinated directly with tribes and elected officials and staff of local governments in the area. Over a period of more than 10 years, WSDOT has worked with the communities on the east side of Lake Washington that could be affected by the project. WSDOT undertook this effort to better understand the possible project effects and benefits to travelers who travel by bus or car in the Eastside SR 520 corridor and to businesses that rely on the corridor for movement of goods and services.

Please refer to the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report in Appendix E for additional information about public outreach and tribal and agency coordination activities conducted throughout the duration of the project.

Agencies, tribes, and the public are encouraged to comment on a project throughout the environmental assessment process. During the initial scoping phase of the project, agencies, tribes and the public were asked to comment on the purpose and need for the proposed project and the environmental topics to be evaluated in the EA. WSDOT has made the EA document available to agencies, tribes, and the public for comment. During the comment period, WSDOT will host a public hearing to gather feedback. The public hearing will also provide the public an opportunity to learn more about project, the proposed mitigation, and the EA process.



Participants at the 2008 public scoping meeting held at the North Bellevue Community Center

The EA incorporates and builds upon prior planning efforts and environmental studies related to SR 520, including the comments provided by agencies, tribes, the public, and other interested parties in response to the 2006 *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project* (WSDOT 2006). Agency and tribal coordination and public

outreach prior to September 2008 were conducted under the auspices of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project.

What public outreach has occurred or is planned for the project?

What is outreach?

Outreach is the effort made to contact members of the general public or specific targeted groups or individuals to provide project information and to obtain input.

WSDOT developed a comprehensive public involvement plan specifically intended for the principal groups affected by the project. The purpose of the public involvement plan is to guide and document WSDOT's communication with the public. This involves providing opportunities for the public to be meaningfully involved in the project's decision-making process.

Public involvement activities provide information on the project's progress and offer opportunities for input by community members. WSDOT's approach to involving the public in the project is two-fold:

1. Hosting events that the public can attend such as public meetings, open houses, and meetings with mayors.
2. Reaching out to the public through existing community groups and events to broaden involvement; for example, WSDOT has provided informational booths at existing community events and attended community meetings to provide project briefings.

To make information about the project as widely available as possible, a variety of communication tools and materials were created and will be continually updated during the project. These include informational brochures, press releases, a Web site, and e-mail announcements. These materials and tools provide updated information on the project's status and let community members know where and how to provide comments. See Appendix E, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report, for additional detail and documentation of public outreach efforts conducted for this project.

What special efforts did WSDOT make to reach minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations?

Public outreach for the project was inclusive of all populations and used methods to engage members of communities that historically have been under-represented in the public involvement process. Several specific approaches were used to reach historically under-represented populations, including the following:

- Staffing information tables at community events and festivals organized and attended by low-income or minority people, including the Crossroads Farmers Market.
- Locating a project information display in places where it would be viewed by low-income or minority people, for example, at the North Bellevue Community Center and at the Bellevue Community College Library.
- Discussing issues relevant to the proposed project at meetings of special interest groups and community organizations that draw diverse populations.
- Staffing information tables at selected Eastside businesses.
- Providing materials for public information events at transit stops along the corridor and for print and electronic publications that serve low-income or minority people.

Project materials have been translated into Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese at key milestones during the project. The project team incorporated the comments and concerns expressed by the public into the overall project comment database for documentation and response. Public involvement and outreach to minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations will continue throughout the duration of the project.

What concerns were expressed by the public, and how did public, tribal, and agency comments influence the project design?

Through the outreach opportunities described above, the public communicated the following key messages:

- **Design the corridor to accommodate future needs** – Public comments on this topic were numerous though varied: some requested a six-lane corridor, others proposed the need for eight lanes, and still others suggested that four lanes should be employed in a fashion that optimizes transit use.
- **Keep effects on neighborhoods to a minimum** – Residents expressed concerns about the effects of an expanded SR 520 on their neighborhoods. Specific concerns included traffic congestion on local streets, increased noise and air pollution, and loss of a community feel in the neighborhoods.
- **Monitor the possibility of negative effects on the natural environment** – Community members were concerned about the effects that the project could have on the natural environment. Specific concerns included untreated stormwater runoff and adverse effects on sensitive habitats along the SR 520 corridor.

In addition to these concerns, the public expressed support for elements of the proposed project. In particular, community members supported the regional bicycle and pedestrian path and lids that reconnect communities.

WSDOT solicited feedback from agencies and tribes through a variety of forums, starting before the project was initiated and continuing through the project design and environmental process. Input from agencies, public officials, and the general public plays an important role in the decision-making and evaluation process for this project. It influences the proposed project's scope and the design choices advanced for further study in the environmental review process.

How has WSDOT involved tribes?

WSDOT and FHWA are committed to respectful, effective consultation with tribes in recognition that project activities may affect tribal rights and interests. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 and WSDOT Executive Order E 1025.00 on Tribal Consultation both require consultation with tribes.

WSDOT initiated consultation with the following federally recognized tribes:

- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Snoqualmie Tribe
- Suquamish Tribes
- Tulalip Tribes
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

WSDOT is also engaged with the non-federally recognized Duwamish Tribe as a consulting party. The project team has conducted outreach with tribal staff to discuss cultural resources as well as other issues relevant to tribal concerns via individual meetings, document reviews, formal correspondence, and e-mail. Additionally, tribes were invited to participate in scoping for the project.

The project is adjacent to the “usual and accustomed” fishing areas of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. In addition to the agency coordination meetings that Muckleshoot Indian Tribe representatives may have attended, the project team has coordinated with staff of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe throughout the planning and design stages of the project. In addition, the project team sought specific feedback from the staff of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe on the team’s proposal for replacing fish passage barriers with structures that will allow fish passage.

What is scoping?

Scoping is the process implemented early in project development to involve the public, agencies, local jurisdictions, tribes, and other concerned groups in identifying the range of proposed actions, alternatives, environmental issues, effects, and mitigation measures to be addressed in an environmental document.

Usual and Accustomed Fishing Area

As affirmed by the Boldt Decision and the Treaty of Point Elliott, Indian tribes have a right to harvest fish free of state interference, subject to conservation principles; to co-manage the fishery resource with the state; and to harvest up to 50 percent of the harvestable fish. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe’s usual and accustomed fishing area includes Lake Washington.

How has WSDOT involved federal, state, and local government agencies?

WSDOT and FHWA are the co-lead agencies for this project and environmental process, and they serve as the project proponents. Many federal, state, and local agencies and tribes provided input throughout the environmental process through a variety of forums. Forums for technical input from agencies and tribes include the regulatory agency coordination process (RACp) and associated technical working groups (TWGs), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) steering group, the multi-agency permitting (MAP) team, and technical coordination meetings or individual briefings with agencies and tribes.

While the regulatory agency coordination process and technical working group forums initially focused on the entire project corridor (Seattle, Evergreen Point Bridge, and Eastside), these groups transitioned to exclusively focusing on the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project (Seattle and Evergreen Point Bridge) once the SR 520, Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project was initiated in June 2008. At that time, coordination with agencies and tribes transitioned primarily to the multi-agency permitting team and individual meetings.

In addition to the forums previously noted, individual meetings with agencies and tribes that focused on the project began in October 2008. During fall 2008, the project team facilitated a scoping phase to solicit comments from federal, state, and local agencies and tribes on environmental topics to address in the EA. The initial 30-day comment period for the scoping phase ran from September 23, 2008, to October 24, 2008.

Elected officials who represent cities and towns adjacent to the SR 520 Eastside corridor play an important role in the public involvement program. WSDOT has provided briefings to and meets regularly with elected officials from the following jurisdictions:

- City of Medina
- Town of Hunts Point
- City of Clyde Hill

- Town of Yarrow Point
- City of Kirkland
- City of Bellevue
- City of Redmond

Elected officials, notably mayors, and city staff act as a conduit for their constituents, providing WSDOT with input on project elements of particular interest to community members.

What is the Urban Design Process?

The input of Eastside community members is a key element of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). The principles of CSS are both implicit and explicit in the design development process for this project.

The Urban Design Process was influenced by input from two committees: the design advisory group (DAG) and the Eastside community design collaboration (ECDC). Input from both of these committees resulted in the establishment of preliminary design guidelines for the project.

The 2006 design advisory group process established project design goals, theme, vision, and principles for the SR 520 corridor as a whole. These components have served as building blocks that have guided design development for the project.

The Eastside community design collaboration, comprised of Eastside community stakeholders, was convened in 2008. The Eastside community design collaboration participated in two open houses, a series of three workshops, and several technical and jurisdictional meetings. At the same time, a parallel outreach process was conducted with the cities of Bellevue and Kirkland to advance preliminary design at Bellevue Way and 108th Avenue NE.

The preliminary design guidelines are the preferred recommendations that integrate community values, urban design principles, and WSDOT standards.

What are Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)?

CSS weigh transportation needs, community values, and environmental goals on equal footing in determining a final project design.

SR 520, MEDINA TO SR 202: EASTSIDE TRANSIT AND HOV PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT