King County
Department of Transportation
201 South Jackson Street
M.S. KSC-TR-0815
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

September 27, 2010

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Governor of Washington
P.O. Box 4002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Joint Transportation Committee
3309 Capitol Blvd SE
P.O. Box 40937
Olympia, WA 98504-0937

Dear Governor Gregoire and Joint Transportation Committee Members:

The King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the ESSB 6392 workgroup process, which yielded recommendations for design refinements to the preferred alternative for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program: I-5 to Medina Project. The workgroup process has allowed KCDOT to work with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, the University of Washington (UW) and other agencies to refine design elements and ensure that these elements support attractive travel options for those traveling within the SR 520 corridor and in neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor. We believe that this process has given the region a critical opportunity to make further improvements to the state's preferred design to produce the best design for all users.

Improving mobility for people and goods across Lake Washington and on local streets in the Montlake and University District neighborhoods remains a major purpose of this project. KCDOT supports this project moving forward, especially in light of the transit-supportive elements added through the ESSB 6392 workgroup process. We applaud the collaborative work of the technical team and the ESSB 6392 workgroup in developing these recommendations. Many of the recommendations outlined in the report address our highest priority interests in the project, which are summarized below.

Service quality and reliability for riders
The transit priority and HOV lane recommendations included in the report are an integral component to keeping buses and riders moving through the heavily congested corridors of SR 520 and Montlake Boulevard. These recommendations, in addition to the continuous 12-mile HOV lane system to be implemented in the SR 520 corridor, will provide a benefit for 15,000 daily transit riders traveling across SR 520 today and for 7,000 daily riders on

local bus routes connecting Seattle neighborhoods in the Montlake corridor, including 23rd Avenue, Montlake Boulevard and Pacific Avenue. Optimizing transit operations on both SR 520 and in the Montlake corridor will allow Metro Transit to provide faster, more reliable service for customers traveling between the University District, Seattle neighborhoods and eastside communities. Maintaining and improving speed and reliability is essential to support cost effective transit service that can retain existing ridership and meet future needs.

While these components provide a benefit for riders on both SR 520 and the Montlake corridor, the recommendation related to phasing the second bascule bridge in the preferred alternative may significantly impact transit speed and reliability, particularly on 23rd Avenue, Montlake Boulevard and Pacific Street. KCDOT requests further analysis by WSDOT to determine the impact of phasing the second bascule bridge as part of the project.

Convenient and timely connections for transit riders
Prior analysis has shown that 60 percent of transit riders destined for the Montlake Triangle area are headed to the UW Medical Center and the main campus, from both eastside communities and Seattle neighborhoods. Maintaining connections between local and cross-lake bus service at the Montlake Triangle and in the Montlake corridor gives riders mobility and access between communities, job centers, educational institutions and other key destinations. Connections between buses and Sound Transit's link light rail station are also important to allow riders to connect to even more destinations as the system is built out beyond 2016.

Preserving these connections in the SR 520 project design to give riders timely connections to destinations on both sides of Lake Washington is crucial. The information in the report on bus stop locations and transit connections has been very helpful in developing the optimal design for the area. Additional traffic modeling to fully understand the general traffic congestion and travel time impacts of the different options, as well as associated estimated costs, will also be critical and KCDOT looks forward to reviewing that information. KCDOT will continue to work with partner agencies including WSDOT, UW and Sound Transit as the project moves forward to optimize the convenience of intermodal connections and improve the pedestrian and non-motorized environment in the Montlake Triangle.

Delivery and expansion of service to key markets
The SR 520 project presents KCDOT with both opportunities and challenges in continuing to provide quality service to multiple transit markets for eastside communities and Seattle neighborhoods. Tolls begin in spring 2011 on SR 520, and KCDOT expects a growing demand for transit service in the corridor as people look for alternatives to paying tolls.

Metro Transit will be adding service in the SR 520 corridor as part of the Urban Partnership program, adding 132 daily trips, a majority of which will be added during the peak period. However, still even more service is needed, especially with the removal of the Montlake Freeway Station and the loss of access to the University District for walkers, cyclists and riders of the 355 daily trips that cross SR 520 between eastside communities and downtown

Seattle. To preserve this connection, additional and ongoing operating resources will be needed beyond the funding provided by the County's recently levied property tax that supports Urban Partnership service investments. KCDOT looks forward to upcoming conversations with WSDOT about how to appropriately mitigate for the Freeway Station removal in order to maintain current levels of connectivity.

Providing fast, reliable and convenient local and cross-lake service as part of this project is vital to the capacity of the corridor and general mobility for the region. KCDOT will continue to be an active partner in the SR 520 project as it moves forward. We look forward to continuing to work with WSDOT to improve the project's utility for optimizing regional mobility, especially as it relates to public transportation.

Sincerely,

Harold S. Taniguchi, Director
Department of Transportation

cc: Paula Hammond, Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
David Dye, Deputy Secretary, WSDOT
Sung Yang, Director of Government Relations, King County Executive Office (KCEO)
Chris Arkills, Transportation Policy Advisor, KCEO
Genesee Adkins, State and Federal Relations Manager, KCEO
Laurie Brown, Deputy Director, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
Ron Posthuma, Assistant Director, KCDOT
Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, KCDOT
Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Doug Hodson, Government Relations Officer, KCDOT

Michael Patrick McGinn
Mayor of Seattle

September 13, 2010

While comments made in the author's position statement focused on items that were specifically a part of the Preferred Alternative, there are broader issues with the current SR 520 project that need be made clear, as I have serious concerns about them and their negative impact on Seattle.

Our vision for this project includes:

- An SR 520 project that is light rail-ready from the start and serves transit only from the beginning and demonstrates a strong commitment to high capacity transit
- An SR 520 project that protects and preserves our natural areas and open spaces
- An SR 520 that is smart about dealing with traffic
- An SR 520 that is realistic about funding--this is a $4.65 billion dollar project with a $2 billion dollar funding gap

Currently, there are many barriers to achieving this vision. A contract to construct a six-lane bridge span will be awarded in Spring of 2011, yet there is no funding for the Seattle portion of this project. Lids that connect neighborhoods and provide open space, re-engineering of on- and off-ramps, a solution for traffic increases in neighborhoods—these elements remain unfunded. The traffic of this six-lane bridge will meet up with the existing four-lane system from Foster Island to I-5, providing no additional space for the extra traffic to go. The extra traffic afforded by an extra lane will exist adjacent to the Arboretum and much of it will merge into Seattle neighborhoods. Seattle streets in the vicinity are nearing full capacity already.

The lack of funding for the Seattle portion of the project demands a re-thinking of priorities.

There is also no requirement for high capacity transit, and funding for needed expansions of transit lags far behind what is needed. The state, city, county, and transit agencies all have limited resources, and this plan chooses to devote them to adding highway lanes rather than investing in high capacity transit. At the same time, there are other WSDOT projects with hefty price tags that will continue to be a financial burden. Instead of costly highway projects, we need to be shifting to meeting the rising demand for transit. When big-ticket items like the SR 520 project do not promote transit as a first priority, we are not only going against the goals of state laws put in place, we are continuing to support the creation of more trips and more traffic.

Making these difficult decisions is the only way we will be able to meet our shared goals for reducing vehicle miles traveled and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. We ask that our regional and statewide agencies and elected officials join us in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Mike McGinn
Mayor of Seattle

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City of Seattle
Seattle Department of Transportation
Peter Hahn, Director

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Subject: Light Rail Transit Accommodation in the SR 520 Preferred Alternative
Date: September 14, 2010

Full build out of light rail transit (LRT) in the SR 520 corridor is not included in the project's Preferred Alternative (PA). There has been an effort made in technical design to ensure accommodation of future LRT by confirming that specific design features of the replacement bridge and approaches support conversion to light rail. Serious questions remain, however, and it is clear that new bridge construction and additional costs will be necessary to add LRT to SR 520 at some future date. The PA has reduced these costs and risks relative to the previous Option A+ design while remaining within the boundaries of the project scope, but it has not fully addressed light rail accommodation.

Remaining Issues in the "Preferred Alternative"
Significant issues, barriers, and practical matters remain within the existing PA, due in part to the lack of a current plan to build LRT in the SR 520 corridor. These challenges include the following:

- **Bridge Deck**—By reducing shoulder widths on the bridge deck and assuming LRT operation in a smaller design envelope, LRT can be accommodated within a 115 foot roadway section. Two significant assumptions have not yet been confirmed: 1) Sound Transit will accept the narrower operating envelope, and 2) FHWA will approve a design standard waiver necessary to narrow the shoulders on both sides of the roadway.

- **Pontoons**—Designers continue to assume that adding LRT to the currently designed 6-lane bridge requires construction and attachment of up to 30 new "flanker" pontoons, which would be both costly and environmentally complex.

- **West Approach**—The west approach has been designed to incorporate a "gap" between the eastbound and westbound lanes to accommodate a future point of departure for light rail. There are two unresolved issues that present challenges to adding LRT to the corridor:
  1.) The structure designed for the eastbound lanes would have to be widened approximately four feet from the west high rise toward Montlake. This will require the addition of longitudinal beams between each of the piling supported caps and a deck surface. This is a straightforward structural addition but will occur over environmentally sensitive waters.
  2.) While more work has been done refining the early concepts for the four different light rail alignments, there is significant work to be done in confirming the feasibility of accommodating these options against the design of the PA. Divergence points, environmental impacts, and accommodation of other technical needs must be further defined in order to determine the level of accommodation that the PA offers.

Summary
Progress toward accommodating a future light rail alignment within the SR 520 project has been made. However, there are a number of unknowns, such as which concept might be selected for an LRT crossing of the Montlake Cut. To truly accommodate future LRT within the SR 520 project, the considerations listed above should be incorporated into the design and construction of the new floating bridge and west approach at this stage of the project.

Seattle City Council

September 27, 2010

Julie Meredith
SR 520 Program Director
Washington State Department of Transportation
600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Ms. Meredith:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the ESSB 6392 Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup's (ESSB 6392 Workgroup) Draft Recommendations Report. The multiagency process has been positive and productive, and has helped to improve working relationships among many of the key stakeholders in the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project (SR 520 Project).

The City Council's key goals for the SR 520 Project remain as follows:

- ***Improve Transit.*** Maximize transit usage and connectivity, and prioritize transit along the SR 520 corridor and in adjacent Seattle neighborhoods by improving the speed, reliability, and expandability of local and regional transit service.
- ***Improve the Pedestrian Environment.*** Increase pedestrian access, mobility, comfort and security, and provide efficient and logical connections to transit and neighborhood destinations.
- ***Improve the Bicycling Environment.*** Increase bicycle access, mobility, comfort and security, and provide efficient and logical connections through adjacent Seattle neighborhoods.
- ***Improve the Neighborhood Environment.*** Improve the physical environment of adjacent neighborhoods for the health and benefit of residents. Minimize any new impacts that the SR 520 Project may have on these same communities.
- ***Improve Montlake Traffic Operations.*** Facilitate acceptable peak and off-peak local traffic operations for all users.
- ***Improve the Arboretum.*** Minimize impacts to the Arboretum in terms of vehicle volumes and speeds, improve access for visitors, and enhance the overall environment of the park.

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We remain committed to working collaboratively with WSDOT, Governor Gregoire and the State Legislature to ensure that these collective goals for the SR 520 Project are met. With these objectives in mind, we have carefully reviewed the ESSB 6392 Workgroup's recommendations and, through this letter, offer some specific comments regarding the various project elements that were evaluated.

We understand that the charge of the ESSB 6392 Workgroup was to refine the design and improve the transit connections for the Seattle portion of the SR 520 Bridge, using the April 2010 Preferred Alternative as a baseline. We also understand that once the Workgroup's final recommendations report is issued later this year, WSDOT staff will work to incorporate those recommendations into a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the SR 520 Project. However, what is not obvious to us and remains unaddressed is how the process for making final design decisions for the SR 520 Project will continue to move forward after the FEIS is published in the spring of 2011 and how the City will be involved. In addition, we want to ensure that the cooperative relationship between the City and State is maintained as this project moves forward. We would appreciate a response from you that articulates how and when this body of work will be completed.

It is clear that the efforts of the ESSB 6392 Workgroup have enhanced the Preferred Alternative and the Seattle City Council agrees with the majority of recommendations that are detailed in the Workgroup's draft report. However, some areas of concern remain:

1. ***Second Bascule Bridge Across the Montlake Cut.*** We appreciate the workgroup's willingness to consider the City's request to examine transportation demand management (TDM) options for delaying or even potentially eliminating the need to construct a second bascule bridge across the Cut. We understand that a second crossing is included in the Preferred Alternative and recognize the need for the environmental process to fully evaluate the impacts of a potentially new bridge. We also appreciate that the additional bridge could well be a component of the SR 520 Project that is necessary to meet our collective goals for the corridor. However, we remain committed to working with WSDOT on developing an agreement on the process for deciding whether the second bridge is needed and if so, when. As part of this process we support exploring TDM alternatives and concur with the Workgroup's recommendation to establish specific triggers for future evaluation of the needs for the second crossing.

   Identifying the three trigger factors to be measured (SR 520 mainline operations, transit travel times, and bike and pedestrian accommodation) represents an appropriate first step. Next, we believe that developing a clear process for monitoring and evaluating the timing and need for a second bascule bridge will be critical to ensure that a framework for decision-making is in place for future policymakers. We propose the following draft framework that could be used to formalize an agreed upon approach to addressing the question of the second bascule bridge:

- Commitment to a corridor management agreement between the City of Seattle and WSDOT that would include an outline of the analytical and decision-making process for the second bascule bridge.
- Development of a baseline report that uses the latest traffic modeling from the FEIS and current "ground" values. This report would be updated annually, based on refinements to traffic models, progress on TDM strategies and construction, and modeled and ground values centered on the triggers that have been identified.
- A three year work plan and schedule to be developed by SDOT and WSDOT to implement TDM measures.
- A technical work group to be identified in the corridor management agreement that includes representatives from the WSDOT, SDOT, KC Metro, Sound Transit and the City Council and would meet at least twice per year.
- The technical work group would review the annual report on triggers, receive updates on TDM measures and make ongoing recommendations to WSDOT and the City as necessary.
- The technical work group would be responsible for making a final recommendation on proceeding to construction of the second bascule bridge to WSDOT and the City. WSDOT would agree to not proceed to construction for the second bascule bridge without Council approval.

We look forward to discussing and developing this process and agreement in greater detail with WSDOT and the Governor's office.

Beyond the triggers and decision process for the second crossing, we feel strongly that more work is needed by SDOT and WSDOT to develop a specific traffic management plan for the interim period between completion of the Montlake Interchange and possible construction of a second bascule bridge. We believe this interim traffic management plan must be aggressively and creatively geared toward forestalling construction of a second bascule bridge by accommodating, to the extent possible, transit, bicycle and pedestrian traffic across the Cut. In addition, we urge that the FEIS include an analysis of alternatives that seek to improve pedestrian and bicycle level of service across the Cut if transit queuing and traffic operations on SR 520 are managed through other means. This may include analyzing a narrower pedestrian and bicycle only second crossing.

2. ***Arboretum***. We are satisfied with the progress made to-date on the Arboretum Mitigation Planning process. However, that effort is scheduled to run until the end of the year and additional analysis related to traffic management options is still needed. Funding responsibility for the improvements ultimately implemented also needs to be assigned.

Given the ongoing nature of this work, the Council wishes to reserve comment until after the Arboretum Mitigation Planning process concludes in December. Ultimately, we are seeking a balanced approach to traffic management in the Montlake area and the Arboretum. Prior to submitting its comments, the Council would also like to receive a briefing from WSDOT and SDOT on the Arboretum Mitigation Planning effort with specific attention to the following:

- The proposed left turn from 24th Avenue to East Lake Washington Boulevard and its specific impacts on the I-5 interchange, the Montlake Interchange and adjacent neighborhoods.
- WSDOT's commitment to mitigation funding early in the project for Arboretum traffic calming and management in 2011 and beyond.
- SDOT's near-term plans for traffic calming that could be implemented as early as 2011.
- SDOT's plans for ongoing traffic monitoring and management in the vicinity of the Arboretum, and process for determining how and when additional traffic calming or management tools should be implemented.

3. ***Corridor Transportation Demand Management Plan.*** The State Legislature's mandate related to corridor management in ESSB 6392 represents a good baseline from which to manage traffic operations on SR 520. We applaud the legislature for being explicit about the minimum occupancy level of three-plus for the HOV lanes and to require notification when the average speeds in the HOV lanes fall below 45 MPH at least ten percent of the time during peak hours. The Council urges WSDOT and the legislature to consider going even further by integrating the use of dynamic tolling with other traffic management tools to more efficiently and effectively manage traffic operations on SR 520. We believe that a single, integrated corridor transportation demand management plan overseen by WSDOT is the way to ensure the best possible results. We urge the legislature to adopt legislation that establishes clear triggers for conversion to full dynamic tolling on SR 520 and for changes to the minimum HOV occupancy levels to facilitate traffic flow, particularly for transit, on the corridor.

4. ***Neighborhood Traffic Management Plans***. Traffic management in adjacent neighborhoods, especially those impacted by possible traffic reduction strategies proposed for the Arboretum, remains a key concern of the Council. Although we recognize that some of the potential neighborhood traffic impacts are still unknown, we strongly encourage WSDOT to create a mitigation funding source that will allow WSDOT and SDOT to address the specific issues as they arise.

Traffic management in the vicinity of Roanoke Park is one issue of particular concern to the Council. As the design specifics for the portion of the SR 520 Project that extends through this neighborhood continue to evolve, we would like WSDOT and SDOT to continue working together to resolve emerging neighborhood issues related to vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian circulation in the vicinity of the lid at 10th Avenue and Delmar Drive.

5. ***Corridor Management Agreement***. With regard to the Arboretum, the second bascule bridge, and neighborhood traffic management, we feel strongly that SDOT and WSDOT would benefit from a formal corridor management agreement between the City and the State. Commitments and a clear delineation of responsibilities would be useful as SDOT and WSDOT continue to proceed with planning and implementation of a variety of elements related to these key corridor management areas. The Council requests that a commitment to developing such an agreement be incorporated within the FEIS as a means to jointly manage the ongoing impacts of the project.

6. ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation.*** We are very pleased with the Workgroup's efforts to identify important non-motorized connections, conflict points and safety issues in the vicinity of SR 520, and to employ appropriate solutions. It is imperative that this work continue throughout the design and construction of the SR 520 Project in order to ensure that bicyclists and pedestrians are protected from conflicts with vehicles and that connections flow smoothly. The Council supports the continued involvement of SDOT and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee in design review, and construction management and mitigation efforts as the SR 520 Project moves forward.

7. ***Portage Bay Bridge.*** The Council remains skeptical that the Portage Bay Bridge design included in the Preferred Alternative is as narrow as it could be. Even though WSDOT has stated its intent to operate the facility at 45 MPH, the Preferred Alternative proposes a new Portage Bay Bridge that is more than 40 feet wider than the current bridge. Further narrowing the shoulder and lane widths proposed for this facility will cause the bridge to appear more like a boulevard and help to induce lower vehicle operating speeds. The Council is supportive of creating a boulevard design with elements such as a planted median that enhance the character and assist with traffic speed control. Ensuring that the cross-section of the new bridge provides transit priority opportunities, such as HOV or transit-only lanes, also remains a priority for the Council. In addition, we also encourage WSDOT to keep working with the Seattle Design Commission and SDOT as the design for the Portage Bay Bridge continues to be refined.

8. ***West Approach/Foster Island.*** We want to applaud the work of WSDOT and the SR 6392 Workgroup for continuing to identify options and alternatives to narrow the SR 520 corridor. As you know, the Council has consistently supported efforts to minimize the

footprint of the SR 520 Project. We want to encourage WSDOT to continue to explore options to narrow structures on the corridor and have a specific suggestion to offer for consideration: WSDOT should examine the impacts of moving the transition of vehicular speeds on the mainline to the west high-rise and manage the corridor from that point west at 45 MPH, with roadway design consistent with the lower speed. This design speed could possibly be designated for only the non-HOV lanes. Doing so could allow for further narrowing of the structure and also aid in the transition to the Montlake Interchange and reduce noise in the Arboretum and Madison Park. We urge WSDOT to evaluate this approach as part of the FEIS.

9. ***Parks and Public Lands***. Although this issue was not specifically addressed in ESSB 6392, we would like to use this opportunity to express two specific concerns:
    - Existing public land in McCurdy Park that is removed from public use should be replaced with comparable lands within the immediate vicinity of McCurdy Park and be easily accessible to nearby residents, without requiring pedestrians to cross major off-ramps or streets. Safe and attractive bicycle and pedestrian connections between the Arboretum and the new SR 520 lid in Montlake should also be provided.
    - Disruptions to other public lands in the vicinity of the SR 520 corridor should be minimized. The Roanoke neighborhood, in particular, is home to several pockets of public land that have been enhanced by local residents. While not officially "parks" that are managed by the City of Seattle, these open spaces are considered parks by the residents that live near and use them. At a minimum, the Council would like WSDOT to create an inventory of all such public lands and assess whether any of these properties will be affected by the construction of the SR 520 Project. We also encourage WSDOT to work with neighborhoods and consider mitigating any potential disturbance of these properties by relocating any such open spaces that are determined to be in the final footprint of the construction area for the new SR 520 Bridge.

10. ***Transit Service and Funding***. The ESSB Transit Planning and Finance Workgroup will begin meeting this fall and is scheduled to release its final recommendations report by the end of this year. As transit functionality will be key to both construction period traffic management and the long-term operation of the SR 520 corridor, the Council will be closely tracking and reviewing the outcomes of this workgroup process. The Council requests a full report on the findings and recommendations of the ESSB Transit Planning and Finance Workgroup as the group's deliberations are coming to a close. We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the use of project mitigation funds and toll revenues to finance transit operations along the corridor and mitigate mobility issues resulting from construction.

11. ***Bus Stop Locations / Re-locations and the Montlake Triangle.*** The Council applauds the collaborative work carried out by the UW, WSDOT, King County Metro and Sound Transit to find a solution to moving forward with redevelopment of the Montlake Triangle and enhancements for transit, pedestrian and bicycle mobility. We also recognize that the ESSB 6392 Workgroup has recommended several potential changes to bus stop locations along Pacific Place and Montlake Boulevard. In particular, we would like to acknowledge that the proposal to create a northbound Montlake bus stop on the newly created lid appears a promising means of enhancing transit connectivity. We support the Workgroup's recommendations and look forward to seeing transit riders and neighborhood residents engaged in this effort before any decisions are finalized.

12. ***Commitment to High Capacity Transit and Light Rail Accommodation.*** We are very pleased with the progress WSDOT and the Workgroup have made in this area and recognize that substantial effort has been made to determine the specific design refinements required to accommodate light rail on the SR 520 Bridge in the future. For the purposes of the FEIS the Council believes sufficient progress has been made. However, we support continued efforts to ensure every possible consideration is accounted for without substantially increasing the cost or environmental scope of the current project.

13. ***Commitment to Mitigation.*** The Council is seeking formalized commitments from WSDOT regarding funding for project mitigation. The Council believes these commitments should be firmly established and specific funding amounts assigned to each element of the City's mitigation plan.

Other issues that are outside the scope of the ESSB 6392 Workgroup's Draft Recommendations Report will also remain important to the Council as the SR 520 Project continues to move forward. Those issues include the following:

1. ***Project Process***. It is unclear how the SR 520 Project will proceed once the FEIS is published. At what time or under what threshold will the City receive assurance that the critical Seattle portions of the project will be fully funded along with the rest of the project? We request that WSDOT and the City develop clear expectations, agreements, and commitments on the final project design and construction process. We request that any understanding between the City and State on this topic take the form of a formal corridor management agreement. The Council will work in partnership with the State to develop these agreements.

2. ***Funding.*** The funding gap for the SR 520 Project is currently estimated at close to $2 billion. To help close this gap, the Council favors full dynamic tolling for the general purpose lanes on I-90 (as opposed to HOT lanes only). This approach would also help to ensure balanced traffic flow on the two floating bridges that cross Lake Washington.

It is a priority for the Council that the entire SR 520 replacement project, from SR 202 to I-5, be fully funded, and we would be pleased to join WSDOT in seeking funding for the project from the legislature. We want to be clear that the Council's endorsement of the Workgroup's project design refinements to the preferred alternative and the project as a whole is dependent upon full funding for **all** project elements on the Westside and the accompanying mitigation.

Thank you again for considering our comments. We appreciate the efforts of all the members of the ESSB Design Refinements and Technical Connections Workgroup and believe this process has produced important and needed results. We look forward to working in continued partnership with you as the SR 520 Project moves forward.

Sincerely,

Council President Richard Conlin

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw

Councilmember Tim Burgess

Councilmember Sally J. Clark

Councilmember Jean Godden

Councilmember Bruce Harrell

Councilmember Nick Licata

Councilmember Mike O'Brien

Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

CC: Governor Christine Gregoire
Paula Hammond, WSDOT Secretary
Senator Mary Margaret Haugen
Representative Judy Clibborn
Mayor Michael McGinn
Peter Hahn, SDOT Director

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Mark A. Emmert, President

September 23, 2010

Ms. Julie Meredith, P.E.
Program Director
SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project
Washington State Department of Transportation
600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Via electronic mail: MeredJL@wsdot.wa.gov

Subject: University of Washington comments on
ESSB 6392: Design Refinements and Transit Connections Workgroup Draft Recommendations Report

Dear Ms. Meredith:

The University of Washington is in support of WSDOT's Preferred Alternative for the SR 520 project. The collaborative efforts among many agencies in the last few years as well as the past few months to refine the Preferred Alternative have resulted in a stronger project.

As Governor Gregoire said at the press conference last April when she announced the Preferred Alternative, we have come a long way since we started with the Pacific Interchange. As you know, the University did not support that concept for several reasons, and we appreciate all of the time and hard work that has gone into this process to get many stakeholders to this point of support.

As a stakeholder, we also recognize that the Preferred Alternative reflects many other compromises that were made to balance the needs of all parties. An example of this is the compromise reached over the Lake Washington Boulevard Ramps. We support the Preferred Alternative's design that removed those ramps from the sensitive area of the Arboretum, while maintaining most of the functionality for transit. The design retains capacity along Montlake Boulevard so that transit is not unduly delayed. Further changes to those ramps, such as permanent turn restrictions on 24th, would compromise transit flow on Montlake Boulevard. Another compromise was providing for a managed shoulder on the Portage Bay Viaduct in order to reduce the corridor's width. Allowing traffic to use this shoulder during peak periods will reduce congestion along Montlake Boulevard, but also responds to the community's desire to have a narrower Portage Bay Bridge. In addition, we applaud the work being done with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee to create a set of mitigation measures, including ways to slow and decrease traffic in the Arboretum. We appreciate the attention that is being paid to this regional resource and know that the

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December report to the Legislature will give it and other regulatory bodies involved in this project a set of measures that can enhance the Arboretum.

We view the second Montlake Bascule Bridge as a critical element to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to the UW campus. The existing sidewalks on this bridge are too narrow to accommodate the increase in bicyclists who will be able to cross SR 520 on the new path. Transit, too, could be delayed as traffic has to merge from the SR 520 interchange area into the four existing (and narrow) lanes. The second bascule bridge will provide a very wide shared bike and pedestrian path, and provide two additional lanes that can be dedicated to transit. As you know, the UW's transportation demand management program is dependent on these alternative modes of travel. We understand that the second bridge would be constructed late in the overall project schedule after other critical infrastructure is complete. However, it is integral to the SR 520 project and should not be eliminated later as a cost-saving measure.

Finally, we appreciate the time and energy put into the Montlake Triangle Charrette this summer by WSDOT, the Seattle City Council, SDOT, Metro, Sound Transit, the bike and pedestrian community, and members of the Seattle Design Commission to refine the Preferred Alternative's plan for the Montlake Triangle area. As we stated early in the process, the University requested consideration of both a tunnel under Montlake Boulevard as well as the overcrossing of Montlake to ensure our collective decision was the right one for future generations. While the Regents and the City have already approved the original Sound Transit pedestrian bridge, we welcomed the opportunity to take a fresh look at the under- and overcrossing options.

During the charrette review of both options, the charrette participants identified the best undercrossing option to be a short, direct tunnel from the mezzanine level of the Sound Transit UW station to the southeast tip of the Triangle (south of the Triangle Garage), with elevators to the surface. As the report states, "The benefits of the undercrossing included a direct pedestrian connection from the University of Washington to the UW Sound Transit station, while providing a grade-separated crossing for light rail passengers, separating the majority of pedestrians from bicyclists, and facilitating an efficient connection between bus and rail. However, it became clear during the charrette that the undercrossing option did not provide an enhanced connection for regional bicycle and pedestrian users going to and from the University or the Burke Gilman Trail from the SR 520 regional trail and surrounding Seattle neighborhoods. Without this regional connection, the undercrossing option did not provide adequate regional benefit to non-Sound Transit users." As a result, we understand that WSDOT could not commit to using public funds to pay for an undercrossing option.

While we feel the undercrossing has some significant benefits to the University of Washington, we also see the significant benefits to the University and the broader community of the overcrossing of Montlake which WSDOT can use public funds to support. As the report states, "The benefits of the selected overcrossing option include a direct connection from the UW Sound Transit station over Montlake Boulevard to the Montlake Triangle, then connection to the University of Washington main campus and the Burke Gilman Trail via the new Rainier Vista Land Bridge. The overcrossing option combined with the Rainier Vista Land Bridge would separate pedestrians and bicycles from vehicles and buses using Montlake Boulevard, while still allowing for enhanced at-grade pedestrian crossings at both the Montlake Boulevard/Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard/Pacific Place intersections. The

overcrossing option/Rainier Vista land bridge provides multiple choices for regional and local bicycle users and efficient connections between transit modes in the Triangle area." With the increase in bike and pedestrian traffic in this area as forecasted by Sound Transit, WSDOT and our own UPass success, we understand and support the report recommending the overcrossing as a refinement to the Preferred Alternative.

At a recent meeting of our Board of Regents, concern was expressed about the design of the new overcrossing (i.e., a Sound Transit Pedestrian bridge) and how it would be blended into the surrounding environment of the Montlake Triangle and Husky Stadium. As this project moves forward, our input into the design will come through the Architectural Commission as well as our Regents since they have final design approval for projects on campus, as outlined in our Memorandum of Agreement with Sound Transit.

The design refinements to the Montlake Triangle area as outlined in the ESSB 6392 Report joined the best elements of many projects—a bridge for pedestrians to access Sound Transit's Link station, the Rainier Vista plan which improves regional mobility for bikes and pedestrians, enhancements to existing transit stops, and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Achieving that vision, however, requires immediate action so that the improvements are in place when the Sound Transit station at Husky Stadium opens in 2016. Agreement on the overcrossing needs to be reached early in 2011 or Sound Transit will build its original approved bridge, foreclosing the opportunity to make the Rainier Vista land bridge a part of this regional plan.

On behalf of the University of Washington, thank you for including us in this process as you worked to refine the Preferred Alternative for the SR 520 project.

Sincerely yours,

Mark A. Emmert
President

cc: UW Board of Regents