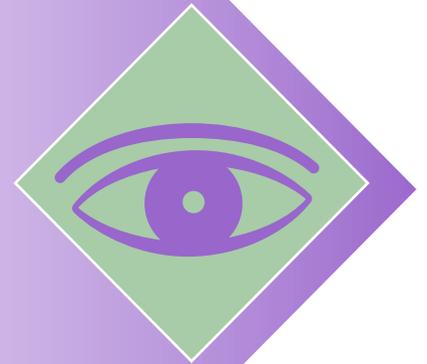


12 January 2006

**SR 520 Bridge Replacement
and HOV Project Draft EIS
6-Lane Alternative Options**

**Addendum to
Visual Quality
and Aesthetics
Discipline Report**



SR 520 Bridge Replacement
and HOV Project EIS
6-Lane Alternative Options

**Addendum to
Visual Quality and Aesthetics
Discipline Report**



Prepared for
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Federal Highway Administration
Sound Transit

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| EIS | Environmental Impact Statement |
| HOV | high-occupancy vehicle |
| MOHAI | Museum of History and Industry |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| SR | State Route |
| WSDOT | Washington State Department of Transportation |



Introduction

This addendum to the *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report* (Parametrix et al. 2005; Appendix S to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) describes the affected environment and environmental consequences for three options to the 6-Lane Alternative. Two options are located in Seattle and one is on the Eastside. These options are described below.

What are the key points of this addendum?

The 6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange option would cause more visual change than the original 6-Lane Alternative. This option would affect the visual character and quality of south Union Bay and its shorelines, Marsh Island and the Arboretum, and the southeast corner of the University of Washington campus. This option would also result in highly visible changes to the visual character of Montlake Boulevard and the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) facilities would lose less land and fewer structures compared to the original 6-Lane Alternative. The Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) building would be removed. As with the original 6-Lane Alternative, sound walls would also block any panoramic views from the Union Bay Bridge that would be available to motorists.

The Second Montlake Bridge option would have a greater visual effect than the original 6-Lane Alternative because the addition of a new bridge alongside the existing Montlake Bridge would change the context of the older bridge and change views in the immediate vicinity.

The South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access - 108th Avenue Northeast option would permanently remove stands of tall street trees of various ages and shrubs on the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) property (maintenance yard) and at the Yarrowood Condominiums complex. Widening 108th Avenue Northeast, Northup Way, and the westbound off-ramp would augment the existing transportation-oriented character of the intersection. The sidewalk and landscaping along the front of the daycare center at the southwest corner of 108th Avenue Northeast and Northup Way could



be narrowed, bringing the roadway closer to the outside play area adjacent to Northup Way.

What options are being considered in this addendum?

6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange Option

This option would remove the Montlake interchange along SR 520 and would construct a new interchange at Pacific Street, just east of the Montlake interchange. Exhibit 1 shows the proposed lane configuration for this option.

The new interchange would be primarily located over the WSDOT-owned peninsula near the Washington Park Arboretum. A new on- and off-ramp to and from the north would extend to Pacific Street at the University of Washington. A column-supported ramp of four general-purpose lanes (two lanes in each direction) extending over Union Bay (referred to as the Union Bay Bridge in this addendum) from the new interchange would touch down at the University of Washington Husky Stadium parking lot before joining the intersection of Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard. At that intersection, the roadway would be lowered 8 to 10 feet from the existing elevation to provide vehicle-only access. The intersection would be covered to allow pedestrian access above and away from vehicular traffic.

The roadway on Montlake Boulevard north of Pacific Street would be widened to the east until just south of Northeast 45th Street. The navigational channel crossed by the new Union Bay Bridge would be the same width as the existing Union Bay reach (175 feet), with a vertical clearance of either 70 or 110 feet.¹ Columns would be placed just outside the width of the ship canal to not block boat traffic.

Ramps to and from Lake Washington Boulevard would still be included in this option; however, their footprint would be slightly different from the original 6-Lane Alternative. The ramp connections to and from Lake

¹ The establishment of a new governing clearance would prevent any vessel with a higher clearance requirement from traveling east from the Montlake Cut to Lake Washington north of the Evergreen Point Bridge. Before establishing a new governing clearance, the Coast Guard will consider whether vessels requiring a higher clearance have an essential use in north Lake Washington. Two vessels with a vertical clearance higher than 70 feet are known to travel this part of the lake. No vessels with a vertical clearance higher than 110 feet travel this part of the lake.



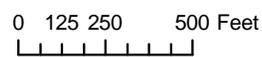


Exhibit 1. Lane Configuration of the 6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange Option
 SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Washington Boulevard and to and from the Union Bay Bridge would construct a full diamond interchange, as opposed to a partial diamond interchange under the original 6-Lane Alternative. This full diamond interchange would provide more access to and from Lake Washington Boulevard. No access to or from SR 520 would be provided at Montlake Boulevard.

From Montlake Boulevard to I-5, SR 520 would be six lanes wide (three in either direction). The profile of the Portage Bay Bridge would not differ under this option from the original 6-Lane Alternative.

Buses would access SR 520 via the Union Bay Bridge through the University area, providing for a more direct connection between buses and the proposed Sound Transit North Link Station at Husky Stadium. Instead of connecting to the Montlake interchange as in the original 6-Lane Alternative, the bicycle/pedestrian path would follow the Union Bay Bridge from SR 520 and would end at the Pacific Street interchange, close to the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Second Montlake Bridge Option

The intent of the Second Montlake Bridge option is to narrow the SR 520 footprint through the Montlake neighborhood, while providing for transit (bus) access from SR 520 to the University of Washington. Exhibit 2 shows the proposed lane configuration for this option, which would be the same as the No Montlake Freeway Transit Stop option, except that it would also include a second Montlake bridge across the Montlake Cut. This bridge would be a parallel bascule (draw) bridge located just east of the existing Montlake Bridge. One bridge would carry northbound traffic, and one would carry southbound traffic.

South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th Avenue Northeast Option

The intent of the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th Avenue Northeast option is to improve access for buses to the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride from eastbound SR 520 and from the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride to westbound SR 520. This option, which is shown in Exhibit 3, would add a new transit/HOV-only westbound on-ramp from 108th Avenue Northeast and a new transit/HOV-only eastbound off-ramp to 108th Avenue Northeast.

The footprint of SR 520 east of Bellevue Way would be widened slightly to accommodate the new ramps. Both 108th Avenue Northeast and Northup Way would be widened and improved under this option. One





- Option Lane Configuration
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Path
- Shoulders and Barriers
- Intersections

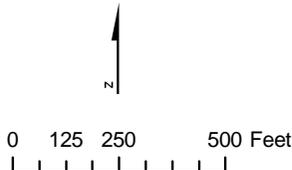
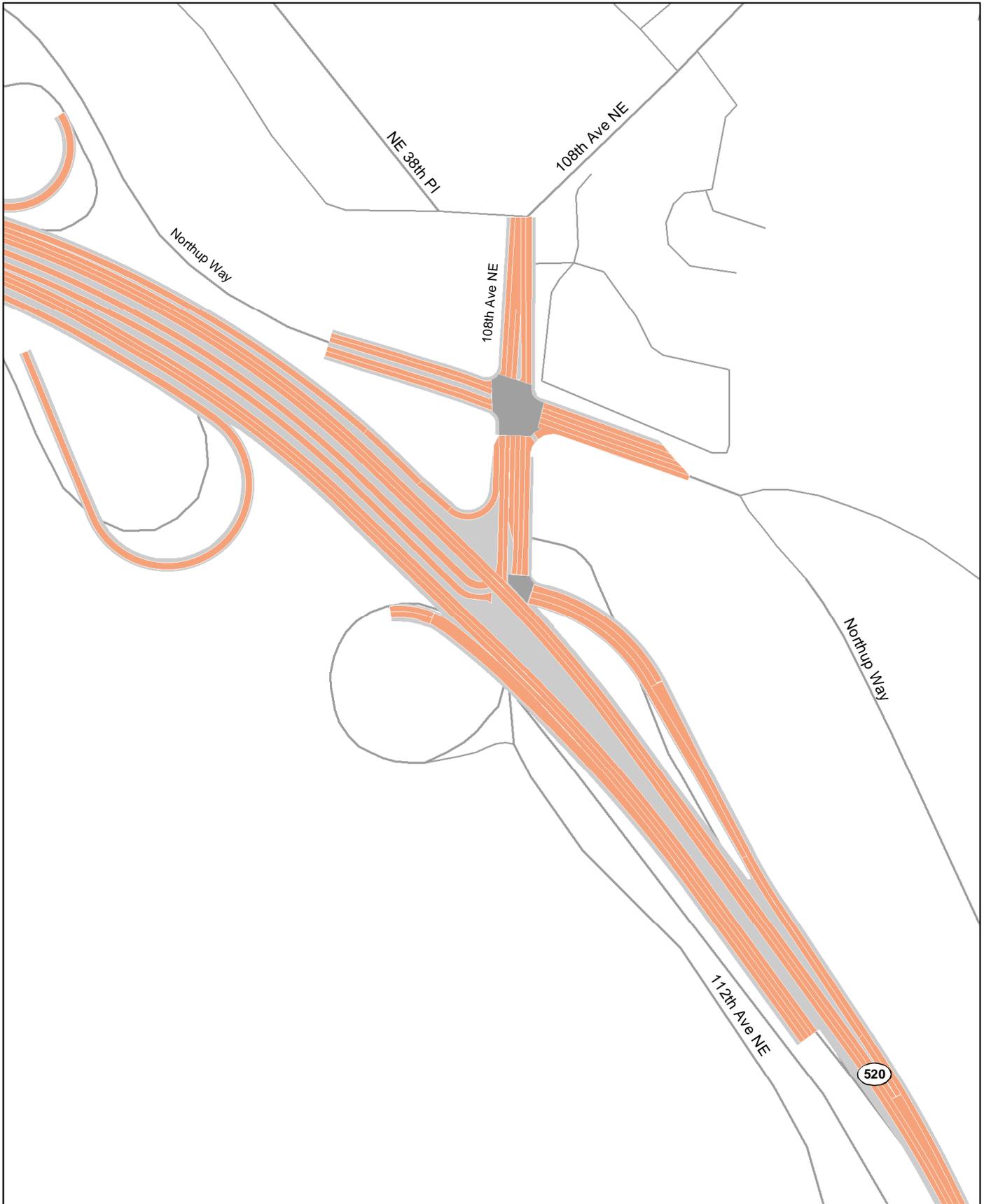


Exhibit 2. Lane Configuration of the Second Montlake Bridge Option
 SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project



-  Option Lane Configuration
-  Shoulders and Barriers
-  Intersections

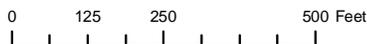


Exhibit 3. Lane Configuration for the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access - 108th Avenue Northeast Option
 SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

lane would be added to 108th Avenue Northeast between the eastbound on-ramp and 38th Place Northeast. Along with the additional through lane on 108th Avenue Northeast, the northbound leg of the 108th Avenue Northeast/Northup Way intersection would be channelized to include two exclusive left-turn lanes, a through lane, and a shared through/right-turn lane.

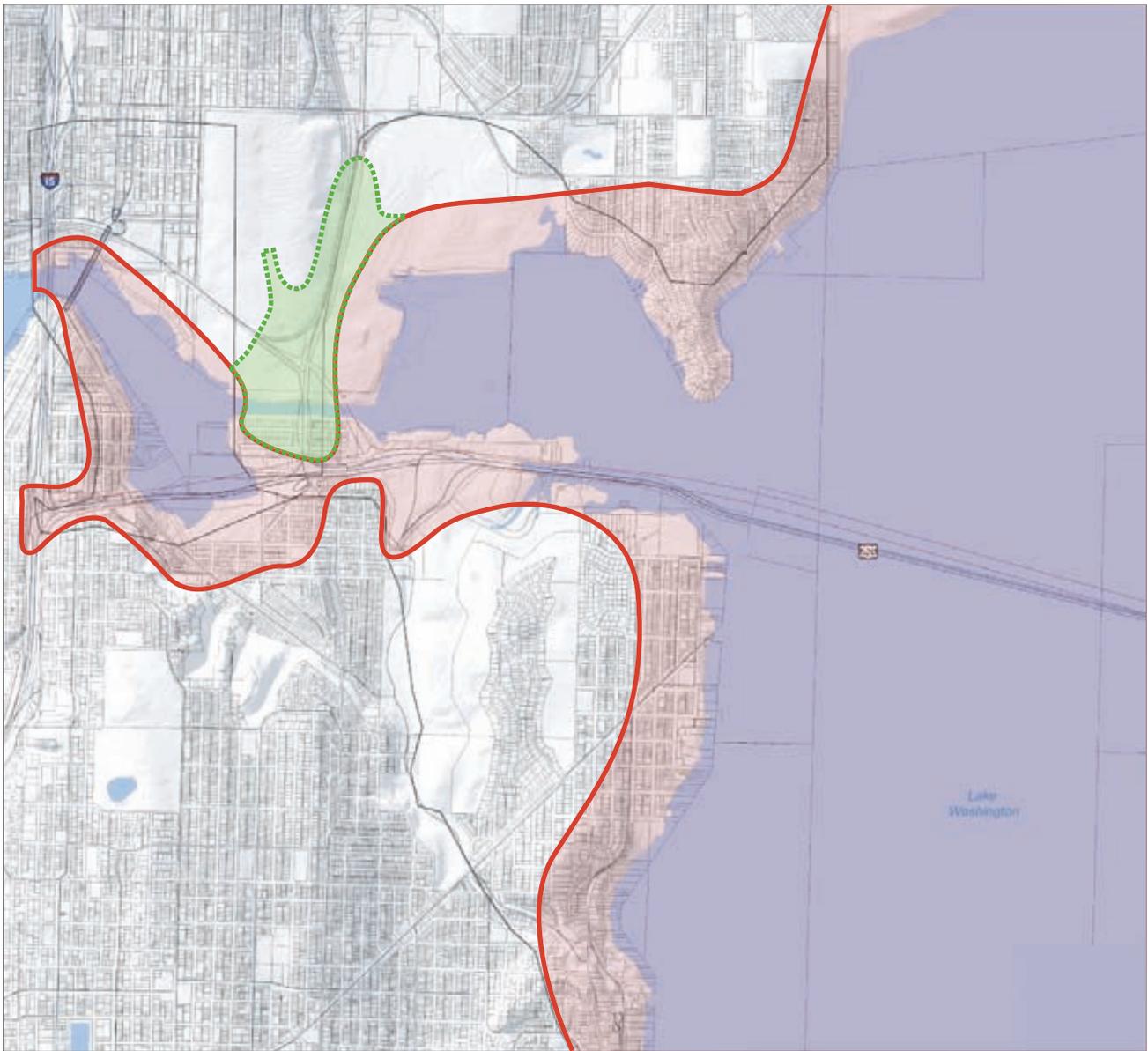
There is also a possibility for adding a westbound second left-turn lane at the 108th Avenue Northeast/Northup Way intersection to facilitate clearing the left-turn queue and serving a higher number of westbound left-turn and through trips.

What additional information was collected for this analysis?

For the 6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange option, the visual quality discipline team increased the size of the viewshed slightly in Seattle to include Rainier Vista and Montlake Boulevard north of Pacific Street (Exhibit 4). The discipline team also visited the site several times. Locations and heights of sound walls on the Union Bay Bridge were obtained from the noise studies.

The Eastside viewshed did not change from the original 6-Lane Alternative.





-  Viewshed Boundary
-  Expanded Viewshed Boundary



Exhibit 4 Viewshed Map for Seattle Options
SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Affected Environment

How was the visual assessment information collected?

The visual quality discipline team collected information for this addendum using the same methodology described in the *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report* (Parametrix et al. 2005; Appendix S to the Draft EIS). The discipline team visited the site several times to evaluate the new affected environment area; the team also reviewed engineering plans and technical data to understand how the options could affect visual character and quality.

What is the current visual character of the study area?

Additional affected environment in the study area includes the Montlake Cut/Ship Canal, north from the Montlake Cut along Montlake Boulevard through the University of Washington campus, and Rainier Vista. These new areas were added to the project viewshed (see Exhibit 4).

The Montlake Cut is a narrow, straight-sided, and walled channel linking Union and Portage bays. It is the north boundary of the Shelby-Hamlin neighborhood of Montlake and the south boundary of the University of Washington campus. The historic Montlake bascule bridge spans the cut and is the only crossing over the cut. Mature trees and park-like landscapes line both sides of the Montlake Cut, screening views of the residences to the south and the landscaped campus to the north. Trails parallel the Montlake Cut on both sides and lead to the University of Washington boat house on the north side and a wooden viewing deck in East Montlake on the south side.

The University of Washington Medical Center's research facilities and hospital are on the north side of the Montlake Cut and west of Montlake Boulevard. East of Montlake Boulevard a long strip of park-like open space with mature specimen trees and expanses of turf runs east-west between the Montlake Cut from the large parking lot south of Husky Stadium. The park has expanses of turf and clusters of mature, tall conifer species. It is a popular Husky pre-game tailgate party venue



and has a group of climbing walls at the eastern end. The University of Washington boat house, Water Activities Center, and a small dock are on Union Bay's shoreline.

The Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection handles high traffic volumes (vehicular and pedestrian) because of its location between large parking areas, the medical center, and the sports complex. The traffic volume, large parking areas, overhead cables for buses and communications, light poles, and traffic signals establish a distinctly urban transportation node character. There are no identified sensitive or significant views from the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection due to the tall trees and buildings that block most views.

Montlake Boulevard between Pacific Street and Northeast 45th Street is a landscaped corridor that includes three pedestrian bridges connecting the East Campus to the Central Campus. The Burke-Gilman Trail just west of and above Montlake Boulevard is a heavily used bicycle/pedestrian route for commuting and recreation. Montlake Boulevard is lined with mature trees and shrubs, and has a tree-lined median. These trees act as a visual screen between the roadway, sidewalks, and parking lots, and create a pleasant pedestrian walkway. Several driveways connect to the east (northbound) side of Montlake Boulevard for access to parking areas, sports facilities (including Husky Stadium) and the southbound lanes.

The University of Washington's Rainier Vista is a tree-lined, formally landscaped view and pedestrian corridor between the "Red Square" Plaza and just north of Pacific Street. The Final EIS for the Seattle Campus Master Plan (University of Washington 2001) noted that Rainier Vista is the most valued view corridor of the University of Washington's Seattle campus and is vital to the character and form of the campus's overall open space system. Rainier Vista dates to the 1909 Olmsted Plan for the Alaska-Yukon Exposition, and is considered to be part of the historic structure of the campus.

What is the current visual quality of the study area?

The vividness, intactness, and unity remain generally the same as described in Appendix S, *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report*. Vividness is the degree of drama, memorability, or distinctiveness of the landscape components. Intactness is a measure of the visual



integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements and eyesores. Unity is the degree of visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole.

Seattle

Vividness for the Montlake-University District areas ranges from low to high. Near the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection, vividness is moderate because of the unique structure of the Husky Stadium and views toward Union Bay from the north end of Montlake Boulevard. The Montlake Cut and Union Bay shoreline have moderate to high vividness because of the combination of the bascule bridge and its towers, the mature landscaping along the channel, and views to and from Union and Portage bays. Vividness within Rainier Vista is moderately high because of the surrounding formal plantings, Drumheller Fountain, and the long axial view.

Intactness is moderate for the Montlake-University District area. The Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection area is a large, busy crossroads surrounded by mid-rise public buildings and Husky Stadium. The Montlake Cut and Union Bay shoreline have moderate intactness because the dense vegetation lining the Cut softens the channel and the boats and docks are small intrusions that are compatible with the natural shoreline landscape of Union Bay. Intactness for views within Rainier Vista is moderately high because there is very little intrusion into the corridor from the outside, other than temporary construction equipment and fences.

Unity in the Montlake-University District area ranges from low to moderately high. This area is a mix of suburban and urban throughout, with formal landscaping. Unity in the Montlake Cut and along the Union Bay shoreline near the University's Waterfront Activities Center is moderate because shoreline buildings, boats, docks, and other structures dominate the foreground views of the waterways. Unity for Rainier Vista is high to very high because it is a coherent, formal landscape.

Eastside

Vividness, intactness, and unity on the Eastside are the same as described for the original 6-Lane Alternative.



Who is affected by changes to the views and visual quality in the study area and how sensitive are they to the changes?

Viewer groups that would be affected by changes to views and visual quality are the same as those described in the *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report*. Groups with views to and from the SR 520 include boaters, joggers, picnickers, and park-goers in and around Union Bay; students, faculty, staff, and visitors at the University of Washington; and residents and commuters in Montlake, the University District, and around the 108th Avenue Northeast interchange. Widening 108th Avenue Northeast would affect residents in the condominiums north of Northup Way and east of 108th Avenue Northeast. Their sensitivity is likely to be moderate to high where views from their residences were affected, either through removal of the existing tree screen or installation of sound walls.

Residents and park and trail users would likely have high sensitivity to landscape aesthetics where the view is of a pleasant, natural-appearing landscape. Motorists may also have moderate sensitivity to the views from and toward the Montlake Cut and Montlake Bridge. Otherwise, motorists' sensitivity is likely to be lower in other areas of the project because this is a busy transportation corridor. The University of Washington viewer groups could have either low sensitivity outside the central campus because they would be focused on their individual activities, or moderate to high sensitivity because of the quality of the landscaping and architecture, especially in the central older part of the campus.



Potential Effects of the Project

How were the simulation viewpoints selected?

No simulations were needed for these options.

What are the potential effects on structures, vegetation, and views?

Seattle

6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange Option

Compared to the original 6-Lane Alternative, this option would result in greater overall visual change, with the exception of the MOHAI and NOAA facility properties. The 6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange option would result in highly noticeable changes to the character of the SR 520/Montlake Boulevard interchange, the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection, and Montlake Boulevard north of the intersection. The addition of the Union Bay Bridge and the interchange over the peninsula near the Arboretum would noticeably change the visual character of the Union Bay/Montlake Cut area. This is in part because there is no structure over Union Bay now, but also because of the height and columns of the Union Bay Bridge and the height and size of the interchange. As with the original 6-Lane Alternative, sound walls on the roadways would make the structure appear more massive.

The permanent removal of the on- and off-ramps at the SR 520/Montlake Boulevard interchange would result in highly noticeable visual changes because of the conversion of pavement to landscaped open space. As with the original 6-Lane Alternative, the MOHAI building would have to be removed to accommodate the new facility. However, less of the NOAA property would need to be removed, allowing most or all of the NOAA facility structures and the gas station to be retained. The retention of structures and landscaping, together with the removal of the Montlake Boulevard ramps, could



produce positive changes if the reclaimed areas are landscaped in a style appropriate to the character of the area.

The Union Bay Bridge would be 110 feet, possibly 70 feet, above the water near the Montlake Cut and would dominate views from East Montlake Park and Marsh and Foster islands. The bridge would also be highly visible from points around Union Bay having views of Husky Stadium and the Arboretum. Two sets of columns on Marsh Island and the bridge overhead would encroach upon the island's broad views, openness, and unobstructed sky overhead. The Union Bay Bridge would be visible from the north stands of Husky Stadium, but would not obstruct the iconic views of Lake Washington or Mount Rainier.

The Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection would be noticeably different due to the Portage Bay Bridge's terminus at the south Husky Stadium parking lot and the lowered roadway at Montlake Boulevard. The recessed roadway at the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection would create a markedly different visual environment, but could provide a safer, more pleasant pedestrian environment.

The removal of the sidewalk and all or most of the street trees of various ages along the east side of Montlake Boulevard between the bicycle trail just north of the Montlake Bridge and Northeast 45th Street would result in an additional visual effect that would not occur with the original 6-Lane Alternative. These removals would continue the trend initiated by the University, which recently removed all of the mature conifers lining Montlake Boulevard at Husky Stadium. As a result, the widening of Montlake Boulevard might have a reduced overall effect on the street character. The temporary removal of the three pedestrian overcrossings spanning Montlake Boulevard during construction would cause a temporary change in the character of the boulevard. The overcrossings would be replaced as part of the road widening.

Changes to the views from Rainier Vista would vary, depending on the viewer's location and the distance from the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection. The intersection and views beyond are not clearly visible from Central Plaza or Drumheller Fountain, the most sensitive portions of the vista, due to trees and variations in terrain. However, the Union Bay Bridge could be partially visible from much of Rainier Vista when trees are leafless. The effect on views near the



intersection would be moderate because the area already has a strongly transportation-oriented character.

Permanent removal of the on- and off-ramps at the SR 520/Montlake Boulevard interchange would result in highly noticeable visual changes there. Compared to the original 6-Lane Alternative, less landscaping would be removed at the NOAA property, allowing most or all of the NOAA facility structures and the gas station to be retained. The retention of structures and landscaping, together with the removal of the Montlake Boulevard ramps, could be positive changes.

Second Montlake Bridge Option

This option would have a greater visual effect than the original 6-Lane Alternative because the addition of a new bridge alongside the existing Montlake Bridge would change the context of the older bridge and change views in the immediate vicinity. Removing two houses and a swath of mature trees and shrubs between 50 and 80 feet wide as far as Pacific Street would change the visual character of the bridge corridor and Montlake Boulevard. The new bridge and roadway would be more open than the current corridor and the combined results would noticeably change views of and from the Montlake Bridge area.

Eastside

South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th Avenue Northeast Option

This option would result in additional visual changes at the 108th Avenue Northeast intersection. Widening 108th Avenue Northeast, Northup Way, and the westbound off-ramp would be a noticeable change that would augment the existing character of the busy transportation node. Permanent removal of stands of tall trees of various ages along the street and shrubs on the WSDOT property and at the Yarrowood Condominiums complex would increase the overall visual effect. Removing the trees would intensify the urban character of the intersection and reduce the visual screen into and from nearby affected properties, in particular at Yarrowood where the trees now serve as a visual buffer. The sidewalk and landscaping along the front of the daycare center at the southwest corner of 108th Avenue Northeast and Northup Way could be narrowed, bringing the roadway closer to the outside play area adjacent to Northup Way.



Would the project create new sources of shadow, glare, or light?

Seattle

6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange Option

Light, glare, or shadow effects would be similar to the original 6-Lane Alternative, except along Montlake Boulevard north of the Pacific Street intersection. Removal of trees from Montlake Boulevard would change the light/shade conditions on the sidewalks and plazas of the sports complex.

Second Montlake Bridge Option

This option's light, glare, or shadow effects would be similar to the original 6-Lane Alternative. The Second Montlake Bridge would increase shading on the canal waters, but this may be partially offset by the removal of tall trees on the south bank. On Montlake Boulevard north of the Montlake Cut, the removal of street trees would eliminate shading in the park-like area east of the boulevard.

Eastside

South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th Avenue Northeast Option

This option's light, glare, or shadow effects would be similar to the original 6-Lane Alternative, but with additional effects at the 108th Avenue Northeast interchange because of the removal of shade-providing trees.

How would project construction temporarily affect visual quality and aesthetics?

The general construction-related effects described in Appendix S, *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report*, would apply to these three options as well. Possible additional effects are described for each option below.



Seattle

6 Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange Option

Additional effects would arise from construction of the Union Bay Bridge and the Pacific Street interchange. Both work structures and construction equipment would be highly visible because of the openness of the surroundings and the height of the bridges.

Reconstruction of the Pacific Street intersection, the Union Bay Bridge terminus in the south Husky Stadium parking lot, and widening Montlake Boulevard would cause appreciable visual effects as a result of congestion and change due to construction equipment, vegetation removal, traffic detours, and excavation, especially for the lowered roadway at the intersection. Most of these construction-related changes would be temporary, and revegetation, where possible, may ameliorate the permanent changes.

Second Montlake Bridge Option

Additional effects would arise from construction of the second bridge and widening Montlake Boulevard to the north and south to accommodate the bridge. Work structures and construction equipment would be visible in the immediate vicinity of the bridges.

This option would cause considerable visual effects as a result of congestion and change due to construction equipment, vegetation removal, and traffic detours. Most of these construction-related changes would be temporary, and revegetation, where possible, may ameliorate the permanent changes.

Eastside

South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th Avenue Northeast Option

Reconfiguring the ramps at 108th Avenue Northeast would require excavation and construction activities and would remove screening vegetation and/or structures that would change the visual character of this area. Increased traffic congestion and the presence of construction equipment would considerably reduce the visual quality of the surrounding area as well. Most of these changes would be temporary, and revegetation, where possible, may ameliorate the permanent changes.



Mitigation

What has been done to avoid or minimize negative effects?

The mitigation concepts described in the *Visual Quality and Aesthetics Discipline Report* would apply to these three options as well.

How could the project compensate for unavoidable negative effects?

The general mitigation concepts described in the discipline report would apply to these three options as well. Additional ideas are:

- The Union Bay Bridge will likely have sound walls between the Pacific Street interchange and the Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard intersection (please refer to the *Addendum to Noise Discipline Report*) that will act as visual barriers and create a confined, hard-edged, visual character and reduce visual quality. The sound walls should be carefully designed to be as aesthetically pleasing as possible and to keep views open to the extent possible.
- The Union Bay Bridge will be a prominent presence in views of and from Union Bay and Montlake, and portions of Portage Bay. The bridge should be designed to be a positive and low-key presence in those views, whether by using a narrow profile, reduced-column design, or camouflaging colors.
- Columns supporting the Union Bay Bridge over Marsh Island and the Arboretum peninsula should be located to avoid the trails and create as much openness as possible.
- Columns supporting the SR 520 mainline over Foster Island should be located to avoid the trails and create as much openness as possible.
- The design of the Second Montlake Bridge should not be a replica of the older bridge, but should be in harmony with the existing historic bridge and neighborhood. Areas where natural vegetation and landscaping have been removed should be replanted and the new landscaping should be compatible with the character of the



local landscape. These areas are the Montlake Cut, Montlake Boulevard, and the street trees near the 108th Avenue Northeast intersection.



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