

EPC EIS Scoping Comments Report Jan. 3 – Feb. 1, 2008

Introduction

The Early Pontoon Construction (EPC) Project initiated a 30-day scoping period to request comments in preparation for developing an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will evaluate potential effects to the surrounding environment from constructing and storing pontoons. The pontoons will be used to restore the SR 520 bridge in case of a catastrophic failure.

The purpose of the scoping period was to gather public input on what issues should be considered and evaluated in the EIS. The EPC project team solicited comments from agencies, Tribes, and the public. The 30-day comment period officially began January 3, 2008, and ended February 1, 2008. A few comments, however, were received by the project team just before or after these dates. The following summary provides an overview of the comments received by the EPC project team. The complete text of all comments is available upon request.

Scoping Meetings

Agency Scoping Meeting

A combined NEPA Scoping and Cooperating and Participating Agencies Meeting was held in Olympia on Jan. 17, 2008, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Local, state, and federal agencies, as well as Tribal Nations, were encouraged to provide feedback regarding the draft purpose and need statement and the range of alternatives for the EPC project. A total of sixteen agency representatives attended the agency scoping meeting.

Public Scoping Meeting

The EPC project team hosted a public scoping meeting in Hoquiam on Jan. 17, 2008. The meeting was held from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Hoquiam High School. Attendees began arriving at 5:00 p.m. After signing in, they were provided with the EPC project scoping folio, environmental process fact sheet, and scoping comment form. Attendees were invited to review program display boards and speak with the project team. At 6:00 p.m., Ron Paananen, SR 520 Project Director, gave a short presentation to explain the purpose of the EPC project and encourage public input. Attendees were able to share their comments by completing a paper or electronic form. Alternatively, a court reporter was available to record public comments. Approximately 200 people attended the public meeting, including local and state elected officials.

Notification

Several methods of notification were used to solicit comments during the scoping period and encourage attendance at the Jan. 17 public scoping meeting. The following list details the advertising materials and methods used to notify the public of the meeting:

- Mailed flyer to Hoquiam and Aberdeen residents.
- Placed display ads in the *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Daily World*, *South Beach Bulletin*, and *North Coast News*.
- Placed legal notices in the *Vidette* and *Daily World*.
- Announced meeting on SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Web site, Early Pontoon Construction Project Web page, Port of Grays Harbor Web site, and City of Hoquiam Web site.
- E-mailed invitation to community stakeholders and state elected officials.
- Placed posters in English and Spanish in community locations in Hoquiam and Aberdeen.
- Announced meeting at Coastal Caucus Legislative Luncheon on Jan. 3, 2008.
- Ron Paananen participated in KBKW AM 1450 radio interview on Jan. 14, 2008.
- Julie Meredith participated in KXRO AM 1350 radio interview on Jan. 17, 2008.

Agency Comments

A total of nine comments were provided by participating and cooperating agencies. The following provides a summary of agency comments:

- Suggests language to clarify the purpose and need statement (multiple comments).
- Requests integration of the Grays Harbor Estuary Management Plan into the purpose and need statement.
- Requests that pontoon moorage alternatives and emergency planning be included in the alternatives analysis.
- Expresses strong support for the project.
- Requests continuing agency collaboration.
- Notes availability of a high-quality labor force in the Grays Harbor area.
- Suggests formatting changes for the EPC Coordination Plan.

Public Comments

Attendees at the public scoping meeting were encouraged to provide written feedback by completing a comment form. The paper and electronic comment forms consisted of the following questions:

- Please provide your feedback on the project's draft purpose and need, the range of alternatives, and environmental topics that should be considered and evaluated in the environmental impact statement (EIS).
- How did you hear about this scoping meeting?
- Tell us your thoughts about the scoping meeting time and location.
- Are there any additional topics you are interested in that were not covered tonight?

A total of 67 public comments were received. Scoping meeting attendees submitted 43 written comment forms. An additional eight scoping meeting comments were transcribed by a court reporter during the public scoping meeting. The remaining comments were submitted via e-mail.

The public comments focused on the topics included in the following table. Most comments included multiple topics. Topics that were mentioned only once are not listed in the table.

Topic	Comments Received
EIS Alternatives (sites and moorage locations)	37
Land Use and Economics	35
Public Involvement	21
SR 520	12
Transportation (Construction and Operation)	12
Other Projects (Hood Canal, I-90, etc.)	7
Ecosystems (Plants and Animals)	6
Historic and Cultural Resources	6
Noise and Vibration	6
Parks and Recreation	6
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	5
Other Environmental Effects	5
Project Phasing and Decision Making	5
Agency Coordination	4
Moorage	4
Schedule and Timing	4
Social Impacts and Environmental Justice	4
Superstructure and Roadway Design	4
Wetlands	4
Catastrophic Failure Planning	3
Navigation and Waterways	3
Visual Quality, Aesthetics, Light and Glare	3
Water Quality, Groundwater, Stormwater, and Surface Water	3
Air Quality	2
Pontoon Construction Methods	2
Pontoon Design	2
Pontoon Transportation	2

A summary of the frequently received public scoping comment topics is provided below.

EIS Alternatives, Land Use, and Economics

Most of the comments received during the EPC EIS scoping period expressed support from the community for pontoon construction at the Grays Harbor property due to expected job opportunities. Several comments expressed a priority for using union labor to build the pontoons.

- Consider the need for increased job development in Grays Harbor.
- Support the local economy, including small businesses.
- Encourage union labor.
- Recognize the labor force available in Grays Harbor.
- Clarify the long-term use of the property.

SR 520, Other Projects, Superstructure, and Roadway Design

Several scoping comments articulated concern about the pontoons being able to support all of the SR 520 corridor configurations currently being considered. Others wanted to ensure that the pontoons could accommodate high capacity transit (HCT), as well as other bridge projects.

- Remain flexible for all SR 520 corridor configurations.
- Accommodate future high capacity transit.
- Design pontoons to accommodate other WSDOT floating bridges.

Transportation (Construction and Operation), Noise, and Vibration

Community members highlighted the anticipated impacts on local transportation, requesting improvements for paving of local streets and increased capacity. Others noted increased noise due to traffic and construction.

- Route heavy truck traffic along 8th Street.
- Pave K Street to accommodate local traffic.
- Determine the capacity and reliability of the existing bridges across the Hoquiam River.
- Support a third bridge over the Hoquiam River to accommodate increased traffic volumes.
- Consider noise levels from traffic and construction.

Ecosystems (Plants and Animals)

Public comments addressed the impact of the proposed project on fish, wildlife and species habitat.

- Consider the habitat of Canadian Geese and other birds in the area.
- Consider the impacts to eelgrass.
- Consider the impacts to fish passage.
- Minimize the impacts to shorelines and wetlands.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Comments discussed the history of the Grays Harbor property and the cultural resources of the area.

- Understand the potential historic and cultural resources at and near the property.
- Consider the impacts to sweetgrass, since this species is gathered by local Tribes for traditional basket weaving. Consider opportunities to replant sweetgrass in the area.

Parks and Recreation

Scoping comments also focused on the importance of maintaining public access near the Grays Harbor property for local recreational activity.

- Maintain local recreational access for walking and sightseeing.
- Consider mitigation opportunities to enhance public access to the river and harbor, such as new boardwalks, walkways, signage, and viewing areas.
- Consider future bicycle routes planned around the area.

Additional Comments

As well as the frequently noted public comments outlined above, additional comments will be further explored by the project team:

- Determine the impacts of the three proposed construction methods, including minimizing noise and maintaining flexibility for future uses of the property.
- Continue to evaluate other properties for their ability to meet the needs of the EPC project with fewer environmental impacts.
- Evaluate pontoon vulnerability during moorage.