



Corridor Program

Congestion Relief & Bus Rapid Transit Projects

I-405 Project Area



I-405 Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project SCOPING REPORT

Prepared by

Washington State Department of Transportation

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is scoping?

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) uses the term “scoping” to refer to the process of defining the content, or scope, of major environmental documents. The scoping process is used to explain the project to agencies and the public, to define the range of alternatives that will be analyzed in the document, and to identify the major issues of concern to both regulatory agencies and local citizens.

The I-405 Project Team conducted a scoping meeting for the tribes and federal, state, and local agencies from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on January 25, 2005 in Newcastle, WA. A separate scoping meeting for the general public was held in Bellevue, WA from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the same day.

The legal notice for the public scoping meeting was published on January 9, 2004, stating that WSDOT would receive comments through February 10, 2005. In addition to the legal notice, WSDOT mailed a newsletter to residences and businesses within the project vicinity, informing them of the scoping meeting and comment deadline. There are attached copies of the legal notice, mailers, posters, advertisements, and written comments in Appendix A to this report.

What is the purpose of the Scoping Report?

The purpose of this report is to document the efforts and results of the formal scoping process conducted by WSDOT for the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project. The information in this report can be used by the public, the tribes, and federal, state, and local agencies to ensure that the environmental issues and concerns identified during the scoping process are adequately addressed in the environmental assessment (EA).

How did we gather materials to assemble the report?

Tribes, agencies, and members of the public provided written questions and observations during the comment period, either on

forms provided by the I-405 Project Team, in formal written correspondence, or through email. We also received verbal comments during the two scoping meetings.

What is the history of the project?

How can I access the 2002 Record of Decision?

You can find the ROD at the following web site:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/I-405/resource/I-405%20ROD%20Final.pdf>

In 1998, WSDOT joined with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit), King County, and local governments to develop strategies to reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility in the Interstate 405 (I-405) corridor. In fall 2002, the combined efforts of these entities culminated in the I-405 Corridor Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and FHWA Record of Decision (ROD).

The ROD identified a Selected Alternative that would widen I-405 by as many as two lanes in each direction throughout its 30-mile length. The ultimate configuration of the Selected Alternative includes buffers separating general-purpose lanes from parallel high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes (potentially being used by future high-capacity transit). The design also allows for expanded managed lane operations along I-405.

In 2003, the Washington State Legislature approved a statewide transportation-funding plan called the “nickel package.” The nickel package provided funding for congestion relief projects in three critical traffic hotspots along the I-405 Corridor: Renton, Bellevue, and Kirkland. The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is one of several projects now being advanced as part of a phased implementation of the Selected Alternative.

In keeping with the direction established in the Final EIS and ROD, each of these projects is being evaluated in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA). These EAs will focus on project-level effects.

The EA for the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project will be based on the analysis in the I-405 Corridor Program Final EIS and will describe any substantial new or additional project changes, information, effects, or mitigation measures not identified and analyzed in the corridor-level EIS. However, the project-level EA will not reexamine the corridor-level alternatives, impacts, and mitigation measures evaluated in the corridor-level EIS, or the decisions made in the ROD.

In addition to the NEPA EA, additional documents (e.g., discipline reports) will be prepared that support regulatory compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the permitting requirements of other regulatory agencies.

What alternatives will the EA analyze?

The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project EA will analyze one build alternative and one “no build” or “no action” alternative.

Build Alternative

The build alternative includes one new northbound lane between I-90 and SE 8th Street and one new southbound lane between NE 4th Street and I-90. The new lanes will generally be constructed on the median side of the existing roadway. A new Wilburton tunnel will also be constructed to accommodate the eastward shift of the southbound mainline roadway.

Two bridges in the area will also be widened: one in the northbound direction over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad; and one in the southbound direction over SE 8th Street. In addition, the existing southbound HOV lane exiting at I-90 will be extended to begin in the SE 8th Street vicinity.

The resulting additional capacity through this area will relieve congestion into and out of Bellevue from the south. The project complements the Bellevue Downtown Access project recently completed in the downtown area. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2008 and the new lanes will be open to traffic by 2011.

No Build Alternative

As required by NEPA, the No Build Alternative will be included and evaluated in the EA to establish an existing and future baseline for comparing the effects associated with the Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative is assumed to maintain the status quo, meaning only routine activities such as road maintenance, repair, and minor safety improvements would take place between now and 2030. The No Build Alternative does not include improvements that would increase roadway capacity, reduce congestion, or greatly improve safety on I-405.

What environmental topics will the EA cover?

The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project EA will include project-level analysis for the following environmental topics:

- Air Quality
- Geology, Soils and Groundwater
- Surface Water, Floodplains and Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Fish and Aquatic Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Upland Vegetation and Wildlife
- Noise
- Energy
- Hazardous Materials
- Traffic and Transportation
- Public Services and Utilities
- Land Use Patterns, Land Use Plans and Policies
- Social Elements
- Economics
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) Resources
- Historic, Cultural, and Archaeological Resources
- Visual Quality
- Cumulative Effects

What are the key project milestones?

Public and Agency Scoping – Winter 2005

Technical Studies – Winter/Spring 2005

Issue EA – Spring 2006

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) – Fall 2006

Begin Construction – Spring 2008

Project Opens – Spring 2011

2. PUBLIC SCOPING

What are the general public concerns?

Public response generated by the scoping meetings focused on four key issues:

- Noise
- Traffic and circulation
- Air quality
- Drainage and water quality

“We would request that the environmental impact statement for this project include community noise considerations with some new noise measurements to be taken in our community.”

**—William Easterbrook
Surrey Downs resident
since 1959**

Possible increased community noise levels dominated respondent concerns. Of 66 responses received, 28 specifically addressed noise. Of this total, 14 respondents advocated the use of barrier walls or berms to mitigate the effects; four suggested the use of sound deadening materials such as “quiet asphalt.” Many respondents were concerned about the noise effects of night construction, and one respondent supported the imposition of speed limits to control noise, as well as higher taxes for louder vehicles.

Respondents concerned about traffic and circulation identified intersections where congestion might occur and expressed a need for carefully determined detour routes during the construction period.

Air quality issues encompassed debris, dust, and particulate matter created by the construction process as well as vehicular emissions.

Several respondents also voiced concerns about project impacts to the Mercer Slough drainage and an existing east-west stormwater drain under I-405 that passes under a property containing a 10,000-gallon fuel storage tank.

While the four topics identified above dominated the public comments, a diverse range of other issues was raised as well. Several individuals addressed aesthetic or design concerns and a few commented on light and glare that might accrue from walls constructed to mitigate noise effects or from illumination necessary for night construction. Several respondents indicated unilateral support for the project.

We have reproduced all written comments below (including comments received via e-mail) and have responded as appropriate. WSDOT also offered the public the opportunity to comment through a perforated card distributed as part of a published newsletter.

Other individuals used preprinted forms distributed during an open house meeting on January 25, 2005. These people answered the four questions we have listed below. In the pages that follow, we have abbreviated the questions as indicated.

Question 1 (Q1): What aspects of the environment do you think should be studied and why?

Question 2 (Q2): Please describe any concerns you may have about potential environmental impacts.

Question 3 (Q3): What measures should WSDOT consider to reduce potential impacts?

Question 4 (Q4): Do you have any other comments about the proposed project?

What are the responses to specific comments?

Alexander, N.

► **Comment:** *I don't see why you won't put your time money and energy in the monorail project. This is what the voters want. Since I live in south Seattle area, I'm not interested in these projects. I am ONLY interested in Monorail that will serve this area. Your projects are only piecemeal efforts to our traffic problems. Monorail is the answer. Current system is and has not been working. Why don't you see this?*

► **Response:** The EIS examined several high capacity systems, including monorail. BRT was selected because this system operates in improved access HOV lanes presently servicing I-405, I-90, and SR 520. By utilizing existing infrastructure, the BRT system can be implemented more economically than monorail or other similar forms of mass transit, and it can serve more destinations with fewer impacts.

Allen, William

► **Comment:**

Q1: *The noise impact on people living west of I-405 and North of 520.*

Q2: *This area has been on edge of noise limits for over 10 years.*

Q3: *Use of "quiet asphalt" in the area of residences.*

Q4: *Glad to see improvements in traffic flow.*

Allen, William (continued)

► **Response:** The EA for the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project will address potential noise effects in the area generally between I-90 and SE 8th Street in the City of Bellevue. For information on I-405 improvements north of SR 520, please see the Kirkland Nickel Project Environmental Assessment (February 2005). Please contact the I-405 Project Office at 425-456-8500 for information on where to view or purchase copies of that document. The environmental assessment for the Bellevue Nickel Project will discuss the feasibility of “quieter pavement” technology to reduce vehicle noise levels in the project area.

Anonymous 1

► **Comment:** *Good job!*

► **Response:** Thank you for your comment.

Anonymous 2

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Why not study the previous environmental impact statement used to prepare for construction of 405 and subsequent reconstruction projects, i.e. S-curves, Bellevue multiple exits?*

Q2: *After the above study, none.*

Q3: *Why not study in preparation for I-605?*

Q4: *Bring it on. It's about time.*

► **Response:** The environmental analysis for the Bellevue Nickel EA will build on prior environmental analysis conducted for the I-405 corridor, most recently the I-405 Corridor Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued in fall 2002. The I-605 proposal was considered in a separate transportation study. The eastside bypass freeway was considered in the screening of alternatives for the corridor EIS. The EIS did not carry the bypass alternative forward because it is outside the Urban Growth Area; it would not save time for north-south travel; it would have large environmental impacts; and the benefits would not outweigh the costs.

Anonymous 3

► **Comment:** *“Railroad Trestle” Ugly and make them a work of art.*

► **Response:** The Bellevue Nickel project will not alter or affect the existing railroad trestle.

Anonymous 4

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise and ways of mitigation. This should include the option of adding a "LID."*

Q2: *Noise is a major impact. Impact to Mercer Slough from additional runoff and adjoining creeks.*

Q3: *Construct a LID like Mercer Island – don't say that there isn't sufficient \$\$!*

► **Response:** Noise will be an important issue addressed in the EA. The I-405 team will be using an FHWA-approved noise model (Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5) to evaluate noise effects on noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of I-405 between I-90 and SE 8th Street. If long-term noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers.

Anonymous 5

► **Comment:** *Please have the noise analyst look at possible reduction of reflected noise from the new Wilburton tunnel.*

► **Response:** WSDOT does not normally address reflected noise unless two parallel walls are proposed on either side of a roadway and the two walls are closer to each other than a distance equal to ten times the wall height. That situation is not expected to occur on the Bellevue Nickel project. With regard to the issue of reflected noise from the new Wilburton tunnel, WSDOT does not expect the tunnel structure to noticeably increase noise levels over existing conditions.

Anonymous 6

► **Comment:** *The environment is not my concern. I would like to see some traffic relief. Washington has some of the worst traffic in the U.S. with all of the taxes we expend it should have been fixed years ago.*

► **Response:** WSDOT is committed to relieving congestion consistent with applicable laws and available funding.

Anonymous 7

► **Comment:** *All four of the projects, by the time they are finished, they'll be outmoded or outdated! Just like I-5 was.*

► **Response:** Project construction is primarily limited by the availability of funding. Funding is available to complete improvements at congestion hotspots. The current plan uses traffic models to forecast out to 2030 to help prioritize projects. The improvements made at these hot spots are the first step toward the Master Plan. These initial projects will operate better than if no improvements are made; the projects will not solve all the congestion problems in the corridor.

Anonymous 8

► **Comment:** *"Nickel Project" how dumb do you think the public is about how their money is spent? Very tacky title to place on this project.*

► **Response:** The term 'nickel' in the name of these projects refers to the funding source for these projects, the legislative action called the 'nickel package.' This funding package is the five cent (nickel) gas tax. WSDOT's motivation in naming the projects 'nickel projects' is to demonstrate where the public's nickel gas tax is being invested.

Anonymous 9

► **Comment:** *You will do what you want no matter what tax payers want. We vote it down and you do it anyway and we all pay for unnecessary items.*

► **Response:** Steady population growth in Washington State has created considerable traffic congestion on our freeways. The state legislature has agreed that these projects are necessary and should be funded in order to improve quality of life for Washington residents.

Anonymous 10

► **Comment:** *Please make sure it looks good. No more ugly gray concrete! Use plenty of landscaping and good design! We have to live with this for years. Olympia is a good example.*

► **Response:** WSDOT is incorporating context sensitive solutions into the Nickel Improvement Projects where appropriate. Context sensitive solutions (CSS) are techniques used to provide a visually pleasing quality to road projects. CSS involves all partners working together to develop transportation facilities that fit with the physical surroundings and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.

Anonymous 10 (continued)

For more information on context sensitive solutions please see our website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/csd/>.

Anonymous 11

► **Comment:** *Please do not consider using the BNSF right-of-way for any but pedestrian use! A hiking trail from Renton to Woodinville would be so great!*

► **Response:** The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project will not change the current use of the BNSF railroad right-of-way, nor will it preclude future use of the right-of-way as a pedestrian trail.

Bennett, Renay

► **Comment:** *These are my personal concerns regarding environmental issues pertaining to the expansion of 405.*

1. *More noise than we already have.*
2. *Air pollution.*
3. *Impacts to Mercer Slough wildlife and longterm viability.*
4. *Historically significant places and objects.*
5. *Absence of long-term planning and its effect on our community and environment.*
6. *Cost/benefit analysis.*

Thank you for accepting comments via email!

► **Response:** The environmental assessment process will investigate your concerns in discipline reports focused on noise, air quality, surface water, wetlands, wildlife, historic places, and land-use planning. Planning for the I-405 corridor extends out to the year 2030.

WSDOT has developed the Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) based on the latest cost estimating experience around the country and elsewhere in the world. CEVP is an intense workshop process, somewhat resembling value engineering. A team of top engineers from private firms, public agencies from around the country, risk managers, and WSDOT engineers examine each project. WSDOT follows this process yearly in order to be on top of changes in industry costs, i.e., rise in steel costs, but also to understand the project's risks and how they have changed.

Bennett, Renay (continued)

A basic benefit cost analysis was conducted on this project. The analysis is how WSDOT prioritizes its improvement projects across the state during the planning stage. This analysis showed that this project had a 3:1 benefit cost ratio; traditionally a 1:1 is considered good. It should be noted, however, that this project is part of an overall corridor improvement program that will add two new lanes in each direction.

**Bennett, Renay, President
108th Ave. S.E. Neighborhood Association**

► **Comment:** *This letter represents the 108th Ave. S.E. Neighborhood Association's Board scoping comments for the environmental review regarding the 405-freeway expansion plans.*

The 108th Ave. S.E. Neighborhood Association is charged with the protection and improvement of our community. We are located west of the Surrey Downs Community, between Main Street and Bellevue Way, and share common boundaries with them as well as overlapping membership.

The most pressing problem in our neighborhood regarding this proposed expansion of 405 is noise. Though many residents have attempted to mitigate the noise problem with double pane windows, plantings, etc., noise levels are still extremely loud.

The addition of more lanes will bring more traffic, and, of course, more noise. This is not a new concern to WSDOT, or to any other state with regard to freeway expansion. It is our hope that WSDOT will work to protect our neighborhood from more noise as they have in the past, for instance in Mercer Island, and utilize the best and latest noise abatement technologies.

Our residents look forward to hearing WSDOT's solutions to our community's well-being and improved viability.

► **Response:** The FHWA-approved noise model (Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5) that will be used to evaluate noise effects will include noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of the I-405 roadway between I-90 and SE 8th Street. The 500-foot distance threshold for including noise-sensitive receptors is based on the fact that noise-sensitive receptors beyond that distance would experience no benefit from a constructed noise barrier.

Bennett, Renay, President
108th Ave. S.E. Neighborhood Association (continued)

The residential area west of, and including, the Surrey Downs community is outside the area included in the noise analysis. Nevertheless, the noise section of the environmental assessment will include a qualitative assessment of the existing and potential noise effects on the Surrey Downs Community.

Bennett, Ron

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise impacts to residential areas west of I-405.*

Q2: *Noise from I-405 is a serious problem 24 hours a day. The addition of two additional lanes will exasperate the problem.*

Q3: *Noise wall installed on west side of 112th Ave SE from SE 6th South to S.E. 12th or S.E. 14th.*

► **Response:** The feasibility of noise walls will be evaluated along the entire length of the project and on both sides of I-405. Please also see the response to the comment from Renay Bennett on page 10 above.

Braymer, Lael

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise abatement for Norwood Village. Planting native plants along freeway as on Mercer Island.*

Q2: *Increase in noise that will come from increase in traffic.*

Q3: *Building a "noise" wall on top of the existing earth berm that was constructed by the highway department to assist Norwood Village in noise reduction.*

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will evaluate the potential for increased noise levels at Norwood Village. If long-term noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers using the Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5. Please note that the existing earth berm is not considered a noise berm.

"My home borders the freeway wall in this area. I would like information on how the impact on our air quality will be measured and mitigated"

—Linda Parrish

Buck, Carol

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise pollution – air quality. We request monitoring existing noise levels at Mercer Park Condominiums – Carol Buck*

Q2: *Concerns: Increased traffic on 118th Ave SE between SE 8th and 405 during project. Noise level and pollution increase from 405.*

Q3: *Construct noise barriers.*

► **Response:** We will consider your request for sampling existing noise levels at the Mercer Park Condominiums. We will also report the results of noise and air quality effects analysis in the environmental assessment for the Bellevue Nickel Project. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers using the Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5. The environmental assessment will also include analysis of existing and future air quality conditions with an emphasis on the health and welfare effects of carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter. We will assess the effects of the Bellevue Nickel Project on traffic volumes of parallel and intersecting streets (including 118th Ave. SE) as well.

Burroughs, John

► **Comment:** *When will we start an I-605 project that bypassed the whole Seattle, Renton, Bellevue, Woodinville, Tacoma, area? 405 is no longer a bypass but an interurban thoroughfare.*

► **Response:** The I-605 proposal was considered in a separate transportation study. The eastside bypass freeway was considered in the screening of alternatives for the corridor EIS. The EIS did not carry the bypass alternative forward because it is outside the Urban Growth Area; it would not save time for north-south travel; it would have large environmental impacts; and the benefits would not outweigh the costs.

Casto, Walt, Jr.

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise during const. and noise of traffic.*

Q2: *With increased traffic capacity noise levels will escalate.*

Q3: *Sound walls and Sound proof windows and as much as I dislike the potential sleepless nights, construction at night to ease congestion.*

Casto, Walt, Jr. (continued)

Q4. *This is or will be the second time in 14 years that I-405 has been widened. Yes I-405 needs more capacity at this choke point; however, sound issues due to this increased capacity must be addressed.*

Will construction of this project be at night? (think sound proof windows) for those residents/neighborhoods affected or impacted by the roads noise now and into the future with the increased traffic.

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will include a description of measures that can be taken to reduce noise from both short-term construction activities and long-term operation. If noise levels from long-term operation are predicted to exceed FHWA criteria, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers using the Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5. Some construction activities may occur at night. The contractor will be responsible for implementing measures to address nighttime noise.

Cohee, Joan

► **Comment:** *I am very concerned about sound (noise) and light pollution. I live above berm area (no concrete walls) in Woodridge and do not want more noise and light at night. I have emailed you about Phoenix AZ sound mitigation (using recycled tires on road surface) project.*

► **Response:** Please see the response to comments from Walt Casto Jr. on page 14 above. The environmental assessment will include an evaluation of potential visual effects, including the possibility of increased light and glare.

Dexheimer, Derek

► **Comment:** *All those projects are short-term fixes for a permanent problem. They will be complete after oil production has peaked and begun its terminal decline. Money that must be spent on real solutions, like mass transit, is being squandered in these projects.*

► **Response:** Although the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is a road widening project, the overall Master Plan for the I-405 corridor includes multi-modal approaches to transit.

Diener, John

► **Comment:** *I'm writing in regards to the possible expansion on 405 and the likelihood of increased noise and pollution that will impact a large group of home owners in what are very high assessed neighborhoods.*

Diener, John (continued)

While projects like the noise barriers along many parts of 405 helped with the decibel levels (in some cases 85+ decibels) and benefited home owners with helping in securing their property values and quality of life, simply widening a major freeway without taking into account the impact to what are substantial real estate investments seems wrong.

Of course you need to weigh the overall benefits of each project and how it either improves or negatively impacts home owners and neighborhoods, but I really haven't seen these particular issues addressed in a substantial manner. If we had a system where a negative impact was reflected in a property's assessed value that directly compensated a home owner in a real time fashion for the negative impact, that would be a start to compensation. However everyone knows our system isn't designed this way and is usually quite the opposite. This is the same with large and small projects. By the time it gets to the public arena many tax dollars and city as well as state people hours have been allocated to promote and project the desired affect and or approval. The average citizen filling a card out of voicing an opinion usually doesn't have a desired outcome, even if everyone recognizes the truth.

I only bring up property values because I'm confident increased noise and pollution to certain neighborhoods and decreased property values can not be avoided with such projects unless measures are taken to address it. And unless the tax payer and property owners are reasonably evaluated and compensated more thought should go into such projects. If you saw a substantial increase in noise in neighborhoods that border, or are up or downhill, from a subject project your value will likely decrease.

I've tried, and in most cases, sold homes bordering in some fashion I-405, 520, 18, 167 and all have had marketability issues with traffic noise and pollution that likely affected value. It's recognized that most of these homes were built after these roads were constructed. But there's a big difference in buying or investing in a home and neighborhood at a value that reflects a certain neighborhood and surrounding area when bought as compared to a change after you've bought. I think of all the Port Packages including increase insulation, new windows, etc. to address a certain impact. I also think the good people and property owners who fight modification to flight paths, runways, etc. have the same concerns.

Lets say you're research is incorrect, like the supposed known flaws in Bellevue's modeling studies, or how certain definitions are modified with out public input to justify a desired outcome. Let's say the increased noise and pollution does impact a property owner by \$75,000.

Diener, John (continued)

Who compensates the home owner? Who compensates the property owners who have in some cases been devastated by the CAO that most knew was and still believe is severally flawed?

All I can ask as someone who would likely be impacted by this increased noise and pollution is great thought should be given before moving forward.

Thank you....John Diener

► **Response:** We appreciate your feedback. You are correct that WSDOT does not investigate the potential effect of traffic noise on property values as part of the environmental assessment process. The emphasis of the analysis in the environmental assessment is on human hearing and possible health effects.

Dykstra, Susan

► **Comment:** *I totally support: 1) I-405 Bell. Nickel Project, 2) I-405 Renton Project, 3) SR 518 SeaTac to I-5 project.*

► **Response:** Thank you for your comment.

Easterbrook, William

► **Comment:** *I am attaching a letter and attachments requesting that highway noise be considered in our community.*

My wife and I have resided in Surrey Downs since 1959. Over the years we have noticed that highway noise has greatly increased. There was a big jump when the highway was changed near the Wilburton tunnel in the late 1990s. In 1998 the city of Bellevue made some community noise measurements that indicated noise was nearing the threshold of allowable noise for the community. Since that time there has been a large increase in traffic and corresponding noise that we experience. I am attaching a copy of the noise measurements that were taken on our deck, facing the highway, and from a deck to the South of us on S.E. 9th.

Noise is now affecting our property values as indicated by a real estate broker that sells in our area. I am attaching a letter from her that relates some recent experience that she has had regarding noise.

We would request that the environmental impact statement for this project include community noise considerations with some new noise measurement to be taken in our community. We can show you the exact locations of the previous measurements. The project should include provisions to minimize highway noise affecting us.

Easterbrook William (continued)

There are some ways to reduce highway noise that might be considered for the project. The first is to reduce direct line of sight from the highway surface to our homes by berms, walls, etc. The existing retaining walls on the east of the highway near the Wilburton tunnel seem to focus noise across to our community. If a new lane is added in that area maybe some simple berms or walls on the west side of the highway would mitigate noise. Also, in the region between Main Street and SE 8th large, flat surfaced walls could be avoided. Maybe simply inclining new walls and breaking up the wall surface would help. Lastly, highway surfacing has some effect on noise and maybe a quieter surface could be found for a portion of the highway.

Please include this letter as an input to the Environmental Impact Study Process.

► **Response:** Please see our response to comments from Renay Bennett (page 10) and Ron Bennett (page 12) on noise walls and quieter surface pavement, above.

Elo, Heidi

► **Comment:** *We live nearby in Bellevue to the Wilburton tunnel. From what I see this project will not start now until 2008- is that correct or I am misreading the info? Also what is the current plan to add this extra lane, i.e., will the Wilburton tunnel be taken down and the train rerouted- or do they know yet? Last if those decisions have not been made of all of the specific route logistics do you know roughly when that will occur?*

► **Response:** Yes, the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project will begin construction in 2008. Currently, I-405 team members are engaged in environmental studies, design work, and public outreach on the Bellevue project.

The I-405 Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project will add one northbound lane between I-90 and SE 8th Street and one southbound lane between NE 4th Street and I-90. The project reconstructs, and moves, the Wilburton tunnel, improving the existing “Wilburton Weave,” and taking the tunnel to its ultimate configuration as described in the I-405 Master Plan (see Master Plan description in website). Two bridges will also be widened in the Bellevue project, one northbound over the BNSF railroad and one southbound over SE 8th Street. The existing southbound HOV lane exiting at I-90 will be extended to begin in the SE 8th Street vicinity.

Elo, Heidi (continued)

The plans right now are for the existing Wilburton tunnel to remain and be used by WSDOT Maintenance. With the exception of maintenance access roads to and from the tunnel, the existing highway pavement will be removed from the approach to the tunnel.

A new tunnel structure will be placed on the median side (the area between the southbound and northbound lanes) of the existing tunnel and the highway lanes will be shifted to go through it. This new structure will carry all of the highway traffic under the railroad. The railroad alignment will remain in its current configuration and will not be rerouted.

Fender, Denton

► **Comment:** *Just do it within budget and on time!*

► **Response:** WSDOT is very focused on keeping projects within budget and on time.

Feri, W. R.

► **Comment:** *HOV lanes cause the biggest problems on 405. HOV lanes stop all three lanes at 167 and again at I-5. This is a bummer. I pay the same taxes as the beautiful HOVer. No wonder we have road rage.*

► **Response:** HOV lanes provide a benefit to traffic in that they move more people than general-purpose lanes. WSDOT recognizes the problem of weaves that occur from HOV to general purpose (GP) lanes as drivers enter and exit the freeway. The Master Plan includes direct HOV ramps at both the SR 167 and I-5 interchanges. With completion of the Master Plan, HOV vehicles will no longer have to weave across traffic and cause congestion at these interchanges.

Hal Woosley Properties

► **Comment:**

Q1: *What level of pollution will be reduced by expanding the roadway (due to lessened congestions)?*

We need to comply with the Clean Air Act.

Q2: *The recently built sound wall reflects road noise to my neighborhood to the west. Please mitigate this new noise.*

Q4: *Build it ASAP.*

Hal Woosley Properties (continued)

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will include analysis of existing and future air quality conditions and will emphasize the health and welfare effects of carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter.

An FHWA-required noise model will be used to evaluate noise effects from the Bellevue Nickel Project. The model will include noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of the I-405 roadway between I-90 and SE 8th Street. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA criteria, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers.

Haman, Donna

► **Comment:** *I have a comment about allowing minivans and SUVs to be sold without proper mud flaps. Stop it!*

► **Response:** WSDOT has no authority over the type of mud flaps that are put on vehicles.

Huo, Kevin

► **Comment:** *Please consider to add high fence and trees to reduce the traffic noise in I-405 and I-90 intersection areas.*

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will describe measures to reduce traffic noise and will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers.

June, Reid

► **Comment:** *The highway noise level northbound is unacceptable. Most is tire-pavement generated. Could a “softer” surface help this?*

► **Response:** The environmental assessment for the Bellevue Nickel Project will discuss the feasibility of “quieter pavement” technology to reduce vehicle noise levels in the project area. Please see our response to William Allen on page 7 above.

Kaufman, Robert and Dawn

► **Comment:** *This is what voted for – do these projects! Especially the one in Bellevue. We experience this bottle-neck constantly – read it is rated in the top 5 worst in the U.S.!*

► **Response:** Thank you for your comment.

“The highway noise level northbound is unacceptable. Most is tire-pavement generated. Could a “softer” surface help this?”

—Reid June

Koning, Frans

► **Comment:** *In general please always provide sound barriers between freeway and neighborhoods.*

► **Response:** WSDOT follows specific FHWA guidance and criteria when analyzing noise effects and potential mitigation. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA criteria, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers. For details on WSDOT's statewide traffic noise analysis and abatement policy and procedures, please visit the following website:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/Northwest/rp&s/environmental/ae/policies.htm>

Lawrence, Chad, and Kimberly Mauldin

► **Comment:** *I am writing to express my concerns over the I-405 Nickel Project between SE 8th in Bellevue and I-90. If possible, would you please let me know when you receive this e-mail so that I'll know my comments will be included in the formal scoping record?*

My primary concern is over traffic noise, and what effect adding lanes in both directions will have on this existing problem. My wife and I live along 108th Ave and SE 12 Street, over a half mile west of the interstate. Even now, the noise from the freeway is incredibly loud. We have taken many steps already to reduce this noise (new laminated-glass windows, 5/8in thick drywall, resilient channel) and we can still hear a large amount of noise inside the house, particularly on cool rainy days (which are, of course, common in this area). Even though we are at least 1/2 mile from the freeway, the freeway's layout seems to direct its noise directly toward us and the Surrey Downs/108th Ave SE neighborhood. The surface of the freeway tilts to the west which causes the entire surface of the pavement and all of the cars' tires (and the sound they produce) to be in direct line of sight with our house. The tilt of the roadway, along with the retaining wall and hill that line the east side of the freeway, also reflects sound that normally would dissipate to the east directly at our neighborhood such that we receive not only direct line-of-sight noise but also lots of reflected noise. We think that the problem is bad enough right now to warrant the construction of a noise reducing wall and installation of "quiet pavement" from SE 8th street to I-90, and are extremely concerned that the addition of lanes without any noise-reducing measures will make the problem unbearable.

Lawrence, Chad, and Kimberly Mauldin (continued)

As you make plans for I-405 lane expansion, we sincerely hope that you will consider the quality of life in our neighborhood. We love living in the area, and hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to make our neighborhood better, rather than worse. Thank you for considering our input.

► **Response:** An FHWA-approved noise model (i.e., Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5) will be used to evaluate noise effects. The model will include noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of the I-405 roadway between I-90 and SE 8th Street. The residential area west of I-405, including the Surrey Downs/108th Ave SE neighborhood is outside the geographic boundary of this study area. Nevertheless, the noise section of the environmental assessment will include a qualitative assessment of the existing and potential noise impacts on the Surrey Downs community.

Lemas, Rena

► **Comment:** *Our home, along with a dozen others, are located on the East side of the 405, near the (southbound) entrance to I-90. We are concerned about the additional lanes noise level. How will this be addressed?*

► **Response:** An FHWA-approved noise model (i.e., Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5) will be used to evaluate noise effects. The model will include noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of the I-405 roadway between I-90 and SE 8th Street. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA criteria, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers.

Limieux, Shaun and Josephine

► **Comment:** *We would like information about what sound barriers will be used in regards to adding one more lane between SE 8th and I-90.*

► **Response:** Please see response to Rena Lemas, above.

Loring, James

► **Comment:** *Within the scope of WSDOT's Environmental Assessment for the I-405 Bellevue "Nickel Project," adverse impacts - and potential adverse impacts -to historic and archeological resources within the study area must be taken under serious consideration and analysis.*

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to the next phases of the Environmental Assessment process.

Loring, James (continued)

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will investigate the potential for impacts to historical and archaeological resources located within and adjacent to the project area.

Martin, Patricia

► **Comment:** *Even though it will be a great inconvenience during construction years, these projects are very much needed. Bravo!*

► **Response:** Thank you for your comment.

McDonald, Jannine M.

► **Comment:**

Q1: *The wetland area between the north and south bound lanes of I-405 south of the SE 8th Exit should be studied because its eventual outfall, as I understand it, runs to the Mercer Slough. It is part of the local system of water ways that have formed as water runs off Wilburton Hill down to the slough.*

Q2: a. *One of my concerns is that if the water from Wilburton Hill is diverted or placed in a holding tank/pond, it will affect the water level of the wetlands adjacent to the slough and possibly the slough itself. The slough is a wonderful natural area that the City of Bellevue has made available to the public through many related public projects. I believe it is important to preserve it and find a design solution for I-405 that does not negatively impact this unique place.*

b. *My second concern is the destruction of the tree covered median and additional scar in the earth that will be created by moving all six south-bound lanes east of the existing lanes south of the SE 8th Exit.*

Q3: a. *To mitigate potential impacts with the existing wetland, mentioned above, WSDOT should study design layouts that place the roadway further west of the existing wetland, enabling it to remain. Drainage culverts should also be placed to direct the water to its current outflow to minimize the impact on the slough.*

b. *To mitigate large removal of trees and earth in the median, mentioned above, WSDOT should study road designs that add only the additional two lanes and required shoulder eastward,*

“The [Mercer] slough is a wonderful natural area that the City of Bellevue has made available to the public through many related public projects. I believe it is important to preserve it and find a design solution for I-405 that does not negatively impact this unique place.”

—Jannine McDonald

adjacent to the existing road bed. In their studies WSDOT should look at extending the Wilburton tunnel across these new lanes instead of creating an entirely new bridge.

McDonald, Jannine M. (continued)

Q4: I believe it is important to consider reducing the scope of the Wilburton tunnel expansion by only adding the lanes needed and not creating an entire new six lane plus shoulders roadway.

The money for the improvements to I-405 would better serve the public if the bottle neck created by five lanes reducing to two plus HOV to continue south across I-90 was addressed. It was puzzling to see the statistical analysis at the open house confirm the I-90 interchange was a bottle neck, but nothing was proposed to solve this problem. I understand funding is limited, but widening the Wilburton tunnel without allowing for vehicular flow south of the tunnel is only a partial fix. Both the Wilburton tunnel and the I-90 interchange need workable solutions. Thank you for providing citizens with the opportunity to comment on this project.

► Response:

Q1: We have delineated this wetland area. This wetland drains into an unnamed stream that is a tributary of Mercer Slough. Potential effects to the wetland and the unnamed stream will be analyzed as part of the project.

Q2: We will carefully analyze the effects of the project's stormwater management system on Mercer Slough and the associated Mercer Slough wetland complex. Efforts to minimize negative impacts to Mercer Slough are being included in the design.

We will carefully document the effect of vegetation removal on both the existing visual quality of the corridor and existing wildlife habitat.

Q3: The southbound lane configuration has been studied extensively and the current configuration reflects an alignment that minimizes effects to the median wetland area. Other configurations studied and rejected included configurations that would have displaced homes located to the west of the existing tunnel.

The existing outfalls to Mercer Slough will remain in their location and configuration.

The Wilburton tunnel is a major constraint on this project. Widening the existing tunnel is infeasible and replacement of the tunnel in place with a wider tunnel cannot be accomplished without large effects to highway and railway traffic.

Q4: The new Wilburton tunnel is being designed for a future seven-lane section in accordance with the ultimate master plan vision of the I-405 corridor.

McDonald, Jannine M. (continued)

We agree with the assessment that this project is only a partial fix for I-405. Unfortunately, funding constraints only allow us to incrementally construct projects with the ultimate goal of reaching the vision that was established under the EIS for the I-405 corridor. Future funding packages will address the constraint at I-90.

McMurtrey, Roy

► **Comment:** *Please! NO MORE ROADS! No more asphalt. No more "improvements" until we have subway system for light rail!*

► **Response:** The EIS examined several high capacity systems, including monorail. BRT was selected because this system operates in improved access HOV lanes presently servicing I-405, I-90, and SR 520. By utilizing existing infrastructure, the BRT system can be implemented more economically than monorail or other similar forms of mass transit, and it can serve more destinations with fewer impacts.

Meier, Lillian

► **Comment:** *Isn't this a never-ending situation? It appears projects are to add lanes for what usually are primarily single occupancy vehicles. Why not try working with public transportation to improve ridership – this improves social, environmental, and economic issues in the NW. Bus schedules and routes are confining. My idea along the lines of "transit" centers what about shuttle services to and from highway access points (home to work – door to door) in pilot areas like downtown Bellevue, Boeing, or South (Kent) industrial areas to improve ridership? Maybe a group of select volunteers in target area and then big publicity.*

► **Response:** WSDOT is very interested in multi-modal solutions to traffic congestion and has incorporated such ideas into the Master Plan for the I-405 corridor. For example, WSDOT concluded that BRT was the best option for improving public transportation service within the I-405 corridor. This decision was supported by Metro Transit, Sound Transit, the FTA, and the FHWA as documented in the I-405 Corridor Program EIS.

Morris, Marjorie

► **Comment:** *It's unfortunate there's only plans for 1 north and southbound lanes. Other projects seem adequate.*

Morris, Marjorie (continued)

► **Response:** The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is being advanced as one of the highest-priority congestion relief projects in the I-405 corridor. This project, however, it is only an initial step toward full implementation of the I-405 corridor program.

Nelson, Doris

► **Comment:** *We in Norwood Village are of course worried about the noise level getting worse that it already is.*

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will evaluate the potential for increased noise levels at Norwood Village. If long-term noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers using the Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5. Please note that the existing earth berm is not considered a noise berm.

Okdale, Roger

► **Comment:**

Q1 : *The noise.*

Q2: *We cannot use our outdoor spaces.*

Q3: *Build higher and more complete (no gaps) barrier walls.*

Q4: *It also sends a lot of dirty rubber over our homes, decks, walkways.*

The noise coming from I-405 into our yard is so loud that it is unpleasant, difficult and mostly impossible, to use our outdoor spaces. Do not enlarge I-405 in this Bellevue area until you solve this invasive problem.

► **Response:** We will report the results of noise and air quality effects analysis in the environmental assessment for the Bellevue Nickel Project. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers using the Traffic Noise Model Version 2.5. The environmental assessment will also include analysis of existing and future air quality conditions with an emphasis on the health and welfare effects of carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter.

Parrish, Linda

► **Comment:** *My home borders the freeway wall in this area. I would like information on how the impact on our air quality will be measured and mitigated.*

Parrish, Linda (continued)

► **Response:** The environmental assessment will include qualitative analysis of existing and future air quality conditions and will discuss the effects of carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter.

Pearson, Jack

► **Comment:** *I-405 should have two more lanes added in each direction. HOV lanes should be eliminated. This will stop the “stop and go” traffic at rush hour and reduce air pollution.*

► **Response:** The I-405 Master Plan will add at least two lanes in each direction along the length of the I-405 corridor. The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is one of the first steps toward implementing the Master Plan. The I-405 Record of Decision recommended a balanced multi-modal approach, including HOV facilities, to resolve transportation issues along the I-405 corridor. HOV lanes move more people than general-purpose lanes and therefore provide transportation alternatives for those people willing to carpool, vanpool, and use mass transit. By encouraging transit, carpools, and vanpools, fewer vehicles use the road and more traffic travels at higher speeds, therefore less air pollution is generated.

Perry, Mike

► **Comment:** *I would prefer to see the “Wilburton tunnel” deleted/removed and a simple bridge for the tracks built. The existing tunnel has always seemed to play a factor in the slowing of traffic in this area.*

► **Response:** WSDOT investigated a railroad bridge versus a tunnel structure. Some of the findings included:

- BNSF did not support a railroad bridge but preferred a tunnel structure
- The severe skew of the railroad increases the cost for a railroad bridge
- Potential future uses of the railroad corridor are limited with a railroad bridge
- Noise issues are likely more favorable with the tunnel

The existing tunnel does appear to play a role in the slowing of traffic in the project area. This situation is most likely due to the constricted shoulder widths within the tunnel. The natural tendency for drivers is to slow down as they pass through the tunnel.

Perry, Mike (continued)

The new tunnel will have full width lanes and shoulders and will appear substantially wider than the existing tunnel. This should help reduce the tendency of drivers to slow down as they enter the tunnel.

Peterson, Bill and Lorrie

► **Comment:** *Lid over I-405 between main and NE 8th like Mercer Island residents enjoy. Complete widening project ASAP. Use lots of landscaping throughout project. Preserve opens space for residents and businesses to enjoy throughout Bellevue. Incorporate art. Beautify and use grand entrances to Bellevue not just cement. Linear parks.*

► **Response:** WSDOT is incorporating context sensitive solutions into the Nickel Improvement Projects where appropriate. Context sensitive solutions (CSS) are techniques used to provide a visually pleasing quality to road projects. CSS involves all partners working together to develop transportation facilities that fit with the physical surroundings and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. For more information on context sensitive solutions please see our website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/csd/>.

Plummer, David

► **Comment:** *Delete all these projects as they will only increase congestion on all segments of I-405, both N-bound and S-bound.*

► **Response:** WSDOT has evaluated the projects effects and determined that the benefits outweigh any potential negative secondary effects for traffic. The Environmental Assessment will contain a complete discussion of the benefits of this project.

Rawley, Fred

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise and road grit pollution.*

Q2: *As Administrative Board President I represent owners of the Mercer Park Condo development (122 units); and we are extremely concerned about the noise and grit levels which are already extremely high.*

Q3: *A sound wall along this section (on west side for us) is a must. (note there are also 3 other developments along 118th Ave SE, plus some single family homes, etc.).*

Q4: *Not at this time. Note that I am retired and would appreciate an opportunity to show your noise tester the area.*

Rawley, Fred (continued)

► **Response:** Please see the response to comments from Carol Buck, page 13 above. The issue of road grit and other particulate matter will be addressed in the air quality section of the EA.

**Rawley, Fred, President
Mercer Park Homeowner's Association**

► **Comment:** *We represent the 122 homeowners of the Mercer Park Homeowner's Association. We are located at 2500 – 118 Ave S.E. Avenue, Bellevue. Our proximity to the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project leads us to write you regarding our concerns surrounding the impact of this improvement project on our living environment.*

As homeowners living adjacent to this project we encourage you to study the following environment aspects of this project.

1. *Increased noise levels – both during and post construction.*
2. *Air pollution due to construction debris, dust, and particulate mater.*
3. *Light level increases – both during and post construction (i.e., a constant “glow” on our eastern horizon.*
4. *Migration of undesirable wildlife (i.e., rats, ants, raccoon, etc.).*
5. *Negative impact on housing salability, both during and post construction.*

We have concerns regarding:

1. *Increased freeway noise levels once the project is completed and 405 is approximately 5 – 15 feet closer to our property line.*
2. *Impact of dust and debris, caused by the construction, resulting in adverse impact on air quality (i.e., health issues for those with respiratory issues).*
3. *During the approximate 3 year construction period we have concerns regarding the following:*
 - a. *The location of the construction staging area and the potential of large trucks and heavy equipment being stored and moving around our homes (i.e. equipment storage and movement between 405 and Mercer Park's eastern property line and /or along 118 Ave SE.*

- b. *Night construction work noise and lighting levels.*
- c. *Traffic re-routing during construction and the potential use of 118 Ave SE as a 405 alternative. This raises specific safety issues due to the presence of Mercer Slough traffic/tours and bike route/lane.*

Rawley, Fred, President
Mercer Park Homeowner's Association (continued)

- d. *Increased home maintenance issues (i.e., siding wash-down, gutter cleaning, etc. – due to construction disruption).*

Our homeowners feel the following measures are necessary to reduce the potential impacts of this project:

1. *Completion of a sound barrier to mitigate against increase of freeway noise levels. Sound barrier should be in place prior to construction to reduce noise levels, particularly if construction will be scheduled at night.*
2. *Monitoring strict adherence to night and day hours of construction, per city of Bellevue requirements.*
3. *Position temporary and permanent lighting, to minimize increased lighting impact.*
4. *Wet down land during earth moving/disturbance in order to minimize dust and debris. Or use of whatever industry standard might be established for this situation.*
5. *Identify a 405 detour route, other than 118 Ave SE.*
6. *Locate construction staging area as far from Mercer Park, and all family neighborhoods, as possible.*
7. *Provide 118 Ave SE residents with priority access to 118 Ave SE.*
8. *Prepare and implement an effective rodent management plan.*
9. *Homeowners Association receive compensation for increase maintenance (i.e., yearly building wash-downs to protect vinyl siding, increased gutter cleaning, etc.).*

Homeowners receive compensation for reduced market value during construction process.

Thank you for requesting, and considering, our comments and concerns. Please pass along any further pertinent information regarding this project to: Mercer Park Homeowner's Association

► **Response:** Thank you for the measures you recommend to address your concerns. We will analyze noise and air quality and will report the results of our analysis in the environmental

assessment. If noise levels are predicted to exceed FHWA standards, or substantially exceed existing levels, we will evaluate the effectiveness, size, and location of natural and artificial noise barriers.

Rawley, Fred, President
Mercer Park Homeowner's Association (continued)

The environmental assessment will also include analysis of existing and future air quality conditions and will take into account the health and welfare effects of carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulate matter. The environmental assessment will also address light and glare, wildlife, construction activity effects, and the effect of construction-related traffic on parallel and intersecting streets, including 118th Ave. SE.

The issue of the economic impact of highway construction on property values and salability is more difficult to address. WSDOT does not investigate the potential effect of traffic noise on property values as part of the environmental assessment process. The emphasis of the analysis in the EA is on human hearing and possible health effects.

Reininger, Carl

► **Comment:**

Q4: There is an existing east-west stormwater drain under I-405, just north of reference 3100 on 405, that continues west under private property located at 2000 118th Ave SE, between Burlington Northern railroad track and 118th Ave SE. This property has a permitted 10,000 gallon fuel storage tank within close proximity the existing drain approximately thirty feet below grade. My concern is regarding the adequacy of this drain to handle increased water flow through the drain without causing damage to the property or the fuel tank. It appears the project will increase water drainage needs especially from the new connection planned for a stormwater retention pond.

► **Response:** This is a concern for us as well. The new stormwater flow control and water quality ponds are designed to restrict site runoff in a way that matches the peak runoff conditions that this downstream system experiences today. As with all discharge locations, the final design will be required to perform a downstream analysis to assure that there are no downstream effects with the final design.

Reininger, Fred

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Drainage system from SE 20th St and Pl in Woodridge together with I-405 drainage just north of "Station 3100."*

Reininger, Fred (continued)

Q2: *Drain line passes under a 10,000 gallon underground storage tank (gasoline) located at 2000 118th Avenue SE.*

Q3: *Previous washouts of line have occurred west of tank at 118th Ave SE. The entire drain line needs to be examined and reinforced or replaced.*

Q4: *Convert I-405 tunnel into indoor recreation area, like a soap-box derby track or sledding hill with snow.*

► **Response:** Thank you for the information on the existing drainage system. WSDOT is investigating the potential to use the existing Wilburton tunnel as a maintenance storage facility once the project is completed.

Schuster, Carol

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Vehicle particulate matter in the neighborhoods near the projects (especially Woodridge – NE of I-405 and I-90 interchange). Noise levels in the neighborhoods near the projects (especially on hills above it).*

Q2: *Levels of vehicle particulate matter that will rise and the related illnesses (lung cancer, etc.) that may follow. Noise levels that will reduce neighborhood housing values, make living nearby intolerable.*

Q3: *Working with the legislature to keep vehicle particulate matter levels low. Working with the communities (Woodridge Community Assn.) to put sufficient sound walls in place, reducing noise in the neighborhood.*

Q4: *I would be interested in being involved on a citizen committee or bringing project personnel to a community association meeting to exchange information. I am also wondering about what impact the construction phase of the project might have on city streets/neighborhoods.*

► **Response:** Please see responses to Carol Buck (page 13) and Fred Rawley (page 27) above. There will be additional opportunities to exchange information with the project team. Your name has been added to the project mailing list to receive periodic project updates and notices of upcoming community meetings.

Scott, W.

► **Comment:** *DEIS/EIS – Plan on an appeal in the “noise” section if the plan fails to include rubberized asphalt aka “quiet” pavement. Appellant will be ECRD-Eastside Citizens for Responsible Development – www.ECRD.net.*

► **Response:** The environmental assessment for the Bellevue Nickel Project will discuss the feasibility of “quieter pavement” technology to reduce vehicle noise levels in the project area.

Senf, Monika

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Noise – quality of close to town residential area
Health considerations.*

Q3: *-low noise street surface
-natural berms
-walls
-speed limits
-higher taxes on cars that have higher levels of engine noise and wind and tire noise.*

Q4: *-have city of Bellevue/King County study impact on tax revenue when property values decline due to noise
-revisit all other parallel running streets for expansion and improvement.*

► **Response:** Please see response to comments from Fred Rawley on page 27 above.

Senf, Monika and Michael

► **Comment:** *When the impact on noise level is studied, we want to see a comparison of the cost to lower noise for the neighborhood with property tax revenue gained or lost. There may be noise control measures that would pay for themselves.*

► **Response:** WSDOT follows specific guidance and criteria when conducting noise effects and mitigation analysis. WSDOT does not investigate the potential effect of traffic noise on property values as part of the environmental assessment process. The emphasis of the analysis in the environmental assessment is on human hearing and possible health effects. The environmental assessment will include the results of a noise effects analysis and will describe measures to reduce traffic noise, including natural and artificial noise barriers.

Senf, Monika and Michael (continued)

For details on WSDOT's statewide traffic noise analysis and abatement policy and procedures, please visit the following website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/Northwest/rp&s/environmental/ae/policies.htm>.

Shoults S.

► **Comment:**

Q1: *The additional noise that will be impacting my home (Mercer Park Condos).*

Q2: *It's already noisy, especially during "rush" hour. If you're going to bring the freeway closer to me, please install a noise barrier between 405 and Mercer Park (BNRR).*

Q3: *A noise deadening wall and a row of fir trees.*

► **Response:** Please see response to Fred Rawley's comment as President of the Mercer Park Homeowner's Association on pages 29 and 30 above.

Smith, Alan

► **Comment:**

Q1: *Part of 108th St is exposed to the noise generated from I-405. There is a direct line of sight west to 108th from I-405.*

Q2: *Noise*

Q3: *Tunnel the North and South lanes from I-90 to NE 8th Street. The walls suggested cannot adequately deaden traffic none.*

Q4: *Obviously every good project improvement soon gets to capacity and the new construction becomes over capacity. I do not need or want this I-405 widening.*

► **Response:** Regarding noise in the vicinity of 108th Ave, please see response to Chad Lawrence and Kimberly Mauldin on page 20.

The Bellevue Nickel Project is an initial project in the approved Master Plan for I-405 that forecasts traffic to 2030 to help prioritize projects. These initial projects will help congested areas operate better than if no improvements are made, but will not solve all of the congestion problems in the corridor.

Smith, Marcia

► **Comment:** *The “on” ramps and “off” are designed poorly – not enough time! It’s a wonder there aren’t more deaths because of this. If new ones are added, this should be taken into consideration.*

► **Response:** No new on-ramps or off-ramps are planned as part of the Nickel Improvement Projects. However, some modifications will be made at the southbound on- and off-ramps at SE 8th Street.

Stuart, Lesley

► **Comment:** *Please do not use the BNSF railroad ROW for vehicles or transit. It should be used only for hiking once the railroad has no further use for it. Thank you.*

► **Response:** WSDOT has no plans to use the BNSF railroad ROW for vehicles or transit.

Such, Renee

► **Comment:** *You are always cutting more roads. Its like a cancer – the more you cut, the more cars come. We need to educate about fewer car trips, car-pooling and use mass transit. The roads are ruining our environment.*

► **Response:** The I-405 Master Plan includes multi-modal, balanced investments, which include Transportation Demand Management (TDM), managed lanes, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and bike and pedestrian facilities and is documented in the I-405 Corridor Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is one of the first steps toward implementation of the Master Plan.

Tatro, Curtis

► **Comment:** *Its time to stop putting band-aids on our interstates when people are taking parallel roads to avoid freeway back-ups, it tells you there are not enough lanes. Instead of adding one, 405 should be 6 lanes north and south, SR167 should be 4 each way plus HOV – LOOK AHEAD!*

► **Response:** Project construction is primarily limited by the availability of funding. The ultimate vision or Master Plan addresses congestion relief to the year 2030. The Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project is one of the first, fully funded steps toward the ultimate vision for the I-405 corridor. The I-405 Record of Decision recommended a balanced multi-modal approach to resolving transportation issues along the I-405 corridor.

Tatro, Curtis (continued)

As recommended, improving current HOV facilities, introducing a BRT system, and adding general-purpose lanes for single occupant vehicles will be incorporated into the I-405 corridor as the Master Plan is implemented.

Wilbur, Keith

► **Comment:** *I want to see Monorail considered/implemented in 405 corridor and all major corridors to provide a transit system that will move people and not add to surface congestion.*

► **Response:** The EIS examined several high capacity systems, including monorail. BRT was selected because this system operates in improved access HOV lanes presently servicing I-405, I-90, and SR 520. By utilizing existing infrastructure, the BRT system can be implemented more economically than monorail or other similar forms of mass transit, and it can serve more destinations with fewer impacts.

3. AGENCY SCOPING

The I-405 Project Team conducted a scoping meeting for the tribes and federal, state, and local agencies from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on January 25, 2005, in Newcastle, Washington. The format for the meeting included a morning session on the Bellevue Nickel Project that included a presentation by WSDOT staff followed by a question-and-answer period.

What are the responses to general comments?

Bellevue, City of **—Rick Logwood**

► **Comment:** *How extensive has been or will be your evaluation of construction impacts? For example, what about impacts to arterial streets and other access/circulation issues to local jurisdictions? If other issues are identified, will they need to be evaluated later? Impacts will trigger other local agency codes/restrictions.*

► **Response:** WSDOT did address construction effects on a corridor level in the I-405 Corridor Program FEIS (June 2002). WSDOT will now be looking at specific construction effects related to the Nickel Projects for each discipline analyzed in the environmental assessments.

► **Comment:** *Regarding hazardous materials: Have any sensitive or contaminated soils been identified? Use of contaminated fill is an issue. Look at historical fill.*

► **Response:** The Programmatic FEIS reviewed hazardous materials within the corridor. The discipline reports for the Nickel Projects will look at specific hazardous materials within each project corridor. The project teams acknowledged that unknown fill materials have a potential for contamination.

Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department **—Bernard Van de Kamp**

► **Comment:** *Will you be providing initial drafts of the discipline reports for agency review?*

Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department
—Bernard Van de Kamp (continued)

► **Response:** No, WSDOT will not provide initial drafts of the discipline reports for agency reviews. Agencies will be provided with copies of the discipline reports at the beginning of the public comment period on the environmental assessment.

► **Comment:** *Do we ever get to see the design requirements document?*

► **Response:** This is a design/build project with the initial portion of the design being carried to a 15% design level. The design of this project follows the criteria set forth by the Washington State Department of Transportation Design Manual and the I-405 Corridor Project Criteria. Any deviations from these will need to be approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or by WSDOT Headquarters Office as necessary. The Design/Builder will be required to keep a Design File and to document deviations per WSDOT Criteria.

King County Department of Transportation
—Ann Martin

► **Comment:** *Will you be defining the context for these specific projects within the overall corridor?*

► **Response:** Yes, WSDOT will be defining the projects within the overall corridor program for the I-405 projects. In the discipline reports and the environmental assessment, WSDOT will describe how the Nickel projects relate to the Implementation and Master Plans for the I-405 corridor.

► **Comment:** *Will the road widening cause impacts to the current HOV lane during construction? Since those lanes are essentially full currently during peak hour, I expect that there will be impacts. Since the HOV lane doesn't have a lot of capacity, any increase of traffic that you put into that lane will cause impacts. You may need to consider limiting the HOV lane to three persons, instead of the current two-person requirement.*

► **Response:** Currently, it is not anticipated that the HOV lane will be affected any more than the general purpose lanes during the typical commute times. It may be possible that the HOV lane will be affected during nighttime hours, but this should not affect the overall performance of I-405. Lane shifts may be required to provide an adequate safety buffer for temporary barriers, construction activities, etc. In addition, transportation demand management (TDM)

measures will be implemented to help mitigate traffic impacts during construction.

King County Department of Transportation
—Ann Martin (continued)

▶ **Comment:** *Will construction be during the 2007 to 2011 timeframe?*

▶ **Response:** Contractor will be issued a Notice-to-Proceed in spring 2007, with Construction expected to start by spring 2008 and completed by spring 2011.

▶ **Comment:** *For cumulative effects, I hope what can happen is that you can remind us, and those who weren't involved, of the conclusions that were already reached in the EIS so that we don't need to reinvent anything. Make sure you double check your assumptions and make sure you're still in the same range.*

▶ **Response:** The cumulative effects analysis will use the cumulative effects analysis in the I-405 Corridor Program Final EIS as a starting point. The I-405 Corridor Program cumulative effects analysis focused on air quality, energy, farmlands, fish and aquatic habitat, surface water, and wetlands.

Thus, the project-level analysis will be conducted, based on the results of scoping, agency consultations, and the anticipated direct and secondary effects on surface water, wetlands, and fish and aquatic habitat due to the Bellevue Nickel Project. All assumptions will be revisited to ensure that they are still correct.

▶ **Comment:** *Any removal of impervious surface that would be somehow altered or affected should be identified.*

▶ **Response:** Any removal of existing impervious areas will be documented in the appropriate discipline report(s).

▶ **Comment:** *Which streams in the project area are fish bearing?*

▶ **Response:** WSDOT will conduct a complete assessment of fish bearing streams in the project area as part of the Fisheries and Aquatics Resources Discipline Reports. For each waterbody, the assessment will include information on species use during different life stages.

In the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project study area, there is known anadromous and/or resident fish use in Trail Creek, Mercer Slough, Kelsey Creek, and Sturtevant Creek. Several smaller streams in the study area are presumed to have fish use.

King County Metro Transit
—Gary Kriedt, Senior Environmental Planner

► **Comment:** *Please ensure that WSDOT staff coordinate closely with King County Metro staff during development and refinement of alternatives. Please discuss further with David Hull, Transportation Planner (206-263-4734; david.hull@metrokc.gov).*

All projects should maintain transit speed and reliability during construction by providing priority through and around traffic queues. More police should be provided to direct traffic and to help transit coaches through traffic jams.

► **Response:** WSDOT will coordinate with King County as appropriate during the environmental and design processes.

WSDOT efforts to minimize the impact that construction has on the traveling public during the traditional commute times typically allow capacity reduction only during the off-peak hours. On some projects, this has not been feasible due to the physical constraints of the construction area. WSDOT is committed to working with the transit agencies along with the local cities to keep them informed on construction issues as they relate to each organization.

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter

► **Comment:** *How are you going to avoid impacting what was built in the Nickel project when the future phases are built? Stormwater ponds are an example; will the ponds being built now have the capacity to cover future phases or will they need to be rebuilt? How do the detention ponds get modified, if necessary, for road widening beyond these projects in the future?*

► **Response:** WSDOT is developing conceptual stormwater pond designs for the future construction packages. Implementation Project facilities have not yet been designed; however, wherever possible, stormwater ponds for the Nickel Projects will be utilized for future phases.

► **Comment:** *The project analysis needs to take a hard look at fish use of the stream systems. The analysis needs to look at a longer view with*

Bellevue staff, not a one-time fish survey look. The discipline report needs to include all additional information that has been developed. Please don't make me go to all the links where the information can be found, make sure you include all relevant past and current reports.

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter (continued)

► **Response:** Existing fisheries information for the study area will be discussed in the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Discipline Reports. WSDOT will interview staff from the City of Bellevue, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Area Habitat Biologist, the Muckleshoot Tribe, other tribal interests, and appropriate members of the Multi-Agency Permitting Team to gather existing information on fisheries use in the study area. In addition, WSDOT will conduct literature and Internet searches to collect additional fisheries and aquatic resource information. This information will be summarized in the Fish and Aquatic Resources Discipline Report.

► **Comment:** *I will send formal comments. Think about the idea that some of the systems are limiting now (temperature, DO). They are not on the 303d list but need to be looked at in that context. Discipline reports need to pull this together and look at the net effect.*

► **Response:** Water quality will be a subject within the Surface Water discipline report.

► **Comment:** *You need to look at mitigating velocity along with volumes and peak flows. Increased velocities are more problematic in simplified channels than in more complex systems. You need to look at it from a small fish's perspective, could they get away from those discharge areas? Look at increased volume, velocities, and increased durations, not just peak flows. If you've improved the velocities, you still might have impacts to small fish because of extended flow duration. Increasing slower velocities is an important mitigation point to consider in this project.*

► **Response:** Discharge points within the project are located downstream from detention facilities. Detention facilities are designed using MGSFlood which attenuates peak flows and duration from 1/2 the 2-year to 50-year flow events. This results in achieving flow duration standards set by Ecology and matching existing discharge rates to the water body.

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter (continued)

In instances (like the Cedar River) where Ecology has agreed to allow direct discharge, Ecology has analyzed the water body and has determined the water body to be of sufficient size that the flow peaks and durations are not a concern, so velocities in the discharge areas are expected to be within the acceptable range as well.

► **Comment:** *The team needs to look at frequencies. Will they be kept the same? If not, you'll need to look at mitigation strategies.*

► **Response:** The WSDOT Highway Runoff Manual requires that flow control look at both the frequency of peak flows and the duration of peak flows from the site. By using this approach, the design can address any potential impact on the frequency and duration of higher velocities and erosion that occur in the downstream systems. The I-405 Team is working with the WSDOT Watershed Characterization Team with the expectation that greater benefits can be realized through basin level flow control opportunities.

► **Comment:** *The tribe will provide technical comments. If there are impacts to fishing, that's another issue. What we typically do is discuss those issues with the Corps through their permitting process. We predicate those based on what you told us was the project. If it's different, all bets are off. I'm not involved in ESA consultation. I need to be kept up on the information. After today, there is no place for us in the fishing and fisheries area. Not sure how the info will come to me. But need to be kept informed so that in the end, I don't raise red flags.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will work closely with the Muckleshoot Tribe to consistently provide project updates throughout the NEPA process.

► **Comment:** *Suggestion to provide organizational chart and team contact information in the binder.*

► **Response:** This comment will be shared with other 405 project teams to ensure incorporation of the organization chart into future scoping packets.

Multi-Agency Permitting (MAP) Team
—Pat Klavas

► **Comment:** *F&W WAC is for all fish, not just salmonids; I have the same comments as Kate (Stenberg, USACE).*

► **Response:** The Fisheries and Aquatics Resources Discipline Report will include information on salmonids, resident fish, macroinvertebrates, lampreys, crayfish, amphibians, freshwater mussels and clams, and the habitat areas on which they depend.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
—Michael Grady

► **Comment:** *How will the project accommodate future stormwater treatment needs for quality/quantity?*

► **Response:** The provisions for accommodating future stormwater treatment needs for quality and flow control vary by basin. WSDOT is developing stormwater conceptual pond designs for each basin to meet needs of the future construction packages.

► **Comment:** *The current design only accounts for a one-lane option. Given the restrictions in ROW, how are you going to accommodate future improvements? What additional measures are being accommodated now to allow for additional lanes in the future? Will you have enough ROW to accommodate future stormwater needs?*

► **Response:** Additional right-of-way is required for Master Plan (future) roadway improvements, which include construction of two additional lanes in each direction, with major changes to the existing interchanges. Master Plan design improvements are being accommodated within the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project wherever possible and appropriate. The design team is developing stormwater management concepts for the Master Plan that are consistent with the EIS. The proposed stormwater flow control and water quality treatment facilities for the current design have considered these, but do not fully implement them due to the restriction in right-of-way.

► **Comment:** *Do you want comments on NEPA/permitting? I echo Jennifer Quan's (USFWS) comments and the reference to Dick Gersib – we want the watershed analysis to consider that.*

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
—Michael Grady (continued)

► **Response:** WSDOT is accepting comments on both NEPA and permitting for the Nickel Projects during the scoping period for the Nickel projects. The watershed characterization work that was completed by Dick Gersib's group was reviewed and taken into consideration when WSDOT discussed mitigation options for the Nickel projects. Information on the watershed work is available on the WSDOT website by accessing http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/watershed/technical_report.htm.

► **Comment:** *As you look at water quantity issues, put equal emphasis on base flows, in addition to dealing with peak flows.*

► **Response:** Comment noted – The project proposes a very small increase in impervious area to the existing basin contributing to base flows. Our designs follow the WSDOT design guidelines, which include consideration of infiltration.

► **Comment:** *Regarding the issue of on- and off-site mitigation sites, I have a concern about the tracking and monitoring of sites. There are a number of sites that have been identified for the 520 project and we want to make sure that this is a coordinated effort. Is there a central repository so that you can identify which mitigation can be counted to which project? Using watershed-based analyses to identify on- or off-site opportunities for riparian protection or enhancement. Track the projects with a centralized and accessible database for all Urban Corridors projects.*

► **Response:** Project staff within the Urban Corridors Office routinely communicate about potential mitigation sites to ensure that multiple projects are not planning to utilize the same mitigation site.

► **Comment:** *Regarding land use and cumulative effects, we'll be looking at indirect effects, which brings up the adequacy of land use ordinances. There is a patchwork of local jurisdictions and we'll need to address critical area ordinances and other local regulations. Specifically, some communities have good critical area ordinances, others do not. What are we going to do to help mitigate effects if the critical area ordinance or other regulations don't address?*

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
—Michael Grady (continued)

► **Response:** WSDOT will comply with jurisdictional regulations, but the analysis of these regulations is the responsibility of local cities and counties. WSDOT does not have the authority or responsibility to do so.

► **Comment:** *On page 3 [of the agency scoping packet], there is a list of potential mitigation activities dealing with aquatic resources. Sounds like what you're asking for are additional or specific ideas to enhance the list? Is that right?*

► **Response:** WSDOT will accept ideas on possible mitigation activities; however, suggestions must be provided prior to the design freeze for each Nickel project.

► **Comment:** *Linking the level and effectiveness of stormwater treatment for water quality and quantity effects to the limiting factors of the local tributaries (see draft recovery plans).*

► **Response:** WSDOT and FHWA will include stormwater mitigation as part of the project description when the Biological Assessment is submitted to the agencies for consultation. Currently, WSDOT and FHWA will not consult on 1) the effectiveness of stormwater mitigation strategies, or 2) the effects of stormwater on listed species as both issues are under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency. However, this issue is being discussed at the executive levels of FHWA, WSDOT, USFWS, and NMFS (NOAA) and WSDOT will follow whatever protocol is decided upon.

► **Comment:** *Retrofitting existing impervious surfaces for water quality and quantity treatment.*

► **Response:** WSDOT is developing stormwater conceptual pond designs for each basin to meet needs of the future construction packages. Each step in the corridor project will be designed with the intent to reach the level of retrofit consistent with the Corridor ROD and EIS by the end of the Master Plan construction.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
—Michael Grady (continued)

► **Comment:** *Are you going to retrofit the Bellevue Nickel project for existing impervious area?*

► **Response:** The Nickel projects are much smaller projects relative to the Master Plan. The proposed Bellevue project would add 28% new impervious area. Both WSDOT and the Department of Ecology require retrofit when the project adds more than 50% new impervious area. We are investigating ways to add retrofit measures appropriate for the Nickel Improvement Project that can also be upgraded for the Master Plan.

► **Comment:** *With regard to stormwater, I assume you're going to do water quality testing and identify the status of tributaries and link those to the WRIA planning efforts? Since you're not retrofitting, I propose you look at limiting factors – water quality/quantity – to see to what extent you can enhance the treatments that have been currently proposed. In some areas this might mean doing less, in others doing more.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will identify water quality/quantity issues as part of the discipline report analysis, and we will refer to the Highway Runoff Manual to identify appropriate treatment opportunities. However, no water quality testing is planned in the present EA scope of work. Water quality evaluations will rely on existing data. We will review existing records for TMDLs and will provide context sensitive stormwater management concepts.

► **Comment:** *With regard to trying to tie stormwater treatment to the limiting factors related to fish and wildlife, is the team meeting the Ecology 2001 Stormwater Manual or DOT's Highway Runoff Manual? Both are being updated. We should focus more on what the fish and wildlife resources need and adapt the project to meet those needs. If we go with the prescriptive approach, we look at enhanced treatment. But it doesn't get you out of the ESA box. The team needs to look at all the work that's been done – the WRIA efforts and the discipline reports. Then, focus on those areas that have needs and design the project to meet those needs.*

► **Response:** The team is using the Highway Runoff Manual. The team will review and incorporate needs identified by WRIA and the discipline reports wherever feasible.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
—Michael Grady (continued)

► **Comment:** *Timing is important. The draft recovery plans will be done late spring of this year. These will start to be implemented at the time you're coming out with your discipline reports. It will be a good opportunity to share information.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will coordinate with NOAA on this issue; please provide WSDOT with copies of the draft recovery plans when they become available.

► **Comment:** *The BA is starting before the discipline reports are complete. Are you sticking to that schedule?*

► **Response:** Portions of the BA are starting before the discipline reports are complete. These include preparing the BA outline, defining the action area and preparing text and a figure describing the action area, preparing the project setting/location, preparing a description of the proposed action, and starting to develop conservation measures, proposed construction activities, and general species information. The analysis of effects will occur after the needed discipline reports are complete.

► **Comment:** *My concern about design build is that if you don't know all the specifics, it's hard to do the analysis.*

► **Response:** WSDOT intends to develop designs to a level of detail that allows the reviewer to understand and analyze project effects.

► **Comment:** *The tribes can be at the table during the ESA consultation at the discretion of the agency. My preference would be to have them involved in the ESA consultation.*

► **Response:** Per comment from NOAA, WSDOT will expect NOAA to notify tribes of ESA consultation for the Nickel projects.

Renton, City of
—Nick Afzali

► **Comment:** *With regard to the lane reduction from 12 to 11 feet, I think the analysis on the corridor EIS was based on 12-foot lanes. However, the project level document will consider the configuration that is being proposed.*

► **Response:** Yes, the corridor EIS was based on 12-foot lanes and the project level analysis will be based on the proposed configuration including the width of lanes. For the Bellevue Nickel project, there will be 12-foot lanes throughout.

Renton, City of
—Allen Quynn

► **Comment:** *Is the DOT stormwater manual comparable?*

► **Response:** The WSDOT Highway Runoff Manual is considered equivalent to the Ecology 2001 Stormwater Manual.

► **Comment:** *You are going to follow the Ecology standard, is that right?*

► **Response:** See response immediately above. WSDOT will follow the Highway Runoff Manual and work with agencies to resolve any differences that may exist.

► **Comment:** *Are there any utility issues along the corridor?*

► **Response:** Several existing utilities cross over and under the I-405 and SR 167 corridors and many of these services will be affected by the proposed widening. Investigations are underway in consultation with the utility owners and agencies to determine the extent and nature of the conflict and to develop strategies for relocation and/or protection, if required.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
—Kate Stenberg

► **Comment:** *Has a wetlands survey been completed? If so, what are the impacts? Specifically, how many acres of wetlands are present? How much of the project area has been examined to identify wetlands? What is the status of wetland takes? What other wetland delineations have been done besides around the tunnel?*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
—Kate Stenberg (continued)

► **Response:** The Nickel areas have been examined for wetland identification. Field work is still in progress for survey work and delineations of wetlands. Because survey is not yet complete, impact numbers are not available at this time but will be included in the wetland discipline report.

► **Comment:** *Does the wetland survey differentiate between those stormwater ponds that are built in wetlands?*

► **Response:** No, there is no distinction in the field flagging. Currently, the delineation includes all areas that "have wetland characteristics." This includes wetlands, stormwater facilities built in uplands that have wetland characteristics, stormwater facilities built in wetlands, ditches excavated in wetlands, and ditches excavated in uplands that have wetland characteristics and may be regulated per the "Talent Decision." The distinction will be made during the data analysis and effects assessment phase (related to what features are wetlands, which are regulated Talent-jurisdiction ditches, and which are stormwater facilities).

► **Comment:** *When you get to the public notice stage that is too far down the road. Bring the tribes in early in the process.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will work closely with the Muckleshoot Tribe to consistently provide project updates throughout the NEPA process.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
—Patty Betts

► **Comment:** *Have you thought about habitat connectivity along this stretch? You should actively check with the resource agencies that know the area.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will look at habitat connectivity in the appropriate discipline reports for the environmental assessment. The research on habitat connectivity will include gathering information from all appropriate federal, state, and local agencies.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
—Patty Betts (continued)

► **Comment:** *Are you tracking commitments made in the EIS?*

► **Response:** Yes, WSDOT will ensure that the commitments made in the Programmatic FEIS are revisited in the Nickel Project environmental assessments. These commitments have been listed in a document that has been shared with the environmental team writing the EA.

► **Comment:** *I'm also interested in the same issues that Mike Grady brought up, secondary impacts and local regulations. We want to be involved in any future discussions on that issue. For the cumulative and secondary effects, you can start with what you did earlier, check against the specific project, add to it, check assumptions, and make changes accordingly. I hope that is the plan. Also, consider the construction impacts and cumulative impacts of other construction projects.*

► **Response:** In regards to secondary effects and local regulations, please see the response provided on page 45 above for the comment offered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Michael Grady). In regards to cumulative effects, yes, we are building on the cumulative effects analysis included in the corridor EIS.

► **Comment:** *Will comment forms be online?*

► **Response:** Scoping comment forms will not be available on-line. Written comments should be mailed by February 10, 2005, to Allison Ray, I-405 Environmental Manager, at the following address: 600 108th Ave NE, Suite 405, Bellevue, WA 98004.

► **Comment:** *Will comments be attributed to individuals?*

► **Response:** Yes, comments within the scoping report will be attributed to specific individuals.

► **Comment:** *When will the comments be ready?*

► **Response:** The scoping reports for the Nickel projects will be published in spring 2005.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
—Patty Betts (continued)

► **Comment:** *What role will the contractors have with regard to advance mitigation? How will it all be coordinated? When will it happen? Are there other early actions that the contractor should be aware of? The contractors need to be kept up to speed on early environmental commitments.*

► **Response:** WSDOT may prepare separate contracts for the advance mitigation sites. It is expected that pre-qualified contractors with more environmental expertise will bid on the environmental works than the typical transportation contractors. Therefore, the contractors for the advance mitigation sites and the Nickel projects will likely be different. WSDOT will ensure that contract documents include all necessary environmental information.

► **Comment:** *This goes back to EPA's guidance on NEPA. The team needs to be looking not just at existing conditions but reflecting on what makes a functional system, not at only whether or not the project is better or worse than existing conditions. How does the project relate back to a functional system?*

► **Response:** Where appropriate, WSDOT will compare existing and future conditions to thresholds drawn from the best available science. As part of the Early Environmental Investments (EEI) program, a WRIA-level watershed approach was implemented for mitigation site selection.

EEI sites were identified using criteria that included functional assessments of water resources including streams, wetlands, and other fish habitat. The process also included coordination with basin planning efforts within the WRIs to address limiting factors and work toward the overall functional improvement of the basin.

► **Comment:** *The point from NEPA/SEPA is to analyze impacts regardless of gaps in laws and regulations. Just because it doesn't apply doesn't mean there is no impact. Look at it from the perspective of what does the system need?*

► **Response:** We will use the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual to evaluate the potential effects of the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project. These guidelines ensure a systematic and comprehensive environmental review of all relevant concerns.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
—Patty Betts (continued)

► **Comment:** *Are you developing scopes of work for some of these areas? Is there an opportunity to look at the scopes of work for NEPA? It would be helpful. Is there an opportunity to provide feedback on defining the baseline and what projects are going to be considered for cumulative effects? I would like to be able to comment now rather than later.*

► **Response:** The scopes of work and contracts have already been finalized for the Nickel projects. However, the project teams welcome specific comments on projects that should be considered as part of the cumulative effects report.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
—Jennifer Quan

► **Comment:** *Does any of this work tie in with WSDOT's watershed characterization work that Dick Gersib is doing?*

► **Response:** The watershed characterization work that was completed by Dick Gersib's group was reviewed and taken into consideration when WSDOT discussed mitigation options for the Nickel projects.

► **Comment:** *Will you be doing enhanced water quality treatment?*

► **Response:** Yes, as required and defined by the WSDOT Highway Runoff Manual.

► **Comment:** *I really appreciate Kate (Stenberg, USACE) bringing up the wildlife corridor. I didn't know we had that opportunity. The project should do a landscape analysis to identify what is moving through there. Also, the project needs to consider any upland habitat – forested areas – and needs to maintain those upland functions with specific attention to anything that has trees on it. Mitigation for some of that [the upland habitat] could be combined – with enhancement of a wildlife corridor.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will analyze the effect of the project on wildlife habitat, including any wildlife corridors found in the study area. Where feasible and prudent, the project will revegetate within the right-of-way.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
—Jennifer Quan (continued)

► **Comment:** *I want to request a review of construction, maintenance, and operational impacts for ESA.*

► **Response:** Information on the effects of construction and operation of the Nickel projects will be provided in the Biological Assessments (BAs). Pre-consultation coordination with the Services will also take place. The I-405 projects will follow WSDOT's maintenance program to address maintenance effects; and operational effects for stormwater and noise are analyzed in the BAs per federal and state regulations and policies.

► **Comment:** *Also pay attention to potential recovery needs for bull trout. There is a draft Recovery Plan for bull trout, which identifies a number of actions needed for bull trout recovery. The plan identifies Lake Washington and its tributaries as foraging, migratory and overwintering (FMO) habitat and the needs [as they relate to recovery] for this habitat as maintaining and improving habitat conditions – water quality, habitat, etc.*

► **Response:** WSDOT will review the draft Recovery Plan for the Coastal-Puget Sound Bull Trout published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 1, 2004. Information pertinent to the study area will be included in the Fisheries and Aquatics Resources Discipline Report for the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project. Specific attention will be paid to Lake Washington and its tributaries as they relate to various life history stages of bull trout. Where applicable, mitigation actions will be recommended that would improve bull trout habitat conditions.

► **Comment:** *The downside of piecemealing is not capturing all the potential impacts. Have you looked at future Bellevue plans? Have you reached the 50% threshold with those future improvements (the Implementation Plan)?*

► **Response:** Yes, the project team is looking at future I-405 improvements (Master Plan) as we evaluate stormwater facilities for both Nickel Improvement Projects. We will add the new impervious areas of the Nickel projects to that of future I-405 projects to remove the "piecemealing" influence as we test for the 50% threshold. We are looking at this issue with the expectation that it would be better to make progress toward practicable retrofit on each project to avoid delaying the retrofit until it is triggered by the threshold.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
—Jennifer Quan (continued)

► **Comment:** NOAA Fisheries and USFWS released joint comments to the proposed revisions to the stormwater manual that has been developed by the Department of Ecology. This speaks to the issues that Karen (Walter, Muckleshoot Tribe) just brought up. It also speaks to our concerns over the lack of detention for the Cedar River. I will email an electronic copy if you like.

► **Response:** The I-405 Team is in regular communication with WSDOT Headquarters Hydraulics and is routinely kept aware of any pending changes on the WSDOT Highway Runoff Manual (HRM). We understand that the WSDOT HRM update staff is tracking pending changes to the Ecology manual, but we would appreciate if you could send us a copy of the e-mail that USFWS and NOAA Fisheries provided to Ecology.

► **Comment:** The problem with looking only at (managing for) peak and duration is that it only mitigates the physical aspects of the stream channel (i.e., erosion) and it hasn't been designed to minimize impacts to fish.

► **Response:** Discharge points within the project are located downstream from detention facilities. Detention facilities are designed using MGSFlood which attenuates peak flows and duration from 1/2 the 2-year to 50-year flow events. This results in achieving flow duration standards set by Ecology and matching existing discharge rates to the water body.

By matching the existing peaks and durations that the full range of flows occur, the flow control method addresses your concern for changes in peak velocities and the duration that velocities will occur.

In instances (like the Cedar River) where Ecology has agreed to allow direct discharge, Ecology has analyzed the water body and has determined the water body to be of sufficient size that the flow peaks and durations are not a concern, so velocities in the discharge area are expected to be within the acceptable range as well.

Yarrow Point, Town of —Leonard Newstrum

► **Comment:** *Have traffic staff agreed to 11-foot lanes? How does that affect the transportation analyses that were done for the corridor? Obviously, an 11-foot lane will not perform as well as 12-foot lane. Does it contribute to a higher accident rate?*

► **Response:** The analysis done for the corridor for the Selected Alternative is still valid. The long-range plan of the corridor is to have 12-foot lanes throughout. Lane widths for the Bellevue Nickel project are consistent with the long-range plan. Not only is highway capacity (i.e., overall vehicle throughput) a function of lane width, but it is also a function of the number of lanes in the system. The project is expected to decrease accidents by reducing congestion on I-405 through the project area.

► **Comment:** *The design freeze in spring seems pretty close. There still seems to be many issues that need to be resolved.*

► **Response:** The environmental and design teams will work together to address all known issues prior to the design freeze for the discipline reports.

► **Comment:** *Fifteen percent of design will be sketchy. So, you'll have sketchy design plus the design requirements document to provide to the contractor?*

► **Response:** It is important to note that while the overall percent completion is 15%, critical components will be developed to sufficient detail to allow the Design/Build contractors, and others, to fully understand the design intent, schedule, constructability, and cost, thereby minimizing uncertainty and changes during final design and construction. The 15% design will establish the footprint, wall locations, channelization, cross-sections, etc. The Design / Build project execution is widely accepted and in other states has proven itself to be the method of choice for projects of this nature.

What are the responses to Bellevue-specific comments?

Bellevue, City of, Transportation —Bernard van de Kamp

► **Comment:** *Residents are concerned about existing and future noise impacts. The City of Bellevue wants to create a trail connection with the BNSF ROW. Can you talk more about the tunnel versus the bridge over the Wilburton tunnel?*

► **Response:** Many different things were considered when analyzing a highway tunnel structure versus a railroad bridge structure. Some of the items reviewed were:

- Compatibility with I-405 Master Plan
- Compatibility with future railroad potential uses
- Highway traffic operations
- Railroad traffic operations
- Railroad alignment considerations
- Highway alignment considerations
- Avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas
- Avoidance of home and business displacements
- Noise considerations
- Construction impacts to traffic (highway and rail)
- Costs (Capital and Maintenance)
- Aesthetics
- Safety

As far as noise is concerned, a tunnel structure normally provides a certain amount of noise attenuation and is often desirable. A full noise analysis will be conducted as part of the environmental process. The results of the noise analysis will dictate requirements for noise mitigation.

A tunnel structure would not preclude development of a trail by the City in the future.

Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department
—Bernard van de Kamp (continued)

► **Comment:** *There will be a lot of impervious surface.*

► **Response:** The Nickel project would result in a 28% increase in new impervious areas. The change in stormwater runoff from the increased impervious area will be mitigated by the proposed flow control facilities.

Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman

► **Comment:** *The City of Bellevue is pleased that the Washington State Department of Transportation is moving forward with implementation of the I-405 Corridor Program. The “Bellevue Improvement,” or Bellevue I-405 Nickel Project, will bring a welcome solution to chronic traffic congestion between downtown Bellevue and Interstate 90. This improvement will support sound growth management principles by helping to focus development in the downtown Bellevue urban center and will enhance the value of recent Access Downtown transportation improvements. Additionally, we anticipate that it will compliment the Sound Transit I-90 Two Way Transit/HOV project by improving the downtown Bellevue to I-90 connection. Combined, the Access Downtown project, Bellevue Improvement, and I-90 Two Way Transit/HOV Project should greatly improve mobility between South King County and East King County, and between Seattle and Bellevue. These improvements will also prepare the system for future SR 520 reconstruction. We anticipate that additional I-405 improvements in downtown Bellevue will be necessary to ensure adequate access and sufficient capacity for through volumes. The City looks forward to continuing our agency partnership and working cooperatively to build the project.*

► **Response:** WSDOT looks forward to working with the City of Bellevue on future phases of the I-405 project.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

► **Comment:** *I-405 is often referred to as Eastside’s Main Street. As you are aware, it carries high vehicle and person volumes and is congested over nine hours each day between SR 520 and I-90. Similarly, parallel City arterials are heavily used. During the construction of Access Downtown, Bellevue worked with WSDOT and Sound Transit to minimize traffic disruptions on I-405 and on local streets.*

**Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman (continued)**

The project was a great success. We are confident that this success can be repeated. However, we are looking to the environmental assessment to articulate potential traffic impacts during and after constructions, and how they can be mitigated. The environmental assessment should evaluate potential traffic diversion to City arterials such as Bellevue Way, 112th Avenue Southeast, Southeast 8th Street, Lake Hills Connector/Richards Road, and others during construction.

Upon completion of the project we anticipate that more traffic will be drawn to the Southeast 8th Street interchange. We are hopeful that the improvement will alleviate some congestion on Bellevue Way. Currently, Bellevue Way is highly congested with regional traffic that would more appropriately be served by I-405. The proposed southbound high occupancy flyover ramp should improve transit and carpool access to Seattle and points beyond.

► **Response:** WSDOT is committed to continuing coordination efforts to minimize traffic impacts during construction. The environmental assessment will document traffic impacts both during construction and after the project is built.

The Nickel Project HOV improvements planned for southbound I-405 extend the existing southbound right side HOV lane back to the SE 8th Street off-ramp. Please note we are not currently proposing a southbound HOV flyover ramp to westbound I-90.

NOISE

► **Comment:** *Traffic noise is a long-standing and growing area of concern in Bellevue. Existing noise walls shelter the Woodridge neighborhood East of I-405 and must be maintained and improved, if justified. Business and residents to the West of the freeway are currently not protected from noise. The city expects to work closely with WSDOT in reviewing existing and projected noise levels in proximity to the proposed project. While we recognize that many of the sensitive noise receptors are somewhat distant from I-405, we expect that consideration will be paid to noise issues during the design process and subsequent mitigation efforts. The City continues to track WSDOT's ongoing research of alternative noise mitigation strategies, such as quiet pavement technologies.*

**Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman (continued)**

Ultimately, we are confident that an appropriate balance will be reached in providing improved access to the city and minimizing negative impacts to the City's neighborhoods.

► **Response:** WSDOT has met with many residents from Bellevue communities and talked with them about the I-405 Bellevue Nickel project. We have listened to their concerns about noise and explained our traffic noise study process and noise mitigation policies. We understand that traffic noise is a growing area of concern in Bellevue and we will be working closely with the City of Bellevue on our efforts to analyze traffic noise and propose noise mitigation where justified.

The Woodridge neighborhood has existing noise walls. At the very least the existing noise walls will remain in place after completion of the project. If existing noise walls will need to be moved as a part of this project we will at least replace the existing noise wall in kind. Our team of noise experts will be taking measurements and modeling future noise levels in Bellevue this spring and summer. If the future noise levels approach or exceed the FHWA noise abatement criteria we will then determine if either a new noise wall is warranted or if upgrading the existing noise wall is warranted. Consideration for noise mitigation will be applied equitably to all residents in Bellevue as they are throughout the state.

HISTORIC AND VISUAL RESOURCES

► **Comment:** *The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Wilburton Railroad Trestle is in close proximity to the proposed project. The trestle is listed on the Washington State register of historic resources and is considered a major asset to the City. It is one of a limited number of remaining historic structures in East King County and is treasured by the City's residents. Based upon review of the information provided at the January 25th 2005 agency scoping meeting, it does not appear that the project will have any effect on the trestle. However, as the environmental review progresses and design alternatives are considered special care should be given to avoiding impacts to this structure. Similarly, many residents in the project consider the trestle a major visual asset. The City seeks to preserve the visibility, architectural, and structural integrity of the structure.*

**Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman (continued)**

► **Response:** We are aware of the historic nature of the Wilburton Railroad Trestle and will give special care to avoiding negative effects on the structure.

**TRAIL AT THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE
RAILROAD CROSSING**

► **Comment:** *The 1999 City of Bellevue Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Update calls for a hard surface trail within or parallel to the BNSF Railroad right of way. Key to the Bellevue Improvement is the freeway crossing. WSDOT is proposing to construct a new tunnel adjacent to the existing southbound Wilburton tunnel as a main feature of the project. The new tunnel will feature a “lid” that will serve as the bridge deck for the railroad. In the northbound direction a lane will also be added, necessitating that the railroad under-crossing be expanded. Bellevue will accommodate a quality trail crossing of the freeway. The crossing must be designed to ensure safety and maximize wildlife benefits.*

► **Response:** We will design the new Wilburton tunnel to preserve the possibility of a future trail crossing of the freeway above the tunnel that is safe.

MERCER SLOUGH TRIBUTARIES

► **Comment:** *The City conducted a comprehensive stream inventory in 2001. Investigation of the two minor tributaries east of Mercer Slough and in the I-405 Bellevue Nickel project area were found to be fish bearing. In the first tributary (74_01_1), survey efforts revealed numerous sticklebacks, whose distribution extended well upstream. There was minimal flow in this segment, and the stream resembled a series of several small wetlands with surface-water connections. Segment 74_01_2 began upstream as a typical pool-riffle sequence with a medium-sized cobble substrate, before flowing into an extensive wetland. Attempts to locate an outfall into the slough were unsuccessful, and it is suspected that the connection is sub-surface. The upstream end was thoroughly sampled but no fish were found. The restoration project was to increase pool habitat but the pools are now isolated due to a lack of flow. Insufficient flow and disconnection from the slough may explain the absence of fish in this reach.*

**Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman (continued)**

► **Response:** A habitat survey will be performed on streams within the study area to determine the extent, nature, and functions of the habitat in those streams. In addition, existing information, including interviews with City of Bellevue staff, will be reviewed to determine the nature and extent of fish use within these stream systems. Any potential effects to streams in the study area as a result of the project will be documented and mitigated appropriately.

WILDLIFE AND HABITAT LINKAGES

► **Comment:** *The Mercer Slough wetland provides resting, feeding, and breeding habitat for a wide diversity of birds, including many priority species. Special attention should be taken to maintain or improve the existing habitat linkages. This is especially true given the proposal to rebuild the Wilburton tunnel. The opportunity exists to optimize the design (assuming a tunnel) to incorporate habitat features that would influence the dispersal behavior of species and link Mercer Slough with Kelsey Creek and the habitat patches in Wilburton and Richards Valley. A heavily landscaped solution designed for both wildlife and humans would be ideal. Preservation or enhancement of intermittent patches, especially in the remaining natural area in the median is also important. Such a solution should be combined with a multi-purpose trail.*

► **Response:** The existing habitat linkages over and under the I-405 mainlines will remain. The new Wilburton tunnel may create opportunities for improving those linkages, but fewer prospects exist for incorporating habitat features where the railroad crosses under the northbound lanes.

LOCALIZED WETLAND IMPACTS

► **Comment:** *Impacts to the wetland in the median should be mitigated either on site, or preferably, through enhancement to degraded areas within Mercer Slough.*

► **Response:** This wetland complex has been delineated and the potential effects to the wetland will be assessed as part of the project. Effects to wetlands resulting from the project will require mitigation. A wetland mitigation plan will be developed for the project that may include on- and/or off-site mitigation.

**Bellevue, City of, Transportation Department Director
—Goran Sparrman (continued)**

For example, we are currently working with the City of Bellevue to jointly develop a site that would mitigate the negative effects of the project on wetlands and streams. If we need additional wetland mitigation acreage, we will work with Bellevue to identify another site.

STORM DRAINAGE POND ABUTTING KELSEY CREEK

► **Comment:** *The impacts associated with operation and construction of this pond are of particular concern given its location abutting an existing fish ladder. The location and sizing of the discharge should be addressed in terms of its potential impact to fish stacking up in the pool below. A comprehensive restoration plan should be anticipated. During construction the prior facility, discharges to Kelsey Creek were an issue, especially during the installation of the discharge pipe.*

► **Response:** Effects from new stormwater facilities on existing flow conditions in Kelsey Creek will be analyzed as part of this project. Mitigation will be required for effects to fisheries resulting from this project.

► **Comment:** *Again, Bellevue remains strongly supportive of the I-405 Bellevue Improvement. We look forward to working with you during the environmental assessment and subsequent design and construction. If you have any questions about the City's scoping comments, please contact Bernard van de Kamp, Regional Projects Manager at 425-452-6459. The City will work with WSDOT and assign appropriate staff to the project as it progresses to address issues concerning the design, the environment, public relations, etc.*

► **Response:** Thank you for your comment.

**King County Department of Transportation
—Ann Martin**

► **Comment:** *With regard to railroad right of way and it being considered for abandonment by BNSF, there is a letter to WSDOT that should be taken into consideration. There is some coordination with PSRC that is looking into land banking along that right of way. As far as wildlife, if there is a less demanding transportation use for some time, there may be ability to use the corridor in other ways (pedestrians, bicycles, wildlife).*

King County Department of Transportation
—Ann Martin (continued)

► **Response:** The I-405 Project Team is aware of potential abandonment issues as well as other possible uses for the corridor. The current design could accommodate a wide variety of future uses, including a pedestrian/bicycle trail.

King County Metro Transit
—Gary Kriedt, Senior Environmental Planner

► **Comment:** *King County Metro supports extending the southbound outside HOV lanes from I-90 through the reconstructed Wilburton tunnel to SE 8th on ramp.*

Increasing the capacity of I-405 could induce more traffic to east-west arterials which would impact transit service on those arterials. The EIS should analyze the potential for this impact. The following intersections could be impacted:

- NE 8th Street (e.g., BTC and routes 230-253, 261, 272)
- NE 70th Street (e.g., routes 245, 251, 265)
- NE 85th Street (e.g., routes 540, 238, 230)
- NE 116th Street (e.g., routes 236, 260)
- NE 124th Street (e.g., routes 255, 935, 230, 236, 238,
- NE 160th Street

► **Response:** The environmental document will address the freeway and local traffic impacts associated with the proposed improvements.

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter

► **Comment:** *You've described this section of the Bellevue project as having a two-lane option at some point in future. When does the second lane come on line and how are you addressing the impacts for those future improvements? What additional measures are being considered?*

► **Response:** A conceptual "Master Plan" for the corridor is currently under development. This plan will be used to identify preliminary lane configurations that are consistent with future traffic projections and consistent with the I-405 Corridor Program EIS and Record of Decision (ROD). The future plan as defined in the ROD

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter (continued)

identifies as many as two additional lanes through this portion of the corridor.

In addition to the two new lanes, ramp connections will need to be reconfigured to allow for acceptable operations. For example, in some cases, the addition of braided ramps will be necessary to eliminate weave congestion, in other areas collector/distributor lanes may need to be extended, and still in other areas, auxiliary lanes may be required between on and off ramps of consecutive interchanges.

Because we are conducting preliminary design studies for the future, we are able to identify major features that are necessary for future improvements. This enables us to incorporate future improvement considerations into current project designs. For example, the size and location of the new lidded structure at Wilburton will be constructed to include enough capacity to accommodate future traffic. Another example would be placing retaining walls (to be constructed with the current project) in locations where they will accommodate future widening projects. Yet another example would be sizing and siting drainage facilities in ways that they can easily be expanded in the future.

The current funding provided by the legislature provides construction money for the Bellevue Nickel Improvement Project. Future funding sources will need to be secured in order to proceed with additional projects. As future projects are funded and developed, the associated impacts of those projects will be addressed.

► **Comment:** *I echo those comments made by Mike (Grady), Jennifer (Quan), and Kate (Stenberg). For the issue of fish movement, you need to work closely with Bellevue city staff. Are the weirs working well for Kelsey Creek? This may be a place to concentrate future mitigation improvements. The Chinook and Coho are key species – need to look at impacts to reduced passage, how big are culverts, impacts of more storm water on them.*

► **Response:** The I-405 Team will interview staff from the City of Bellevue, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Multi-Agency Permitting Team, the Muckleshoot Tribe, and other tribal interests to gather existing information on fisheries use in the study area. Questions related to how well the existing fish passage structure at Kelsey Creek/Mercer Slough will be included in these

Muckleshoot Tribe
—Karen Walter (continued)

interviews. Fish passage concerns in the project area will be assessed in the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Discipline Report.

The information gathered in the interviews and in project-related fieldwork will be used to establish potential mitigation opportunities in the study area, including possible fish passage improvements.

Questioner Unknown

▶ **Comment:** *When does the project go to ad?*

▶ **Response:** At this time, we expect this project will go to ad at the end of 2006 with construction to begin in early 2008.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
—Kate Stenberg

▶ **Comment:** *The Wilburton tunnel area provides a connection for wildlife (a key wildlife corridor) from Mercer Slough to the City of Bellevue's greenbelt system. Whatever design you come up with should maintain that connection.*

▶ **Response:** The current design includes a new tunnel structure parallel to the existing Wilburton tunnel, which will remain in place. The built condition will provide the same type of connection for wildlife along the railroad corridor as it does today.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
—Patty Betts

▶ **Comment:** *From reviewing the habitat connectivity areas, through maps, it looks like there are some wetlands on the east side of Kelsey Creek. Is there value in connecting this to Mercer Slough? Habitat connectivity includes amphibian and plants, not just larger animals.*

▶ **Response:** If I-405 staff observes any potential mitigation opportunities during wetland and stream surveys (including the possibility for improved habitat connectivity between wetlands associated with Mercer Slough and Kelsey Creek), those opportunities will be described in the appropriate discipline reports. Final mitigation requirements for the project will be determined at a later date.

Yarrow Point, Town of
—Leonard Newstrum

► **Comment:** *When we were developing the program for the corridor, we pursued getting the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad Right of Way (ROW) for future transportation uses. When we start talking about the Wilburton tunnel/lid, we should not preclude any future transportation uses – pedestrian path, elevated monorail, etc. If you do the wrong thing, we will lose it.*

► **Response:** We are designing the new tunnel structure at Wilburton to coincide with the current heavy rail use of the railroad corridor. This would be considered a conservative design for other future transportation uses, as they wouldn't need a tunnel structure as large or as sturdy as what is being proposed.