

What environmental analysis has WSDOT already completed?

We have evaluated the environmental effects of three projects in the SR 520 program. Following the completion of environmental review and permitting, we can begin construction.

Project	Environmental milestones	Begin construction
I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft EIS: August 2006 Supplemental draft EIS: January 2010 Preferred alternative: April 2010 Final EIS: Planned spring 2011 Record of Decision: Planned summer 2011 Permits pending, expected by the end of 2011 	<p>2012</p> <p><i>Pending completion of environmental review</i></p>
Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental assessment: December 2009 Finding of No Significant Impact: May 2010 All permits received 	Spring 2011
Pontoon Construction Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft EIS: May 2010 Final EIS: December 2010 Record of Decision: January 2011 All permits received 	February 2011



Stay involved with the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program:

Website
www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge

E-mail
SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov

Phone: 1-888-520-NEWS (6397)

E-mail updates
 Visit the SR 520 program website to sign up to receive monthly e-mail updates.

Mail
 Washington State Department of Transportation
 SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program
 600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
 Seattle, WA 98101

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SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program



April 2011

Protecting the environment while enhancing safety and reliability

SR 520 is a critical link connecting the major population and employment centers of the Puget Sound region on either side of Lake Washington. Approximately 115,000 vehicles carrying 190,000 people travel the SR 520 Evergreen Point Bridge every day. After nearly 50 years in service, the floating bridge and other structures in the corridor are vulnerable to windstorms and earthquakes. The SR 520 program will enhance safety by replacing the vulnerable structures and keep the region moving with vital transit and service improvements along the SR 520 corridor from I-5 in Seattle to SR 202 in Redmond.

WSDOT is committed to enhancing safety and delivering transportation solutions while minimizing effects on the built and natural environments. As we move forward with planning and construction, we must carry out our responsibility to investigate potential environmental effects of the program.

How does WSDOT abide by federal and state environmental regulations?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) require project sponsors to evaluate the environmental effects of their projects before a decision is made to move forward. NEPA applies to federally funded or permitted projects in all 50 states, while SEPA applies to projects within the state of Washington. Projects within the SR 520 program comply with both laws, which have generally similar requirements.

NEPA and SEPA both require evaluation of a project's effects on the built and natural environment so decision makers can weigh environmental considerations alongside other factors. Public review and comment on environmental documents are important to the success of the process, and WSDOT conducts extensive outreach to ensure that all interested parties are aware of opportunities to participate.



Lead Agencies

Each project evaluated under NEPA and SEPA must have a "lead agency" that is responsible for compliance with these regulations. For projects in the SR 520 program, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the NEPA lead agency, and WSDOT is the SEPA lead agency.



How does the environmental review process work?

In the environmental review process, WSDOT evaluates how the project would affect elements of the built environment (such as land use, parks, cultural resources, visual quality and noise) and the natural environment (such as wetlands, water quality, fisheries and wildlife). These evaluations involve work by planners, scientists, and engineers who review existing documents, conduct field studies and calculate the effects of the project for each environmental resource.

For projects that are likely to have significant impacts, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is prepared. This process was used for the I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project and the Pontoon Construction Project. As noted below, we completed an environmental assessment for the Eastside Transit and HOV Project.

An EIS includes the following steps:

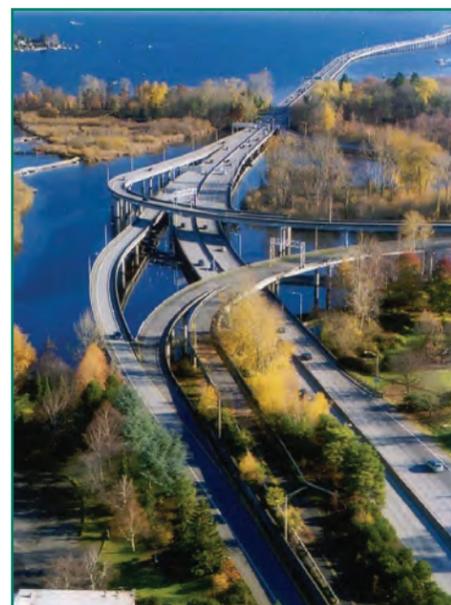
- 1. Public and agency scoping.** Scoping provides an opportunity for agencies, tribes and the public to comment on the project's purpose and need, the range of alternatives for accomplishing the project purpose, and the topics to be evaluated in the environmental analysis.
- 2. Draft EIS.** The draft EIS describes the project alternatives and the existing conditions in the study area, and evaluates the environmental effects of each alternative, including a "no build" scenario. It also identifies potential measures to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate for the identified project effects. Once the draft EIS is published, comments can be submitted for a minimum of 45 days. FHWA and WSDOT also hold a public open house or hearing to receive comments. If new alternatives or new potential impacts are identified, a supplemental draft EIS may be prepared, as we completed for the I-5 to Medina project in 2010.
- 3. Final EIS.** In the final EIS, FHWA and WSDOT respond to all the comments received on the draft EIS and supplemental draft EIS. This document also identifies a "preferred alternative," or the design that best meets the purpose and need of the project after meaningful consideration of the public and agency comments and environmental effects. The final EIS also identifies the mitigation measures for the preferred alternative.
- 4. Record of Decision.** After the final EIS is issued, FHWA prepares a Record of Decision. This document describes the selected course of action for the project and makes specific mitigation commitments. It also documents compliance with other regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Once the Record of Decision is issued, we can proceed with final design and permitting.

Within the SR 520 program, the Eastside Transit and HOV Project was evaluated in an environmental assessment (EA), which allows FHWA and WSDOT to determine whether or not a project has significant environmental impacts without completing a full EIS. This project received a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in May 2010.

What is the SR 520 program?

The SR 520 program includes three projects:

- **I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project**
Replaces the SR 520 floating bridge, approaches and roadway between I-5 and the eastern shore of Lake Washington.
- **Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project**
Completes and improves the transit and HOV system from Evergreen Point Road to the SR 202 interchange in Redmond.
- **Pontoon Construction Project**
Advances pontoon construction to restore the floating section of the SR 520 bridge in the event of a catastrophic failure and to store those pontoons until needed.



SR 520 and the Washington Park Arboretum looking east.

What are the environmental benefits of the SR 520 program?

- Improved water quality in Lake Washington and local streams and creeks with the addition of stormwater treatment.
- New noise reduction strategies along the SR 520 corridor near neighboring parks and communities.
- Improvements to the Arboretum and a new park along the Ship Canal to mitigate for effects on project area parks and trails.
- Projects to enhance wetlands and aquatic habitat in the Lake Washington watershed.
- Improvements to Yarrow Creek and culverts to make them fish passable.
- Enhanced community connectivity along the corridor with lids spanning SR 520.
- Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity with local and regional trails recommended by communities.



Untreated stormwater currently drains directly into Lake Union, Portage Bay, and Lake Washington. Stormwater treatment will be provided as a part of the SR 520 program.

How has WSDOT involved the public throughout the environmental process?

The environmental process provides an important opportunity for the public to understand and comment on the environmental effects of the SR 520 projects. Comments and questions from community members, residents, businesses, organizations and lawmakers help us to design a better SR 520 corridor for drivers, transit riders, bicyclists, pedestrians and neighbors.

Since 2006, we have received more than 2,200 comments that have helped shape the program's environmental documentation and selected transportation solutions. Public comments and responses become a part of the public record and are included as a component of our final environmental documents.



Water lilies beneath the existing SR 520 ramps in the Arboretum. The ramps will be removed as part of the I-5 to Medina project.

Permit review process

Before we can begin construction, we need to receive permits from a variety of jurisdictions and agencies. Agency and jurisdiction decision makers use our environmental documentation to help inform their permitting processes. They also use permit notices and permit hearings to gather feedback from interested citizens and agencies on the proposed action.

We coordinate with these decision makers throughout the environmental process to help minimize environmental effects, incorporate interested citizens and agency comments and implement practical measures for environmental stewardship.



I-5 to Medina project supplemental draft EIS public meeting in February 2010.