Washington State
Department of Transportation

SR 520
Focus Groups Report

May 4, 2006

Presented by

Cocker
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Methodology of Focus Groups

Cocker Fennessy conducted five focus groups for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) between April 20 and 26, 2006. Three groups were held in Seattle and two were held in Kirkland. Each focus group was approximately two hours in length. Objectives included:

- Gathering information on how King County residents view and use SR 520, including their knowledge about the corridor, how and when they use it, and their impressions about safety, congestion, environmental mitigation etc.

- Testing possible messages for the proposed SR 520 replacement options, including alternatives for entering and exiting at the Mountlake/University of Washington area.

- Gaining understanding of how regular SR 520 users and neighbors rank proposed solutions.

Participant Demographics

A total of 48 people participated in the groups—24 men and 24 women. The age range of participants was 25-65. Outlined below are the dates, locations and make-up of participants for the five focus groups:

April 20 – Seattle

1. King County residents who are not regular users of SR 520 and do not live near SR 520

April 25 – Seattle

1. Seattle residents who are regular users of SR 520
2. Seattle residents who live near SR 520 neighbors but do not use SR 520

April 26 – Kirkland

1. Eastside residents who are regular users of 520
2. Eastside residents who live near SR 520 but do not use SR 520

Selection Criteria

In order to hear unbiased opinions, Cocker Fennessy requested that participants meet the following criteria:

- Not employed by or related to anyone employed by the Washington State Department of Transportation.
- Not employed by or related to anyone employed by a city or county department of transportation.
- Not employed by or related to anyone employed by a transit agency.

- Not employed by or related to anyone employed by a contractor or construction company that builds transportation projects.
- Not employed by or related to anyone employed by a market research company, advertising firm, television station, radio station or newspaper.
- Has not participated in a focus group in the last 18 months.

Moderators and Staffing

Anne Fennessy and Kris Jorgensen moderated and staffed all five groups. They guided participants through a broad conversation about their views on various aspects of transportation broadly and SR 520 specifically. One would moderate while the other would take notes. All groups were video taped and audio taped.

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Overall Impressions

The following statements are a synthesis of the overall impressions from the five focus groups. These impressions are based on the findings which are located beginning on page 8 of this report.

Importance of SR 520

1. SR 520 was seen as extremely important to the region's transportation system.

2. SR 520 was seen as important to the region's economy—but tying it to UW, Safeco or Microsoft was not advantageous.

3. SR 520 was seen as an alternative to I-90—and that their effectiveness was dependent on the other being open.

4. Eastside participants were more likely to think of SR 520 as the bridge and a freeway going east and west on the eastside, Seattle participants thought of it as the bridge and access to the Montlake and UW neighborhoods.

5. Most ranked SR 520 as one of the top three transportation projects in relationship to other regional transportation projects.

Need for SR 520 improvement

6. About half of the participants had heard about planning for SR 520 but were unclear about what plans are, or the current status of the plans.

7. There was not universal agreement that SR 520 should be replaced or rebuilt.

8. There was not universal acceptance that SR 520 has safety issues.

9. There was skepticism by some that the bridge needed to be replaced—some thought that the existing facility didn't need to be replaced but that it should maintained (rather than torn down).

10. Most people agreed that something had to be done about the traffic and congestion on SR 520.

11. People on the eastside thought the main reason to fix SR 520 was to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. They did not see it as a safety problem.

12. People thought that wind storms were a manageable problem for SR 520 because the bridge could be closed during bad weather. They did not see it as vulnerable to earthquakes.

13. Participants wanted HOV lanes added to SR 520 to improve travel flow for vanpools, carpools and busses.

Neighborhood and environmental improvements

14. Participants did not think that Lake Washington was being polluted by SR 520, but if it was, it should be stopped and cleaned up.

15. People are resentful about lids and saw them as a luxury and not a necessity. Many questioned the 'reconnection' aspect of lids or improvements to neighborhoods. They felt that the bridge and the highway have been there for 40 years and spending the money to reconnect them made no sense.

16. Mitigation is seen as a way to "buy off" neighbors.

17. People were skeptical about noise walls being effective.

Lane Options

18. People initially liked the 6 and 8 lane options best, but when provided with the price of the options most chose the 6 lane option.

19. It was intuitive to many that if an 8 lane option was chosen to replace SR 520 then there would be back-ups and congestion bottlenecks on I-405 and I-5.

20. Adding HOV lanes for transit and car and van pools was generally considered a good idea.

21. Everyone was passionate about having high capacity transit on the bridge—and they were impatient about it being built in the future. They wanted it to be built when the bridge was being replaced and they wanted to know where it would be built (on the bridge).

22. People thought that those who did not support any increase in the number of lanes were 'not realistic'.

23. Some people felt that the arguments that WSDOT used was meant to bias them against the 8 lane option.

24. There seemed to be a concern about the width of the shoulders and bicycle and pedestrian lanes. Many wanted to increase lanes in the 6 lane option by removing or shrinking shoulders or pedestrian and bicycle paths.

25. Most participants thought the 6 lane option was the compromise and created the most value.

Montlake/UW neighborhoods interchange design options

26. When presented with two options for entering and exiting the Montlake/UW neighborhoods, most people preferred the Pacific Street interchange.

27. People expressed support for the pedestrian plaza in the Pacific Street interchange option.

28. Some felt that traffic flow would be better with the Pacific Street interchange, and that this option impacted fewer neighborhoods than the Montlake Bascule bridge option.

29. Concern about the second Montlake Bascule Bridge included:
    - There would still be the issue of having a drawbridge opening
    - They felt that Montlake traffic would still be at a standstill

30. Concerns about the Pacific Street interchange included:
    - Impacts to the Arboretum
    - Impacts to the waterways
    - Belief that there would be accidents on the interchange

Findings

The below findings are based on the questions asked during the five focus groups. We have also selected representative quotes from the focus groups to help provide additional insight into the participants' thoughts and emotions around the issues discussed.

Word Associations

1. HOV lanes were considered a good idea. There was support for HOV lanes to be turned into general purpose lanes during non-rush hours – I-405 and SR 167 were cited as highways that allowed this. A few mentioned that HOV lanes were not used very well and that there were cheaters in them.

2. Most people did not know much about dedicated busways except for the Downtown Seattle tunnel and the tunnel on 4th Avenue in Seattle.

   "It's a poor man's light rail."

3. Light rail was perceived as a positive and expensive—but that 'politics' had caused it to be delayed. Most felt light rail was needed and hoped it would be completed soon.

   "Please build it now."

   "Cooler than transit"

4. HOT Lanes were explored and reactions were mixed. Some had heard about SR 167 having them and a few cited other cities where they worked successfully.

   "It's strictly economical; if you want to go faster you pay for it."

   "Cost effective—what you charge will actually pay for what you need."

5. Bicycle and pedestrian paths invoked strong feelings of either support or opposition—from "necessary" and "needed" to "useless" and "expensive".

6. Alaskan Way Viaduct is considered to be very vulnerable to earthquakes and a death trap. Participants repeatedly stated that they "prayed" for no earthquake when they are driving on it. Participants from Seattle were more likely to see it as an effective way to go north and south (especially as an option to get to the airport.)

   "We can't keep patching it up."

   "It is one of the slickest ways to get around if you know how to use it."

7. Images that came to mind when SR 520 was initially discussed were; crowded, congested, bottleneck, nightmare, avoidance, awful, unpredictable, and stressful

   "It's horrible."

8. I-405 was perceived as an important north south route. It was also described as congested, erratic, backed-up and a problem.

   "You never know what you are going to get—although it is usually bad."

9. Mitigation conjured up images of lengthy legal actions, attorneys and "buy offs" for neighbors. Some other participants didn't know what it meant.

   "Most projects require it (mitigation) to try and make things better."

10. Busses were seen as helpful for commuters but not for getting around during off-peak hours. Busses also elicited negative characteristics such as smelly, scary, too hot or too cold, inconvenient, and stuck in traffic.

    "It's the only major public transit system we have."

11. Vanpools and carpools were thought to be a good idea (for others) and needed, but difficult to use.

    "They are a good thing but you have to have the same schedule as your neighbor and that's not easy."

Initial knowledge of and thoughts about SR 520

12. Most people identified the western boarder of SR 520 as I-5 but the eastern border was not universally accepted. Redmond, I-405, Marymoor Park, Fall City Road, Lake Sammamish, or Microsoft were cited.

13. About half of the participants had heard something about planning for SR 520 but were unclear if it was replacing the bridge, building a tunnel, expanding the bridge, adding light rail, or some other plans.

    "Hasn't it (SR520) been damaged recently?"

    "There was a whole new concept for Montlake but it was rejected, I think."

    "Aren't they building another bridge?"

14. Almost everyone talked about trying not to use the bridge during rush hours—and many said that they rearranged their schedule to avoid it during those times. Most also said that they listen to traffic updates to decide whether to use SR 520 or not.

"I only use it after 9:30 or before 3."

"I changed jobs because of 520."

15. Many participants brought up the fact that there is no longer a "reverse" commute. They felt that traffic was equally bad in both directions (east and west).

16. SR 520 was seen differently by east and westside residents. Eastside participants were more likely to see SR 520 as more than the Evergreen Floating Bridge while westside participants saw it as the bridge and an access route to Montlake or UW.

    "I only use it in one direction, to go from SR 520 to Redmond; I never go to Seattle on it."

17. SR 520 was seen as extremely important to the regional transportation system.

    "One third of the Microsofties wouldn't be employed at Microsoft with out it."

    "It would cause major dislocations if we didn't have it."

    "One bridge could never handle all the traffic."

18. Most ranked SR 520 as one of the top three in relationship to other regional transportation projects. Westside residents prioritized the Viaduct (because of safety) while the eastside residents mentioned I-405. A few said that SR 520 was the most important because it impacted them more than other regional projects.

    "I'd prioritize SR 520 but that is because I use it all the time."

    "If the Viaduct falls, the whole city (Seattle) would be shut down."

19. There was not agreement that SR 520 needed to be replaced—there was agreement that it needed to be improved, but replacing it caused consternation, especially with the eastside participants.

    "We need to maintain it, not replace it."

    "If there is a safety issue we should replace it, but not if we need to just widen it."

    "If it is replaced, it must be phased. We cannot be without one of the bridges."

20. There is a perception that SR 520 is not vulnerable to earthquakes and is mostly affected by windstorms. In some minds, the bridge will withstand windstorms

because WSDOT has enough warning time to close the bridge to 'protect' it and travelers.

> *"They will know when a problem is coming and close the bridge – and they do maintenance every summer to make sure it will be okay."*

Ranking of Reasons for Replacing SR 520

Participants were asked to rank the relative credibility or importance of reasons for fixing or replacing SR 520 by using the numbers between 1 (least) and 5 (highest). Below is the average per reason on how participants perceive each reason. We have also included charts that detail the average (the median) and the "intensity" (the mode) for each reason.

- Increase safety (3.19 average)

  > *"Feels creepy when waves are coming over the bridge."*
  >
  > *"Is there a problem?"*
  >
  > *"The bridge may be vulnerable to windstorms, but the main corridor seems fine."*

- Prevent bridge from sinking (2.71 average)

  > *"Floating bridges by definition don't sink."*
  >
  > *"I haven't heard anything about it sinking."*
  >
  > *"I don't think it is an issue; a boat wiped out an entire pillar and it didn't sink."*
  >
  > *"If it was going to sink, they'd close it down."*

- Reduce time in congestion caused by vehicle breakdowns and accidents on the bridge (2.92)

  > *"This is a huge problem."*
  >
  > *"Pull out area is a good idea."*
  >
  > *"Tow trucks are right there to take cars that run out of gas off."*
  >
  > *"One minor accident can shut down the entire system, making a nightmare."*

- It is carrying twice the traffic designed for it (3.71 average)

  > *"Cars are lighter so there is less wear and tear now."*
  >
  > *"It can't last forever – we need a replacement."*

- Survive earthquake and severe windstorm incidents (3.44 average)

"I don't think an earthquake will bother it because it's on the lake."

"They can close it for bad weather – it's just a temporary problem."

- Increase mobility for vanpools, carpools and busses (3.75 average)

  "We need light rail, build it and it will come."

  "There should be more lanes; that will help."

- Reduce travel time (2.92 average)

  "People need to live closer to where they work."

- Improve traffic so it doesn't hurt our economy (3.27 average)

  "We don't want to hurt our economy but is there a way to get more out of the existing concrete?"

  "Boeing is gone, Microsoft could be next."

  - ✓ UW, Safeco, Microsoft

  "Don't target these businesses, they can use vanpools better."

  "I care about the UW because it is a school, but the others are businesses and they can pay for themselves."

- Reduce impacts on neighborhoods (2.27 average)

  "Noisy neighbors get more lip service. They talk to neighbors about it to try and help them feel better, but nothing really happens."

  "There needs to be some budget restraints."

  "Those people chose to live in a neighborhood near a freeway."

- Improve transit options (3.71 average)

  "That is a good idea but not the reason to build a new bridge."

  "Not that many people use transit system; it would have to be really convenient."

  "I'd rather be on a bus versus a car – it gets you over faster. You just have to know how to understand the transit system."

- Provide for pedestrian and bicycle access (2.75 average)

  "I think more bikers would use it if it were there – especially those in the high-tech industry."

  "It is a low priority in the whole problem."

- Improve water quality in Lake Washington (1.79 average)

  "I'm not buying it."

"Tearing down 520 will hurt the environment too."

"I don't see the connection – I have never heard of that."

- Reconnect neighborhoods with parks/lids built over sections of SR520 (2.06 average)

  "I don't visualize the neighborhoods as being decimated."

  "It was untold million of dollars and delayed construction in Mercer Island for twenty years. I don't want to delay construction on 520."

  "It would be nice if there was enough money. It seems nice to have, but I'm not sure it is needed."

- Reduce traffic noise (1.40 average)

  "Who does it disturb? Didn't they know about it when they moved there?"

  "Noise walls don't work."

Intensity of Responses

Below is a summary of how participants ranked reasons:

Statement:	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**S4**	**S5**	**S6**	**S7**	**S8**	**S9**	**S10**	**S11**	**S12**	**S13**	**S14**
Overall Average (mean)	3.19	2.71	2.92	3.71	3.44	3.75	2.92	3.27	2.27	3.71	2.75	1.79	2.06	1.40
Most frequent response (mode)	3(20)	1(17)	3(16)	5(18)	5(15)	4(22)	3(13)	4(13)	2(17)	4(16)	1(15)	1(27)	1(26)	1(36)

Responses:	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
S1 - safety	4	7	20	10	7
S2 - sinking	17	8	6	6	11
S3 – breakdowns	4	14	16	10	4
S4 – twice traffic	4	5	10	11	18
S5 - earthquake	7	5	11	10	15
S6 – van/car pools	0	8	7	22	11
S7 – travel time	7	9	13	9	10
S8 - economy	6	8	11	13	10
S9-neigh impacts	12	17	15	2	2
S10 – transit	3	2	14	16	13
S11- ped/bikes	15	10	5	8	10
S12–water quality	27	11	5	3	2
S13 – parks/lids	26	9	4	2	7
S14 - noise	36	8	2	1	1

The top credible reasons for replacing SR 520 were:

- Increase public transit, car and van pools (3.75 average)
- Handle twice the traffic (3.71 average)
- Survive windstorm and earthquakes (3.44 average)
- Help the economy (3.27 average)
- Increase safety (3.19 average)

The least credible reasons for replacing SR 520 were:

- Reducing noise (1.40 average)
- Improving environment/water quality (1.79 average)
- Reconnecting neighborhoods (2.06 average)
- Reduce impacts on neighborhood (2.27 average)
- Preventing the bridge from sinking (2.71 average)
- Creating bike/pedestrian access (2.75 average)

21. After hearing the various reasons for why people think SR 520 should be replaced, most people's opinion about whether SR 520 should be replaced stayed the same, although some felt it was a little higher priority because the reason had raised their awareness.

Discussion of Three Options (A-4 lanes, B-6 lanes and C-8 lanes)

22. Most people liked either Option B (6 lanes) or C (8 lanes) when first viewing the options. Option A (4 lanes) seemed like a waste of money.

    "What's the point of a four lane option?"

    "C is just too big, how will it impact Montlake?"

    "I like C because it will minimize future rework and cost. Urban sprawl seems to be the trend."

23. There seems to be a misunderstanding of the need for the width of shoulders and bike and pedestrian lanes.

    "Why are we giving so much space to the shoulder? Why not just have one shoulder?"

    "Shoulders are important – for ambulances and breakdowns – but do you need two?"

    "Could be used for future growth."

24. There were negative reactions to the five lids in Options B (6 lanes) and C (8 lanes).

    "This is a transportation package - not a piece the neighborhoods back together forum."

    "Who wants to play by a freeway?"

25. There was an intuitive reaction that Option C (8 lanes) would create back-ups or congestion at the interchanges of I-5/SR520 and I-405/520

    "If we are spending the money, I'd rather do it all the way – we will see more growth. But I am concerned about 405 and I-5 because that will just cause more congestion there.

26. There was strong support for a high capacity transit option with all of the options and participants wanted the map to show them where it would be located in the future.

    "Will the high capacity transit steal the shoulders or will they narrow the automobile lanes in the future?"

27. Most participants who supported Option C (8 lanes) moved to Option B (6 lanes) after seeing the cost estimates.

28. There was some skepticism about the costs associated with Option C (8 lanes).

> *"This statement was designed to direct us to think that the 6 lane option is better."*
>
> *"I don't see how C would impact I-5 and I-405 to make it that much more costly."*

29. People wanted to amend Option B (6 lanes) by increasing capacity by removing or shrinking either the shoulders or pedestrian/bicycle path.

> *"We must add another lane; but we could scratch the shoulders and bike/ped lanes to get that."*

Statements regarding Lane Options

30. Very few people supported Option A (4 lanes) because they felt that the money wasn't worth what you were getting.

> *"That is a total waste—you get essentially the same thing; nothing is added, except shoulders."*
>
> *"That seems unrealistic— I don't think people will ever get out of their cars so we will need more."*

31. Most participants agreed the Option B was the best compromise after reviewing all the options, hearing the details of each, and hearing pro and con arguments.

> *"B seems like it would suffice; C would be great but the cost is crazy."*
>
> *"B has something for everyone and it'll spread out the traffic a little – that will help."*

32. Many thought that it was a good idea to encourage people to use transit by building and restricting lanes to only HOV or transit.

> *"HOV's are good – they provide incentives to people."*
>
> *"HOV lanes should be 'free' lanes and we should have that on SR 520."*

33. Most participants didn't agree that by not building lanes you would encourage people to ride transit.

> *"Those people don't live in reality."*
>
> *"That's wishful thinking – you can't get people out of their cars by not building HOV lanes."*

"It would be a failure if they didn't build any new lanes at all."

34. Most people were skeptical that Option C (8 lanes) would ever work since they didn't believe that there would ever be investments in I-405 or I-5 that could accommodate it.

    "They always say 'someday' and that day never comes. They were supposed to do that in Renton, and they never did."

Comparison of 6 lane design options (building a second Montlake bridge or building a new Pacific Street interchange)

35. Most people preferred the Pacific Street interchange over the second Montlake bridge, although some voiced concerns about the bridge being a visual blight.

    "I like it better because the traffic flow seems much better."
    "This option only seems to impact University property."

    "It seems better but I can't really visualize it – it seems like it would be huge and mess up that nice view."

36. People liked the Pacific Street Plaza because it allowed pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate the intersection safely.

37. There was concern for how the Arboretum would be impacted by the Pacific Street Interchange option.

    "Will all the cars feed off onto the same roads that currently exist? That would be a bad idea."

Summary Chart of Reasons for Replacing SR 520

Summary of Reasons to Replace SR 520

Statement:	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14
Overall Average (mean)	3.19	2.71	2.92	3.71	3.44	3.75	2.92	3.27	2.27	3.71	2.75	1.79	2.06	1.40
Most frequent response (mode)	3(20)	1(17)	3(16)	5(18)	5(15)	4(22)	3(13)	4(13)	2(17)	4(16)	1(15)	1(27)	1(26)	1(36)

Intensity of Responses

Responses:	1	2	3	4	5
S1 - safety	4	7	20	10	7
S2 - sinking	17	8	6	6	11
S3 – breakdowns	4	14	16	10	4
S4 – twice traffic	4	5	10	11	18
S5 - earthquake	7	5	11	10	15
S6 – van/car pools	0	8	7	22	11
S7 – travel time	7	9	13	9	10
S8 - economy	6	8	11	13	10
S9-neighborhoods	12	17	15	2	2
S10 – transit	3	2	14	16	13
S11- ped/bikes	15	10	5	8	10
S12–water quality	27	11	5	3	2
S13 – parks/lids	26	9	4	2	7
S14 - noise	36	8	2	1	1

Discussion Guide

Set-Up – 10 min

- Introduce moderator and Cocker Fennessy
- Disclose taping and observers
- Lay ground rules
  - ✓ Turn off cell phones/pagers
  - ✓ No wrong answers
  - ✓ Speak one at a time
  - ✓ Be open and candid
- Introduce participants
  - ✓ Name
  - ✓ Years in Puget Sound area

- **Word Association – 15 min (25 min)**
  - *When you think about the following words, what comes to mind?*
    - ✓ Transportation
    - ✓ High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes
    - ✓ Light Rail
    - ✓ Bicycle/Pedestrian Lanes
    - ✓ Alaskan Way Viaduct
    - ✓ SR 520
    - ✓ I- 405
    - ✓ Mitigation

Introducing the Topic 15 min (40 min)

Let's talk a bit about SR 520.

- Has anyone heard anything about SR 520 recently? What have you heard?
- When you think of SR 520 what do you consider its western border? What do you consider its eastern border?
- Do you ever use SR 520?
    - For what?
    - What time of day do you use it?
    - How often?
- How important is the SR 520 Bridge to the regional transportation system?
    - What makes it important?
    - Are there other transportation projects that you consider more important? What are they?
    - Are there other projects that you consider less important? What are they?
- Do you think that SR 520 needs to be replaced? What are your reasons?

Discussion of priorities 20 min (60 min)

The State Department of Transportation has been studying how to replace SR 520 Bridge and roadways leading from the bridge to I-5 and I-405.

DOT has been charged with maintaining or increasing mobility while at the same time trying to reduce any impacts to neighborhoods on the East and West sides of Lake Washington.

I want to talk about the reasons that some people think that SR 520 needs to be replaced. I am handing out the numbers 1 to 5. As I go through the list of reasons why SR 520 be addressed I would like you to choose a number that ranks how important you think that reason is - 5 being the most important reason and 1 being the least important reason.:

Some people say that the SR 520 needs to be replaced to ….

- Increase safety
- Prevent bridge from sinking
- Reduce time in congestion caused by vehicle breakdowns and accidents on the bridge
- It is carrying twice the traffic designed for it
- Survive earthquake and severe windstorm incidents
- Increase mobility for vanpools, carpools and busses
- Reduce travel time
- Improve traffic so it doesn't hurt our economy
    1. UW, Safeco, Microsoft
- Reduce impacts on neighborhoods
- Improve transit options
- Provide for pedestrian and bicycle access
- Improve water quality in Lake Washington
- Reconnect neighborhoods with parks/lids built over sections of SR520
- Reduce traffic noise

Now thinking back on the conversation we just had, what comes to mind as:

- The most credible reasons?
- The least compelling reasons?
- After hearing these reasons has your opinion changed about replacing SR 520? Any one think is a higher priority? A lesser priority? (Have them raise their hands.)

Discussion of three options 5 min (65 min)

After years and hundreds of public and community meetings the Washington State Department of Transportation has narrowed the options to fix SR 520 to three. Currently the SR 520 corridor between I-5 and I-405 has four lanes for all traffic – two going in each direction, it has no shoulders for disabled traffic, no HOV lanes and no bicycle or pedestrian paths or access.

Let's discuss the three options that are under final consideration for fixing SR 520 and get your opinion on them. All would replace the existing bridge and roadways and all would allow High Capacity Transit (HCT) to be added in the future.

[Handout cross-sections]:

- Option A
    - Replace the current four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)
    - Add shoulders for disabled vehicles
    - Add ped/bicycle paths (4 lanes total)
- Option B
    - Replace the current four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)
    - Add two new lanes for HOV (1 in each direction)
    - Add shoulders and ped/bicycle paths (6 lanes total)
- Option C
    - Replace current four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)
    - Add four new lanes (2 lanes for HOV(1 in each direction) and 2 lanes for all vehicles (1 lane in each direction),)
    - Add shoulders and ped/bicycle paths (8 lanes total)

- What is your initial preference of these three options? Who prefers the 4 lane, 6 lane, 8 lane? – raise hands

- What are your reasons?

Environmental improvements – 5 min (70 min)
All of the options will include environmental mitigation for stormwater treatment to reduce pollutions, noise walls to help reduce neighborhood noise, and landscaping and architectural treatments to better blend the facility into the neighborhoods.

In addition, the Options B and C (the 6-lane and 8-lane options) include five (5) small lidded sections over the freeway, two on the west side of the lake and three on the east side of the lake, to reconnect neighborhoods cut in two when the original freeway was built in the 1960's.

- How important do you think these environmental improvements are?
- Let's rank the importance of these environmental improvements on a one to five scale:
    - Storm water treatment
    - Noise walls
    - Landscaping and architectural treatments (what might they be?)
    - Lids

Specifics of each option: 10 min (80 min)

[Handout charts]

Details of Option A – 4-lane alternative

- Replaces existing aging structure, reducing earthquake and storm damage risk
- Adds shoulders for disabled cars, improving traffic flow and reliability over the SR 520 bridge
- Adds a new bicycle/pedestrian path across Lake Washington, providing a new cross-lake connection for bikers and pedestrians
- Allows for High Capacity Transit to be added in the future
- Does not add capacity for moving more people and vehicles
- Because the new road would be wider than the existing structure, the environmental impacts would be greater, but there would be fewer environmental impacts than with the 6 and 8 lane options
- The estimated cost of this option is between $1.7 – 2 billion

Details of Option B - 6-lane alternative

- Includes the features that we just discussed for the 4-lane option
- Adds two new HOV lanes (one in each direction) for transit, carpools and vanpools
    - Allowing more people to use SR 520
    - Improving travel time and reliability of transit and HOV
    - Improving transit connections between the freeway system and Seattle and Eastside employment centers
- Adds five landscaped lids or caps over the freeway (2 on west side or lake; 3 on east side), improving the connections between neighborhood near the highway
- The environmental impacts would be greater than the 4-lane option
- The estimated cost of this option is between $2.3 – 3.1 billion

Details of Option C - 8-lane alternative

- Includes the features just discussed in the 4 and 6-lane options
- Adds two new lanes for all traffic (one in each direction), allowing more people and vehicles of all types to use SR 520
- Causes traffic congestion points around 1-5, 1-405 and local streets, creating a need to modify these affected highways and streets
- The environmental impacts would be greater than the 4 and 6 lane alternatives
- The estimated cost of this option is between $4 and 4.9 billion. Modifying I-5 and I-405 to handle additional traffic would add approximately $5 billion to the cost.

After hearing formation what is your preferred alternative? What are your reasons?

- **Arguments for and against the three options 15 min (95min)**

  Different people with different perspectives are saying different things about the options under consideration. I'll list a few of these statements and then want to know if they change how you feel about the options you think make the most sense:

  - Option A (4 lane) arguments:
    - Some people say that Option A (4 lane option) has the least environmental and neighborhood impacts, is the most affordable, and coupled with future high capacity transit will force people out of their cars and on to transit. What do you think of that argument?
    - Others say that option A (4 lane option) will cost $2 billion and after construction we will get basically what we have now and that congestion is only going to grow and get worse. What do you think of that argument?
  - Option B (6 lane) arguments:
    - Some people say that the Option B (6-lane option) is a good compromise, that the HOV lanes encourage people to shift to transit, busses and carpools, and while not the cheapest it provides the best overall value. What do you think of that argument?
    - Others say that you should build new lanes only if everyone can use them; that restricting new lanes to HOVs and carpools is wrong. What do you think of that argument?
    - Others say that adding new lanes, even if they are lanes for transit, carpools and vanpools are unacceptable. That no new lanes should be built. What do you think of that argument?
  - Option C (8 lane) arguments:
    - Some people say that Option C (8-lane option) creates environmental and neighborhood impacts that are too great, that I-5 and the city street system, especially in Seattle, will never be expanded enough to absorb the additional traffic coming in from the 8-lanes which will just cause dangerous backups, and that the cost of this option and the costs of improvements on I-5 and I-405 are prohibitive. What do you think of that?
    - Others say that adding additional lanes when replacing SR 520 is the right thing to do because some, even though they will possibly cause backups at I-5, I- 405 and on city streets, that someday if major capacity improvements are made to I-5, I-405 and the city street systems, SR 520 can handle it. What do you think of that?

  After hearing all these opinions, what option do you now prefer?

- **Comparison of 6-lane design options – 15 min (110 min)**

Let's talk in more detail about Option B, the 6-lane option. There is one particular area that is presenting significant challenges to the project's designers. Specifically, that area involves where and how to provide access to and from SR 520 to the University of Washington and neighborhoods on the west side of the lake in Seattle.

There are two different options for entering and exiting SR 520 in the Montlake/University area. I'm going to show you visuals of each.

[Go to book]

The first option is to build a second Montlake drawbridge. This option includes:

- Building a second drawbridge parallel to and just east of the existing Montlake Bridge across the Montlake Cut.
- Providing one-way, three-lane traffic flow across each bridge with traffic on one bridge heading northbound and on the other heading southbound (adds one additional lane of traffic in each direction).
- Widening Montlake Boulevard near Pacific Street to handle additional traffic.
- Removing and relocating the Montlake freeway transit stops to an undetermined location near the proposed Sound Transit light rail station at Husky Stadium, which helps to narrow the highway through the Montlake neighborhood.

What are your impressions? Which do you prefer and why?

The second option is to build a new Pacific Street Interchange. This option includes:

- Closing the current SR 520/Montlake interchange and relocating it to the east near the current Lake Washington Boulevard ramps.
- Building a bridge from SR 520 at the new interchange across Union Bay to connect to Montlake Boulevard at Pacific Street near the UW Medical Center and Husky Stadium. This interchange also provides access to the Arboretum and Lake Washington Blvd.
- Removing the Montlake freeway transit stops to reduce highway width, with bus service to the University area using the new bridge across Union Bay to access transit stops closer to the University.
- Lowering the intersection at Pacific Street and Montlake Blvd. 8-10 feet with a pedestrian plaza built above the intersection.
- Adding one lane in each direction to Montlake Boulevard between Pacific and Northeast 45th streets to further improve traffic flow.

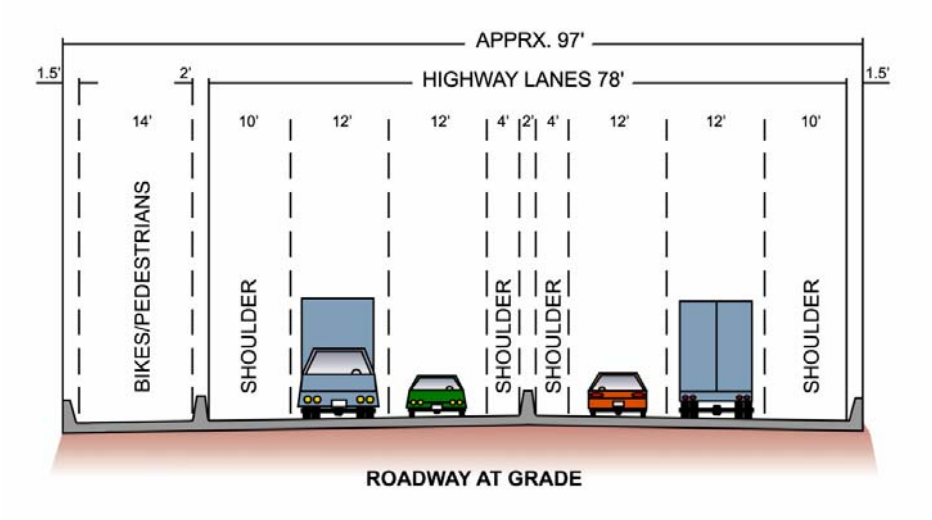
What are your impressions? Which do you prefer and why?

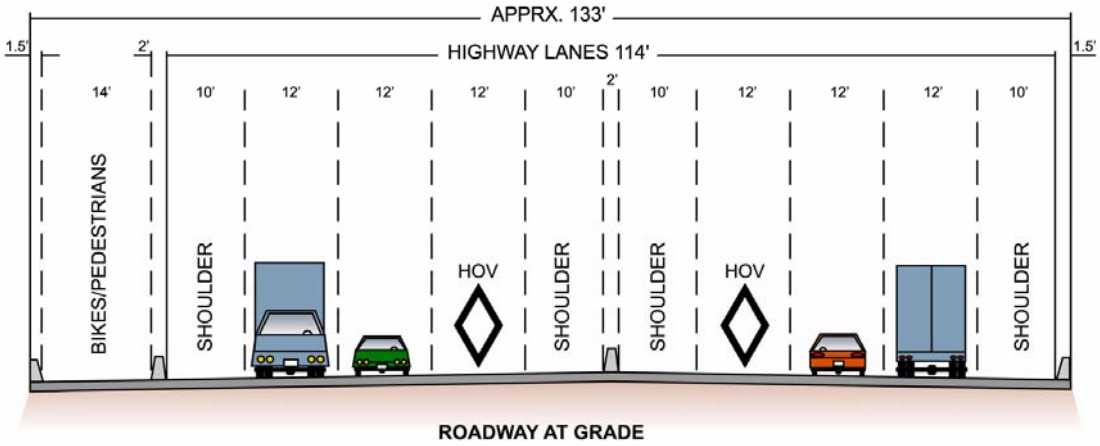
- **Summarize and final thank you.**

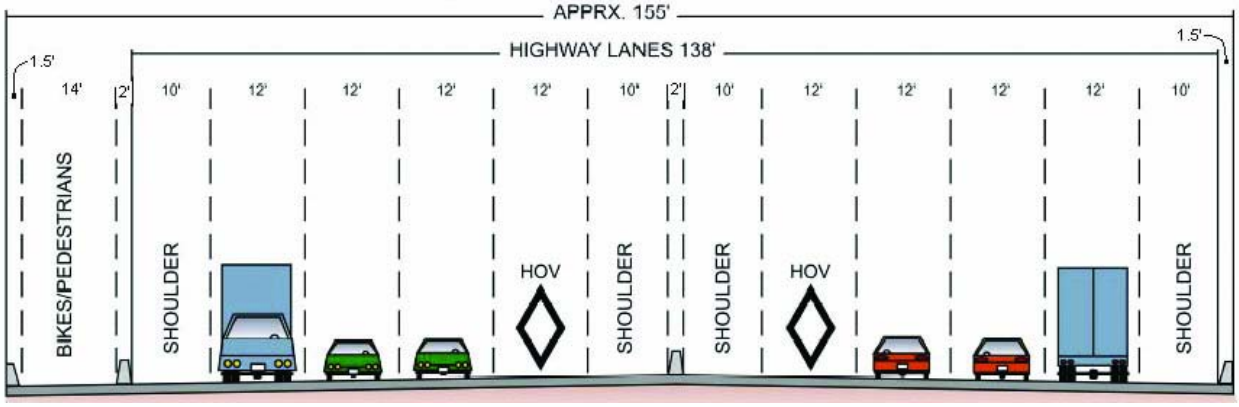
Handouts

The same handouts were used in all five focus groups:

- Cross sections of the 4, 6 and 8-lane options







- Charts outlining the benefits of the 4, 6 and 8-lane options

Comparison of SR 520 Replacement Options
Option A

Features	**Option A – 4-Lane Alternative**
Replaces existing aging structure · Reduces earthquake and storm damage risk	✓
Replaces existing four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)	✓
Adds shoulders for disabled vehicles · Improves traffic flow and reliability	✓
Adds a new bicycle/pedestrian path across Lake Washington · Provides new cross-lake connection for bicyclists and pedestrians	✓
Allows for High Capacity Transit (HCT) to be added in the future	✓
Adds sound walls · Reduces noise in neighborhoods	✓
Treats stormwater runoff · Reduces pollution of lake water	✓
Greater environmental effects than the existing structure	✓
Estimated Project Costs (Based on 2005 cost estimates)	**$1.7 – $2.0 billion**

Comparison of SR 520 Replacement Options

Options A & B

Features	Option A – 4-Lane Alternative	Option B – 6-Lane Alternative
Replaces existing aging structure · Reduces earthquake and storm damage risk	✓	✓
Replaces existing four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)	✓	✓
Adds shoulders for disabled vehicles · Improves traffic flow and reliability	✓	✓
Adds a new bicycle/pedestrian path across Lake Washington · Provides new cross-lake connection for bicyclists and pedestrians	✓	✓
Allows for High Capacity Transit (HCT) to be added in the future	✓	✓
Adds sound walls · Reduces noise in neighborhoods	✓	✓
Treats stormwater runoff · Reduces pollution of lake water	✓	✓
Greater environmental effects than the existing structure	✓	✓
Adds two new High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes (one in each direction) for transit, carpools and vanpools · Allows more people and vehicles to use SR 520 · Improves travel time and reliability of transit and HOV · Improves transit connections between the freeway system and Seattle and Eastside employment centers · Greater environmental effects than the 4-Lane		✓
Adds five landscaped lids over the freeway · Improves connections between neighborhoods near the highway		✓
Estimated Project Costs (Based on 2005 cost estimates)	**$1.7 – $2.0 billion**	**$2.3 – $3.1 billion**

Comparison of SR 520 Replacement Options

Options A , B & C

Features	Option A – 4-Lane Alternative	Option B – 6-Lane Alternative	Option C – 8-Lane Alternative
Replaces existing aging structure · Reduces earthquake and storm damage risk	✓	✓	✓
Replaces existing four lanes (2 lanes in each direction for all traffic)	✓	✓	✓
Adds shoulders for disabled vehicles · Improves traffic flow and reliability	✓	✓	✓
Adds a new bicycle/pedestrian path across Lake Washington · Provides new cross-lake connection for bicyclists and pedestrians	✓	✓	✓
Allows for High Capacity Transit (HCT) to be added in the future	✓	✓	✓
Adds sound walls · Reduces noise in neighborhoods	✓	✓	✓
Treats stormwater runoff · Reduces pollution of lake water	✓	✓	✓
Greater environmental effects than the existing structure	✓	✓	✓
Adds two new High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes (one in each direction) for transit, carpools and vanpools · Allows more people and vehicles to use SR 520 · Improves travel time and reliability of transit and HOV · Improves transit connections between the freeway system and Seattle and Eastside employment centers · Greater environmental effects than the 4-Lane		✓	✓
Adds five landscaped lids over the freeway · Improves connections between neighborhoods near the highway		✓	✓
Adds two new lanes for all traffic (one in each direction) · Allows more people and vehicles of all types to use SR 520 · Causes traffic congestion points around 1-5, 1-405 and local streets, creating a need to modify these affected highways and streets · Greater environmental effects than 4 or 6-lane alternatives			✓
Estimated Project Costs (Based on 2005 cost estimates)	**$1.7 – $2.0 billion**	**$2.3 – $3.1 billion**	**$4 - $4.9 billion (plus approximately $5 billion to modify I-405 and I-5)**

Participant Demographic Information

King County residents

April 20, 2006; 6:00 pm

Males – 5 participants

Age Distribution

25-34	1
35-44	1
45-55	1
56-65	2

Education Level

HS grad or less	2
Some college or more	3

Public transit, car/vanpool

3 or less times/week	4
3 or more times/week	1

Females – 5 participants

Age Distribution

25-34	0
35-44	4
45-55	1
56-65	0

Education Level

HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	5

Public transit, car/vanpool

3 or more times/week	4
3 or less times/week1	1

Seattle residents who are regular users of SR 520
April 25, 2006; 6:00 pm

Males – 3 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	3
45-55	0
56-65	0

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	3

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	2
3 or more times/week	1

UW employee	
Yes	0
No	3

Microsoft employee	
Yes	0
No	3

Females – 6 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	2
35-44	4
45-55	0
56-65	0

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	6

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	3
3 or more times/week	3

UW employee	
Yes	3
No	3

Microsoft employee	
Yes	1
No	5

Seattle residents who live near SR 520 but do not use SR 520
April 25, 2006; 8:00 pm

Males – 6 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	1
45-55	4
56-65	1

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	6

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	6
3 or more times/week	0

Females – 4 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	1
45-55	2
56-65	1

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	4

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	3
3 or more times/week	1

Eastside residents who are regular users of SR 520
April 26, 2006; 6:00 pm

Males – 5 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	0
45-55	2
56-65	3

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	5

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	4
3 or more times/week	1

UW employee	
Yes	0
No	5

Microsoft employee	
Yes	0
No	5

Females – 4 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	1
45-55	2
56-65	1

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	4

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	1
3 or more times/week	3

UW employee	
Yes	0
No	4

Microsoft employee	
Yes	2
No	2

Eastside residents who live near SR 520 but do not use SR 520
April 26, 2006; 8:00 pm

Males – 5 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	0
35-44	2
45-55	2
56-65	1

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	5

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	4
3 or more times/week	1

Females – 5 participants

Age Distribution	
25-34	1
35-44	1
45-55	0
56-65	3

Education Level	
HS grad or less	0
Some college or more	5

Public transit, car/vanpool	
3 or less times/week	4
3 or more times/week	1