ATTACHMENT 5:
COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Comments and Responses

In this attachment, we present comments submitted to WSDOT during the public comment period for the EA for the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project ending on May 11, 2009, and our response to each comment. We received spoken comments (recorded during the public hearings and presented here as a transcript) and written comments submitted at the public hearings and via email and letter. Each of the 26 comment documents is presented in its entirety in the order shown in the following index. The comment documents are presented with numbers in the margins denoting individual comments. Our corresponding responses to the numbered comments follow each page of the individual comment documents.

Changes to the text of the EA, discipline reports, and technical memoranda are shown in the Errata (Attachment 1 to this FONSI).

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PUBLIC SCOPING OPEN HOUSE

Bellevue Public Library

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

Bellevue, Washington

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reported by: Linda M. Grotefendt, CCR
License No. 3013

Mindi Pearson.

MS. PEARSON: I really don't know what to say. She asked me to come over here and speak to you. Ironically, I came here to check my email. But I'm -- the reason why they asked me to come over here is that they felt that I was one of the cases they were thinking of, of somebody who might need special accommodation if the 520 toll comes into effect.

I'm an interpreter in the hospitals; not just one, but many. And I'm also a substitute teacher. So I might go do a substitute-teaching job in Seattle. Then I go interpret at Evergreen Hospital. Then I go back and I go interpret at Harborview. So I'm constantly going across the bridge.

So perfect example: I own my own business. I have to pay my own taxes. I have to pay at least 2.50 an hour, now, to park my car in Seattle, which has gone up a dollar. You know, if I'm in a parking garage, I have to pay for the parking garage. Obviously, gas as well. So to do a toll on top of it -- I still get paid the same whether I'm doing -- if I'm doing a DSHS appointment or if I'm doing a private appointment, the fact is that it still comes out of that.

And so, at the end of the day, maybe I could possibly take it off at the end of the year, but it's still money that's not in my pocket. And it seems like my pocketbook is becoming smaller and smaller and smaller.

1 So I guess my only thought with the SR 520 bridge: I personally -- I wish that they didn't toll it, just because -- perfect example, my sister just lost her job as an engineer, my boyfriend just lost his job in marketing, and lots of people are out of work. So to add taxes to people that are already struggling to survive --

You know, I'm oftentimes, now, finding myself trying to, you know, give out what little I have, even more, just because -- it's not like I make a lot of money as a substitute teacher either, or as an interpreter, really. But I just -- I just wish they'd think about the timing, because it is such a strained time in the economy already.

So that's all.

(End of comment.)

(End of public comments.)

Response to Mindi Pearson:

1. Thank you for the comment.

CERTIFICATE

STATE OF WASHINGTON)
)
COUNTY OF KING)

I, LINDA M. GROTEFENDT, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for King County, Washington, do hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand the above public comments, that the foregoing transcript was prepared under my personal supervision and constitutes a true record of the above public comments.

WITNESS my hand and seal in Renton, County of King, State of Washington, this 3rd day of May, 2009.

_____

Notary public in and for the
State of Washington, residing
at Renton.

My commission expires 1-

PUBLIC SCOPING OPEN HOUSE

Seattle Public Library, Roosevelt Branch

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Seattle, Washington

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reported by: Linda M. Grotefendt, CCR
License No. 3013

Damon Sununtnasuk, 2226 Elliott Avenue, Apartment 410, Seattle, 98121.

2

MR. SUNUNTNASUK: I think it's actually a positive thing we're taking responsibility for infrastructure and tolling. I come from Florida, where you can expect to pay a toll on virtually any road you drive on, especially bridges. So, to me, it's just second nature to pay to cross a body of water. And although I predict that tolling will probably be high, I encourage the City to investigate tolling other main arterials, and perhaps 405 or I-5.

3

I think that the variable tolling rates aren't necessary, that perhaps offering reduced rates for carpooling. And I think that, you know, paying for these infrastructure projects can be supplemented by changing a lot of the tax structures that are existing. For example, the cap on property tax, I think, is ridiculous. It needs to be investigated.

But I think that's it.

(End of comment.)

Response to Damon Sununtnasuk:

2. Thank you for the comment.
3. After extensive study conducted by the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee, it was determined that variable tolling is the best option for this corridor.

John Kranick, 1217 Northeast 56th, Seattle, Washington.

4

MR. KRANICK: My comment is that I think that the tolling would probably create a lot of anger, and people -- it would be a tax that people would be reminded of every time they drive across the bridge. And I would prefer that an income tax be looked at on incomes over 250,000 or over $300,000. And that is a source of revenue that the State is not tapping. And I would think about that before I would think about tolling, because I would be afraid of it being fuel for another Tim Eyman initiative.

(End of comment.)
(End of public comments.)

Response to John Kranick:

4. Thank you for the comment.

CERTIFICATE

STATE OF WASHINGTON)
)
COUNTY OF KING)

I, LINDA M. GROTEFENDT, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for King County, Washington, do hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand the above public comments, that the foregoing transcript was prepared under my personal supervision and constitutes a true record of the above public comments.

WITNESS my hand and seal in Renton, County of King, State of Washington, this 3rd day of May, 2009.

_____

Notary public in and for the
State of Washington, residing
at Renton.

My commission expires 1-2-2012.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

SR 520 Variable Tolling Environmental Assessment Hearing

Hearing feedback form

Your input is valuable.

Today's hearing gives the community an opportunity to learn about the potential environmental affects of tolling SR 520 and to submit comments.

A few copies of the Environmental Assessment document are available for you to review at the hearing, please do not remove them from the library. You can obtain a copy on-line at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/LkWaMgt/

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts about the environmental affects of tolling SR 520. Place this completed form in one of the comment boxes. You can also provide verbal testimony with the court reporter at the hearing.

If you'd like to write your comments later, send them to Paul Krueger at the WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2nd Ave S, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104 or by email to SR520VariableTolling@wsdot.wa.gov. The comment period ends May 11.

Thank you!

Name/Address or Email:

5 **Comments:** monthly pass for individuals / businesses who use bridge on a frequent basis — w/ reduced fares (based on frequent usage)

Response to Anonymous:

5. Thank you for the comment. Transponder accounts will be able to be paid monthly, but no frequent-user discounts on tolls are being considered at this point.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

SR 520 Variable Tolling Environmental Assessment Hearing

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Thank you!

Name/Address or Email: 98004

MARY COLLINS 10626 NE 17TH ST BELLEVUE, WA.

6 **Comments:** PUT A NEW BRIDGE AT THE TOTEM LAKE SITE THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SELECTED IN THE PAST AND THE ROADWAYS BUILT.

THE LAST TOLL BRIDGE HAD EVERYONE USE THE NON-TOLL BRIDGE.

SENIORS WON'T PAY THE TOLLS. THE STATE, ETC. WILL LOSE VOLUNTEERS FOR A VARIETY OF SERVICES.

THE ECONOMY IS BAD. WE DON'T WANT TO SPEND MONEY, OR TO HAVE THE STATE DEMAND MORE MONEY FROM US — THE WORKING POOR.

Response to Mary Collins:

6. This project, the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project, will not actually replace the bridge. Another project, the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, is currently in the planning stage. Information on that project can be found here:

   http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge/

   Traffic analysis completed by the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee shows traffic on the non-toll bridge options would increase between two to six percent on SR 522, and five to ten percent on I-90, depending on the toll rate.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

SR 520 Variable Tolling Environmental Assessment Hearing

Hearing feedback form

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If you'd like to write your comments later, send them to Paul Krueger at the WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2nd Ave S, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104 or by email to SR520VariableTolling@wsdot.wa.gov. The comment period ends May 11.

Thank you!

Name/Address or Email:
Jerry Tindall jerryt@u.washington.edu

7 **Comments:** The current tolling scenarios seem mostly focused on commuters going from x-fer station to x-fer station. If bridge travel is being decreased during off-peak times, how will transit be improved to accomodate true car-less mobility. As is, trying to go to the eastside with any destination other than a park-n-ride, or x-fer station is generally terrible. If you want to legitimately reduce any sort of non-commuter traffic, viable alternatives should be presented. As non-commuter traffic is going to be limited by the tolling system, the system implemented should also be at least partially responsible for implementing true viable alternatives. As a frequent bus-rider, I can say that people don't ride buses because outside of seattle proper, the buses do not take them where they need to go in any reasonable amount of time.

Response to Jerry Tindall:

7. As part of the Urban Partnership Agreement, transit improvements are planned along SR 520. These improvements include expanding park-and-rides, adding at least 45 new busses, increasing service hours, and increasing rider information services.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

SR 520 Variable Tolling Environmental Assessment Hearing

Hearing feedback form

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Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts about the environmental affects of tolling SR 520. Place this completed form in one of the comment boxes. You can also provide verbal testimony with the court reporter at the hearing.

If you'd like to write your comments later, send them to Paul Krueger at the WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2nd Ave S, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104 or by email to SR520VariableTolling@wsdot.wa.gov. The comment period ends May 11.

Thank you!

Name/Address or Email:
Tim Gould 4cleanair@usa.net

Comments: Tolls on SR 520 will help manage demand and reduce traffic congestion and associated environmental impacts.
8 I support setting variable tolls at a level that will keep traffic moving at 40-45 mph at peak travel times. The I-90 floating
9 bridge should be tolled as well in a similar manner to prevent traffic diversion away from SR 520. Raising the toll rates on
10 520 once a new bridge is constructed makes a lot of sense. The toll revenue should be available, in part, to support operations of transit in the cross-Lake corridor. Equity concerns demand
11 nothing less. To allay concerns about privacy with electronic toll collection, a way should be found -- with legislative authority if necessary -- to separate payment w/ convenient means such as credit or debit cards from the transponder account & device. Keeping the payment system as anonymous as possible will defuse opposition to tolling.

Response to Tim Gould:

8. Thank you for the comment.

9. Peak period traffic volumes will be 11 percent to 18 percent lower on SR 520 after a toll is implemented than if a toll is not implemented. However, with a toll on SR 520, volumes on I-90 and SR 522 would increase only zero percent to four percent and volumes on I-405 and I-5 would not noticeably change.

   The tolling project will result in minimal to no noticeable diversion of traffic to SR 522, I-90, I-405, and I-5 during peak periods because many people will be making other choices. They will change the time-of-day for their trip, use transit instead of driving, or choose a different destination that doesn't require crossing Lake Washington.

10. Use of toll revenue for transit operations is a Legislative decision and not part of this project.

11. State law addresses the privacy issue for customer information and the department follows the most current payment card industry data security standards. People can choose to pay the toll in cash at a customer service center.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: ken@kwa.net
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2009 6:49 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: NO TOLLS for an OUT-OF-DATE SIX LANE SR520 Bridge

12 I'd be willing to pay tools on an 8 or 9 or 10 lane SR520 Bridge, but NOT for an OUT-OF-DATE SIX LANE SR520 Bridge.

To it RIGHT!!!

Take care.
Ken Whelan
ken@kwa.net
206 351 8177

Response to Ken Whelan:

12. Thank you for the comment. This project does not involve bridge widening or bridge replacement.

Paul W. Krueger
I-90 Corridor and Sound Transit Environmental Manager
Urban Corridors Office
401 2nd Avenue South, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

(206) 716-1135 -- Desk
kruegep@wsdot.wa.gov

From: Jerrold Milstein [mailto:jerrymilstein@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2009 6:03 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Tolls

13 I am very disappointed that consideration for tolling both bridges as soon as possible is no longer being considered. It is unfair and gives the Mercer Island citizens an access that is not available to any east sider. If they are not tolled, then I would request that they not be given access to the HOV lanes as a single occupant vehicle.

Jerrold M. Milstein

Response to Jerrold Milstein:

13. Thank you for the comment. Peak period traffic volumes will be 11 percent to 18 percent lower on SR 520 after a toll is implemented than if a toll is not implemented. However, with a toll on SR 520, volumes on I-90 and SR 522 would increase only zero percent to four percent and volumes on I-405 and I-5 would not noticeably change.

    The tolling project will result in minimal to no noticeable diversion of traffic to SR 522, I-90, I-405, and I-5 during peak periods because many people will be making other choices. They will change the time-of-day for their trip, use transit instead of driving, or choose a different destination that doesn't require crossing Lake Washington.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Mary Macksey [marymacksey@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 1:24 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Tolling 520

14 That is a wonderful idea - to toll 520.
Tolling it will slightly lighten traffic for a few short years at least, I would imagine, and the lanes are very narrow, so that should help.
There is the alternate of I-90 if someone does not want to pay, or they can travel I-405.
I lived in Dallas decades ago, and the tollway there helped significantly, and then people were able to decide for themselves whether it was worth it to them to pay the toll. As long as there are other roads that go the same place, a toll is a reasonable and prudent measure for shifting loads.
15 It will also raise money for improvements - hopefully ONLY for improvements of it, NOT for the general highway fund, or worse for the general state fund.
Mary Macksey

Windows Live™ Hotmail®:...more than just e-mail. Check it out.

Response to Mary Macksey:

14. Thank you for the comment.

15. The toll revenue raised from tolling SR 520, as described in ESHB 2211 that authorizes tolling, will be used to help finance the construction of a new SR 520 Evergreen Point Bridge.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Deborah Hart [Deborah.Hart@Seattle.Gov]
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 2:33 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: My opinion on tolling 520

16 It doesn't seem fair to target drivers who have to take 520 to get to work. There are numerous other road projects throughout the region that are not tolled. I don't mind paying taxes but only if everyone pays his fair share. If you're going to toll 520 then to be fair you should also toll Coal Creek Parkway, I-90, the Viaduct, I-405, and I-5. Just because you can't pass an initiative to raise taxes in general doesn't mean you should impose a toll on 520 drivers who have no choice. If you're hoping to increase revenue, by the way, I will not pay $3.25 each way five days a week; I will take the bus. Perhaps that is what you would like me to do, but it won't fill the coffers to pay for the bridge. (It will also double my commute time.)

17 I would prefer a tax to spread the cost of all road works evenly throughout the King County area by increasing taxes on gas, sales, car tabs or income.

Response to Deborah Hart:

16. Thank you for the comment.

17. Thank you for the comment.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: DAVID C SUTHERLAND [davelors@msn.com]
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2009 2:19 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: tolling

I am not a commuter and very seldom go to the Eastside, but I have several concerns/questions.

18 1) Cost - earlier reports were having one way tolls at 3.00+. I think this is high and can be an economic burden on many people especially when tolling before construction begins. I think higher tolls will push more people over to I90. I think a toll at 2.00 would be more realistic and keep more people on 520. I would be OK with 2.00 but at 3.00+, I would not use 520. The 6-8.00 dollars a day might be the daily food budget for some families.

I think if rates are to high, fewer drivers will use the bridge and then the thing will never get paid for. And as for putting tolls on all roads and bridges, that could be disaster for many businesses. People won't be out shopping.

19 2) Variable - If prices are adjusted upwards when traffic is heavy, what happens when traffic is heavy because of an accident, stalled car etc. Are prices readjusted upwards in those cases?

If you are already on the bridge, can prices be raised such as what happens on some of the HOV lanes that have variable prices depending on what section you are driving in?

Response to David Sutherland:

18. As described in ESHB 2211, which authorizes tolling on SR 520, toll rates shall be set by the tolling authority (Transportation Commission) on a variable schedule to maintain travel time, speed, and reliability on the corridor. In addition, the tolls need to generate necessary revenue to help fund the replacement of the SR 520 Evergreen Point Bridge. Under state law, the Transportation Commission is the entity that sets toll rates. The roles of WSDOT and the Transportation Commission are expected to be in accordance with RCW 47.56 as established by the Legislature. The Commission is the toll setting authority and WSDOT builds and operates toll facilities.

19. The variable price of the toll will be static, not dynamic. That means that the toll rate will have a set schedule one day to the next that is higher during periods that are usually congested, as opposed to changing minute-to-minute to respond to immediate traffic conditions. If there is an accident, stalled car, or anything else that might cause traffic congestion, the toll price will not instantly change. Any user of the bridge will be able to find out what the toll rate is going to be before going across. There will be a number of different ways to find out the pricing schedule in addition to signs being posted along the corridor.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: James Paradise [paradise@bmi.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2009 4:37 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: I vote yes

20 I think it is a good idea for a toll on this roadway. Let the people who use the roadway pay for it.

The American Dream in the 21st Century©
James Paradise, Broker
Paradise Real Estate
364 Catherine St., B-1
Walla Walla WA 99362
509-525-1828 Office
509-386-3655 Cell
paradise@bmi.net
www.jamesparadise.com Home
www.wallawallamls.com MLS Search

Response to James Paradise:

20. Thank you for the comment.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Kayann Fitzgerald [FitzK@foster.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2009 5:04 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Tolling Rates

As much as I would enjoy attending a hearing on this topic in person, work and family must come first.

21 My inquiry is what toll rates are being considered for 520. Given the state of the world economy and the cut backs not only at the business level, but individually as well, this is very poor timing indeed. If the tolls are anything like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge - I believe I-90 just got a whole lot busier.

Kayann Fitzgerald

Response to Kayann Fitzgerald:

21. Under state law (RCW 47.56) the Transportation Commission is the toll setting authority and WSDOT builds and operates toll facilities. As described in ESHB 2211, which authorizes tolling on SR 520, toll rates shall be set by the tolling authority (Transportation Commission) on a variable schedule to maintain travel time, speed, and reliability on the corridor. In addition, the tolls need to generate necessary revenue to help fund the replacement of the SR 520 floating bridge.

    The toll rates for SR 520 have not yet been established by the Transportation Commission. We expect the toll rates to be similar to the potential tolling rate scenarios described in the EA document in Chapter 4, page 4.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Chris MacKenzie [chris@nuancestoneworks.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2009 8:34 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Tolling works for me

22 I used to travel I-95 regularly along the east coast, including New Jersey—the toll-booth capital of the world!—before moving here in 1993 and it's a concept that works. Of course I never liked toll booths very much, or the coin-juggling and jockeying as drivers approach them, so I'm glad you've dealt with those problems. And congestion pricing is brilliant!

If tolling reduces congestion and distributes the cost of the resource more fairly among users, I'm all over it.

23 On the other hand, the Pacific Interchange idea for the west side end of the bridge is a ridiculous proposal that needs to go away if it hasn't already.

Chris MacKenzie
256 NE 43rd Street
Wallingford, Seattle

Response to Chris MacKenzie:

22. Thank you for the comment.

23. The Pacific interchange is not part of this project. It is a design that has been considered as part of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. The project team for the bridge replacement project is currently working on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) due to be released later in the year.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Linda Andersson [llandersson4@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2009 10:55 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: 520 toll

24 I am one who would be very affected by the 520 tolls. I live practically on top of the 520 bridge, and it is my only sensible way to get to Seattle.

Unfortunately I am a laid-off teacher, along with thousands of others in WA state these past 8 years, am working 3 different part time jobs with no benefits and a ridiculously small annual income (less than $20,000 . . .) despite that I am still in my prime. My ability to go to my church in Seattle once or twice a week and to my board of directors meetings for 2 groups in Seattle and to lectures at the UW would be greatly impaired by tolls, unless those of us already paying high Bellevue/Medina property taxes and utilities and who live right in the bridge neighborhood could get a discount as needed.

I don't know what the solution should be in these awfully depressed economic times, but I know that I will be staying home instead of having the life that I started when I lived in Seattle until 15 years ago. I will probably move back to Seattle someday, but this is not the time to try to sell my house. I want to help pay for the bridge, but with what? and how much? There are so many wealthy people in my neighborhood for whom a toll is probably no problem, but it will greatly impair my life.

Sorry to be so down. These are hard times.

Linda Andersson
2424 79th Ave NE
Medina, WA 98039

Response to Linda Andersson:

24. Thank you for the comment. No neighborhood toll discounts are proposed at this time.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Scott Anderson [scottba@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2009 7:50 AM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Keeping it affordable

25 I know that Washington State needs to raise money for the bridge replacement, but I think that toll that exceeds $2.50 each way is excessive and encourages alternate routes around the lake north or south. At $5 a day or $25 a week, I would strongly lean toward taking I-5 and I-405 to work. I would prefer a ceiling of $2.00 or $20 a week. Imagine a $12/hour worker at $96 a day who is scheduled from 9am – 5pm. $4.00 a day is more that 4% of their income. Tolls higher are $3.00 ridiculous and should be abandoned whether it be on 520 or the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.

Also I think the floor on the toll should be $1.00. Even if it is Midnight on Sunday – I think $1.00 will raise more money during the off hours, but is still cheaper that the gas to drive around. I appreciate the idea of sub dollar amounts. But in terms of equity – a trip across the bridge is a trip across the bridge.

So to summarize – I strongly favor a one way toll amount that has a floor of $1.00 and a ceiling of $2.00.

Thanks,

Scott Anderson
Shoreline, WA

Response to Scott Anderson:

25. Under state law (RCW 47.56) the Transportation Commission is the toll setting authority and WSDOT builds and operates toll facilities. As described in ESHB 2211, which authorizes tolling on SR 520, toll rates shall be set by the tolling authority (Transportation Commission) on a variable schedule to maintain travel time, speed, and reliability on the corridor. In addition, the tolls need to generate necessary revenue to help fund the replacement of the SR 520 floating bridge.

    The toll rates for SR 520 have not yet been established by the Transportation Commission. We expect the toll rates to be similar to the potential tolling rate scenarios described in the EA document in Chapter 4, page 4.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Jurotich, Theresa [JurotichTM@cdm.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2009 8:28 AM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: against tolling

26 I'm against tolling for the simple reason that it will not change behavior. Anyone that still needs to move between Seattle and the Eastside, and lives near or north of 520, will still use 520. But with a toll, everyone will have to stop and/or slow down to pay the toll. That will make the already horrible congestion on side streets such as Montlake (and those streets feeding Montlake) even worse. Same thing goes for the side/feeder streets on the Eastside.

Theresa M Jurotich, PE
Camp Dresser & McKee Inc.
1218 3rd Ave Suite 1100
Seattle, WA 98101
p (206) 336-4900
f (206) 223-2340

Response to Theresa Jurotich:

26. Thank you for the comment. Tolls will be collected electronically using transponders and video equipment, which means that there will be no toll booths and no slowing down or stopping to pay the tolls.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: Shema, David [david.shema@boeing.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2009 4:20 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: Support for tolling

27 I support variable tolling on **both** 520 and I90, if the question of how to **fairly** handle out-of-area travelers who come into the Seattle area is answered. These folks can not be expected have transponders. I expect that there might be a small additional fee if someone is billed via license plate recognition.

My commute takes me across I90 every workday. Transportation improvements will be worth the toll.

– David Shema

North Seattle

Response to David Shema:

27. As described in the EA document in Chapter 4, page 2, there will be ways to collect tolls if the driver does not have a transponder.

    Peak period traffic volumes will be 11 percent to 18 percent lower on SR 520 after a toll is implemented than if a toll is not implemented. However, with a toll on SR 520, volumes on I-90 and SR 522 would increase only zero percent to four percent and volumes on I-405 and I-5 would not noticeably change.

    The tolling project will result in minimal to no noticeable diversion of traffic to SR 522, I-90, I-405, and I-5 during peak periods because many people will be making other choices. They will change the time-of-day for their trip, use transit instead of driving, or choose a different destination that doesn't require crossing Lake Washington.

Krueger, Paul W (UCO)

From: F. Steven Trevallee [trevallee@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, May 03, 2009 5:48 PM
To: SR520VariableTolling
Subject: tolling

28 Having read your cheery propaganda on tolling, I am curious why I get to pay tolls to cross the bridge, and taxes on big business have fallen to levels far below what I pay as a citizen.

WSDOT likes to be part of the Corporate Welfare System, nickel and diming the average citizen to death. You have neither the clarity nor the political will to charge anyone other than those who do not have a stable of lawyers and lobbyists to represent them.

And then how are you going to use the money? To build yet another ugly, monolithic, DOT design nightmare.

What a deal.

Response to F. Steven Trevallee:

28. Thank you for the comment.

TO: Paul Krueger-Urban Corridor's Office **May 5, 2009**
RE: Comments- SR 520 Variable Tolling Environmental Assessment
From Virginia Gunby, 2540- NE 90th St. Seattle WA 98115-(vgunby@aol.com)
Representing the Ravenna/Bryant Community Association on SR 520 issues.

Hearing Feedback: Environmental Effects of SR 520 Tolling

New state Tolling policies and outcomes should be consistent with improving current worldwide economic problems, our energy challenges, reducing global warming and the unprecedented need to promote new sources for state transportation funding. Tolls/pricing programs should reinforce regional land-use and transportation plans and policies and offer a unique and unprecedented opportunity to initiate, learn from and improve the integration of multi-modal SR 520 corridor policies. The result could reduce the requirement for future highways or lane expansion, and its potential environmental impacts across, and on near shores communities on Lake Washington. (The 1963 SR 520 corridor construction and operations that happened before Federal and State DEIS, Clean Water, ESA laws, and the 1964 Overton Park decision and significantly impacted the natural wetland and park areas with long-term environmental damage, needs to be acknowledged and mitigated.)

29 1.The political "**Piecemeal" Tolling of State Transportation Facilities** is becoming one of the state's future methods of financing major transportation facilities, due to the lack of growth in federal and state gas tax revenues. Washington is currently considering not only Tolls on SR 520, the rebuilt Seattle SR 99and the North/South I-5 Corridor in Seattle, as well as the new proposed I-5-Interstate bridge located between our state and Oregon.
(Tolling on SR 520 first bridge ended, June 30, 1979, 20 years earlier than predicted, and coincidentally the last day of my 6- year appointment to the State Highway/Transportation Comm. In 1979 as a WSDOT Commissioner and member of the Toll Bridge Authority, I moved but lost in a vote to continue the 35 cent SR 520 Tolls. Even then we knew that the 520 Bridge/Corridor had structural problems, and continuing the tolls would have aided with the maintenance costs and the funding of a replacement bridge.
Recommendation Urge that WSDOT apply more foresight and long-range Toll planning in developing the Tolling system for urban state highways, rather than by piecemeal,. project to project

30 **2. Diversion Issues-** Tolling SR 520, without Tolling the other major cross-lake Interstate 90 Corridor will have impacts on current SR 520 trips, and reduce toll revenues. Diversion of 520 users, particularly those who live south of the 520 Corridor, to save money, will use I-90, particularly during the crowded and more expensive peak hours. Transferring trips to I-90 will have environmental impacts. The 2009 Legislature's political decision in ESHB 2211 to forgo tolls on I-90 will have many negative impacts on the financing of SR 520, and on the I-90 and the I-405 corridors, in addition to increasing traffic on local city arterial routes, used by diverted cross-lake auto users. **As required in 2211 the environmental impacts of Tolling only SR 520 should be monitored, reported and changed, as soon as possible.**

SR 520 TOLLS should be permanent and used not only for construction costs and interest funding, but for managing its use, so that there will be less long-term environmental impacts from congested traffic. (The FHWA considers SR 520 and I-90 as one cross-lake corridor. Actions/changes on one facility impacts the other.)

31 3. **Social Justice Impacts**—Future Toll payments for low income SR 520 users, who do not receive a public welfare transportation stipend that pays transportation fees, must be assured through use of toll funds to improve 520 transit/HOV alternatives. **It is important that WSDOT Commission Toll policies, urged by WSDOT staff, adopt fair, enlightened policies to allow a transit share of the Tolls to be used for subsidizing well-planed, improved SR 520 transit operations, for particularly low income users.**

2. Comments on Environmental Effects pm Tolling-V. Gunby 5/5/09

Another Transit-use incentive, to get HOV users to use transit, that is used on tolled San Francisco bridges, would be a policy to **provide a benefit of a free transit roundtrip passes to monthly tolled SOV users**, to encourage them to try transit and to reduce 520 SOV trips.

32 Another positive mitigation would be to **provide for a safe "Casual-rider HOV station"** for screened potential HOV drivers/passengers for a 3 person carpool, to promote use of the peak hour HOV lanes. **provide measurable and sustainable benefits to reduce the use of energy, improve traffic flow and reduce auto-dependent sprawl impacts. If** new Transit operations on SR 520 are subsidized with toll funds, it will conserve energy, preserve Open Spaces, Forest and Rural Lands and .protect the Growth Management's plan's adopted north/south, eastern **Urban Growth Boundary,** consistent with the Regional PSRC 2040 Vision Plan, the Regional Transportation 2040 Plan and local Growth Management Plans.

33 5. **Long-term Reduction of Air, Land, Water, Noise and Light Pollution Impacts**-Predicted benefits of 520 Tolls would reduce SOV trips and would encourage increased Transit use, to reduce auto-related environmental pollution to the Air, Land, Water and 520 vehicle-related Noise. This includes, but is not limited to the -reduction green house gases, to meet state goals, noise, removal of 520 current corridor storm-water from the adjacent Lake Washington and Ship canal, migratory fish impacts, damage to parks, open spaces and the impacts to the last 1st class Lake Washington wetlands. The benefits to nearby communities and adjacent institutions like the U of W Arboretum, Campus, Hospital, Medical School and Stadium, in reducing traffic congestion many local west, north Seattle and eastside arterials/highways.

34 6. **Integrated, Multimodal Trans-lake Planning**--Tolls will provide incentives to encourage finally, the **integration of highway and multimodal Trans-lake transportation planning, for promoting and maintaining a sustainable transportation cross-lake SR 520 Corridor. Goals set for the overall Corridor Performance**, including Tolling can be evaluated and fine tuned through a new ***"Corridor Management Agreement"*** between WSDOT, local adjacent jurisdictions and major employers that has been *proposed by the west-side SR 520 "A" Design communities and supporters.* Strategies for maintaining the "sustainable trans-lake SR 520 Corridor, could include tolling from Seattle's I-5 to Redmond. The Agreement would be reviewed and revised, if necessary to coordinate and improve the overall 520's performance.

35 7. **Reducing Peak-Hour Trips or Forgoing Trips**--Tolls also could have a positive impact on moving freight from eastside warehouses into Seattle at non-peak hours, to reduce the truck traffic and noise to adjacent communities. Reduction of the peak-hour trips will be improved by some users forgoing trips altogether, or using county planned Lake Washington passenger ferries. Others will use the east/west cross-lake SR 520 Bicycles/Pedestrian lane, that connects on the east and west sides to local paths and trails.

Closing Observation: **I grew up in Seattle. As one of the older U.S. cities, it was originally planned for people with inter-city and city transit and small ferries for longer distances. It built sidewalks and streets for people in the Business and Community Centers and built single-family housing in neighborhoods. Then the federal Interstate Freeways increased our use of autos, and resulted in suburban auto dependent development. Seattle's early development is a Model for our suburbs to benefit from in order to grow greener with mixed-transit-oriented land-uses, which will be less dependent on autos. The transit connection of the 520 corridor, to the proposed U of W Sound Transit's LRT station by 2016, will provides unique opportunities to reduce environmental impacts, congestion on both SR 520 and in the whole region. Tolling cross-lake travel offers a key for beginning to aid in our city's renewal and improved environmental quality of the resident's lives, and to how we and our region will move into the future.** File:SR520TOLL EnvAssess5409.doc

Response to F. Virginia Gunby:

29. Thank you for the comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

30. The performance of the SR 520 corridor and other nearby facilities will be monitored before and after the project is implemented. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) will be evaluating the performance of the overall Lake Washington Urban Partnership. Overall travel demand patterns will be monitored, and this will included collecting data on highway, transit, and local arterial performance. More general information about how USDOT plans to monitor the Lake Washington Urban Partnership can be found here:

    http://www.upa.dot.gov/evaluation/assessingperformupa/index.htm

31. Thank you for the comments, suggestions, and recommendations. Impact analysis to low-income users can be found in the EA beginning on page 5-12.

32. The Legislature has funded a separate casual carpooling demonstration project for SR 520. However, it is not a mitigation measure for this project.

33. Social and community resources analysis begins on page 5-8 of the EA, water resources analysis begins on page 5-25, wetlands, wildlife and aquatic resources analysis begins on page 5-26, noise analysis begins on page 5-39, analysis of the cumulative effects of greenhouse gasses begins on page 6-13, and traffic impacts analysis can be found in the *Transportation Discipline Report* in Appendix E of the EA.

34. Thank you for the comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

35. Thank you for the comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501 - (360) 902-2598

April 20, 2009

Washington Department of Transportation
Urban Corridors Office
ATTENTION: Paul Krueger
401 2nd Ave S, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Krueger:

SUBJECT: State Environmental Policy Act Document; WSDOT - UCO Proponent, SR 520 Variable Tolling Project.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has reviewed the above-referenced State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) document received on April 16, 2009, and offers the following comments at this time. Other comments may be offered as the project progresses.

36 RCW 77.15.253 prohibits the unlawful possession, importation, purchase, selling, propagation, transportation or release of any prohibited aquatic animal species in the state. RCW 77.15.290 prohibits the unlawful transportation of aquatic plants. Of particular concern is the threat posed by the potential accidental introduction of zebra and/or quagga mussels to our State's ecosystems, recreation and economy. Although no zebra or quagga mussels are known to exist in Washington at this time, it is possible, and even probable, that they will be found in State waters sometime between the expected completion dates of this project (2010-2016). WDFW recommends WSDOT develop and implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to preclude the spread of invasive species including, but not limited to, zebra and quagga mussels. Some potential sources for the accidental transport of detrimental invasive species related to this project include, but are not limited to, accidental introduction of the pontoons from one State water to another, moving barges into Lake Washington from other water bodies, or using equipment within the wetted perimeter that may have been in contact with infected waters elsewhere. The BMPs should include pre-work inspection of equipment for invasive species prior to initiating work below State waters. If invasive zebra or quagga mussels are found WDFW requests that the equipment be quarantined and WDFW Enforcement be contacted immediately to ensure proper cleaning prior to working in State waters. Other invasive species should be removed and disposed of as appropriate.

37 The Environmental Assessment shows that the "tolling point" will be attached to an existing bridge over Lake Washington. There is insufficient detail in the EA to determine whether or not a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) would be required or not from WDFW. WDFW requests an opportunity to review plans for the "tolling point" including some additional information on

how it will be constructed or fastened so we may determine if this project requires an HPA or not. In another portion of the EA it discuss "concrete pads" but it is unclear where these will be located or the scale of the pads. If they are located over the water an HPA may be required for the pouring of concrete over State waters per WAC 220-110. 38

39 WDFW recommends any new platform-like structures attached over the roadway on the bridge include bird exclusion devices (such as porcupine wire) to discourage nesting. Bridges tend to be a sink habitat with low survival for fledglings. Sources of mortality for fledglings on bridges include landing on the roadway and being run-over my automobiles or drowning in the water in the case of many non-waterfowl species.

40 The EA discuss the impact of artificial light on aquatic species including, but not limited to, Endangered Species Act listed Chinook salmon, bull trout, and steelhead. Some studies have indicated that sodium based yellow lights may have less impact on fish and wildlife species than the brighter mercury based white lights. WDFW recommends the proponent install shields on all new and any existing unshielded light sources over Lake Washington as a measure to direct illumination away from the water in order to minimize potential impacts on fish and wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. If you have any questions, please contact me at (360) 902-2598.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Bell
WDFW MAPT Biologist

SWB:swb:SP-SR520toll-01

cc: SEPA Coordinator, WDFW
David Brock, WDFW RHPM
Stewart Reinbold, WDFW AHB
Alisa Bieber, WDFW AHB
MAPT, Bellevue

Response to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

36. Thank you for the comments. There will be no threat of the introduction of these invasive aquatic species as there will be no in-water work for this project.

37. WSDOT has decided not to add new structures or gantries for the tolling equipment on the bridge. The equipment will be attached to the existing steel truss structure on the east end of the bridge.

38. The concrete pads will be located on land and will total about 150 square feet in size. See Exhibit 4-1 of the EA for their location.

39. Mitigation will include bird exclusion devises to discourage nesting on new equipment, where warranted.

40. All new light sources will be shielded and focused on the highway, or will be infrared lights.

CITY OF MEDINA
Development Services
501 Evergreen Point Road, Medina WA 98039
425.233.6400 (phone) 425.454.8490 (fax) www.medina-wa.gov

May 1, 2009

Urban Corridors Office Director of Development Services
Attn: Allison Hanson
401 Second Avenue South, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: CITY OF MEDINA COMMENTS ON EA FOR 520 VARIABLE TOLLING PROJECT

Dear Ms. Hanson,

The City of Medina appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment (EA). While we understand that ESHB 2211 is before the governor for her signature, you should be aware that Medina has concerns with the bill that were expressed in a letter sent to the governor and state legislators, and is attached to this letter. In addition to these concerns, we have the following comments on the EA and action to issue a Determination of Nonsignificance:

41 1. Adoption of the NEPA documents and issuance of the DNS prior to the EA process being completed is premature. WAC 197-11-600(2) clearly establishes that NEPA documents must previously been prepared in order to evaluate the impacts that support issuing the DNS.

Proposed Action: Completion of the NEPA process should occur before issuing a SEPA threshold determination for the project.

42 2. The EA does not adequately evaluate the impacts for increased demand for transit services, which would affect the city's Evergreen Point Road transit flyer stop. The discussion of existing transit service relies on the 2006 DEIS for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV project (Appendix E page 317). The information in the 2006 DEIS is likely out-of-date, especially since there has been a documented increase in transit ridership over the past couple of years. Additionally, Appendix E on page 4-20 describes peak period transit ridership is anticipated to increase between 26 and 32 percent with tolling, but no analysis is provided to determine if the demand could be met by existing or planned transit services.

Proposed Actions:

43 a. The existing analysis should clearly identify existing transit performance measures so that future impacts to the transit system can be evaluated and compared. Specific transit capacity and performance should be measured in the EA to understand how the system operates today. The transportation analysis should be updated to reflect recent data including load factors, hours of operations, existing capacity, etc.

44 b. The analysis should account for possible reductions in transit service due to decreased revenue and likely restructuring of service currently being evaluated by King County Metro. The EA should evaluate future with and without tolling scenarios and compare the transit demand to capacity, by route or specific travel pattern, to identify the project's impact to the transit system.

45 c. The EA should identify a program to monitor the performance of the transit system to address the impacts of increased ridership on existing and future transit operations. This program should be tied to a set of mitigation measures to be implemented if and where transit impacts occur. These mitigation measures should be included in the EA.

46 d. The mitigation measures referenced in the Tolling Implementation Committee (TIC) *Tolling Report* should be integrated into the EA to address the impacts to the transit system. More specifically, the *Tolling Report*, page 36, references Appendix E and recommends the following:

- *Develop a coordinated transit implementation plan with WSDOT, King County, and Sound Transit.*
- *Expand transit service via the Urban Partnership Agreement in the 520 corridor and possible other improvements to transit service in response to anticipated or actual traffic diversions.*
- *Local jurisdictions support new transit service in the corridor. The Urban Partnership Agreement would fund the purchase of 45 new buses, but operational funds are needed.*
- . *Funding to operate transit needs to be identified and secured. Using toll revenues to pay for that service is a policy decision to be made by the Legislature.*

47 e. The EA should identify mitigation measures to address the 30 percent shift to transit assumed under the tolling scenario. The mitigation measures should include the recommendations in the *Tolling Report* as well as implementation of a monitoring program and identification of specific service and capacity needs.

48 3. The EA does not adequately evaluate the impact a 26 to 32 percent increase in transit ridership will have on park-and-ride facilities. Appendix E, page 3-17 to 3-18, describes the existing transit service in the study area and the transit centers/park-and-rides located along SR 520, but no specific evaluation is provided. The Evergreen Point Bridge Park-and-Ride is located in Medina. This park-and-ride has between 45 and 51 spaces, which average an approximately 90 percent utilization by 9:00 a.m. on weekdays (see King County Metro website). While redevelopment of this park-and-ride facility is included with the Eastside Transit and HOV Project, the city is concern that the anticipated increase in transit ridership will result in a greater demand for ridership parking causing a spill-over of parking onto nearby residential and city properties prior to and after redevelopment of the park-and-ride.

Proposed Actions:

48 cont.

a. The study should address existing utilization of park-and-ride lots, which would be impacted by increased transit ridership leading to additional use of park-and-ride lots.

b. The EA should evaluate the project's impact on park-and-ride facilities and identify whether existing capacity would meet the demand. In addition, the EA should describe potential impacts to adjacent neighborhoods due to vehicles parking on the adjacent street system where park-and-rides have inadequate capacity. Other impacts such as increased vehicle circulation through neighborhoods should also be reviewed.

c. The mitigation measures in the *Tolling Report* should be integrated into the EA. Page 36 of the *Tolling Report* recommends the following park-and-ride facility mitigation:

- *Transit-related improvements such as new or expanded park-and-rides should be added, including in the I-90 corridor, if it is tolled.*

d. The EA should include identification of facility expansions or new locations for park-and-rides as well implementation of residential parking zones and other parking restrictions or programs to mitigate neighborhood impacts as part of mitigation measures.

49

4. The local traffic diversion analysis and impact in the EA is not detailed enough for predicting impacts on particular interchanges and local intersections. There is not a satisfactory conclusion as to why local traffic diversion was not analyzed. With the increase in transit ridership and park-and-ride usage, intersections in the City of Medina e.g., along Evergreen Points Road and 84th Avenue N.E. would be impacted. There is already congestion along 84th Avenue N.E. from Bellevue traffic using this as a bypass route to the 84th Avenue N.E. / SR 520 interchange.

Based on the tolling analysis, minimal increases in traffic volumes are anticipated along diversion routes such as I-90, I-405, and SR 522 (Appendix E pages 4-13 to 415). These routes are already congested; thus, small increases can equal large increases in travel time, even though the EA appears to indicate otherwise. With the toll on SR 520, and I-405 becoming even more congested, traffic is likely to divert to local streets to bypass congestion.

Proposed Actions:

50

a. The EA should provide operational analysis of local intersections and arterials to address the impacts of increased congestion, changes in local travel patterns, and possible impacts of diverting traffic caused by the SR 520 tolling project.

51

b. The EA should identify a program to monitor local traffic diversion due to the SR 520 tolling project. The monitoring program should compare with and without tolling performance measures for specific intersections and arterials throughout the study area based on input from local agencies. This monitoring should include follow-up review conducted at specific points in time to disclose impacts on local facilities as well as check assumptions from the EA such as decrease in cross lake travel along SR 520. Locations in Medina of concern would include SR 520 interchanges, 84th Avenue N.E., 12th Street N.E. / Lake Washington Boulevard, and access roadways to the park-and-ride.

52 c. The mitigation measures in the *Tolling Report* should be integrated into the EA. Page 36 of the *Tolling Report* recommends the following traffic mitigation for diversions:

- *System-wide instrumentation and traffic monitoring:*

  Local access roads may need to be added such as Ballinger Way, NE 145th Street, and Juanita Drive.

- *A toll mitigation account to respond to traffic diversion effects would be set up to fund the noted mitigation strategies and to find other mitigation as necessary. A joint state/local process would be developed to decide which projects should be implemented to mitigate actual effects of diverted traffic once tolling begins. Funds from the account would be focused on the six-year period following tolling authorization.*

53 d. The EA should identify improvements to the local street system to accommodate increases in traffic and ways to redirect traffic to other facilities and include them as part of the mitigation measures.

54 5. The EA describes on page 4-3 that the project would include signing along the corridor to inform drivers of the approaching tolled facility. The description does not include information on when and where drivers would be notified of the tolling so they can alter their route, if necessary. The EA also states that the location of signs would not affect the transportation analysis. However, if signage is placed at 92nd Avenue in Yarrow Point and Clyde Hill then drivers could possibly have to divert through Medina.

Proposed Actions:

a. A description of the proposed location of signs should be provided.

b. The EA should provide an analysis of impacts to local intersections and arterials due to the placement of signs and drivers altering their route

55 6. Diversion of heavy vehicles is not adequately addressed in the EA. Heavy vehicles also travel on SR 520 and if they are not aware of the tolling, drivers may need to exit at 92nd Avenue. Clyde Hill has restricted trucks over 40-feet in length, which can lead to problems.

Proposed Actions:

a. The EA should include how heavy vehicle traffic would be routed in consideration of the Clyde Hill restrictions.

b. An analysis should be provided to address the impact to local intersections and arterials due to heavy vehicles diverting from SR 520.

56 7. The EA does not include an adequate analysis of possible noise impacts on adjacent and nearby residential properties caused by operating the backup generator. While noise from a generator is exempt from the maximum permissible noise standards during an emergency, such as a power outage, the testing of the generator during non-emergencies is not exempt. Medina has adopted the King County Noise Ordinance Chapter 12.86 through 12.100. The maximum permissible noise level caused by the generator at adjacent residential property

lines is 55 dB(A) between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekends. This drops to 45 dB(A) during the remaining hours.

Proposed Action: An analysis of the potential noise levels being generated by the generator should be included in the EA. If the noise levels exceed the maximum permissible noise standards, the EA should include mitigation measures to reduce the noise levels to meet standards.

57 8. The EA does not adequately evaluate the project's impact of placing new lights on the Evergreen Point Bridge over deepwater habitat that will be near a sockeye salmon spawning area on the eastern shoreline of Lake Washington. Studies have indicated that salmonid behavior can be affected by artificial lighting, however, there is no technical data to support the assumption that lighting from the tolling equipment will not affect fish in the lake.

Proposed Action: The EA should include detailed information on the lighting and the amount of light anticipated to be generated from the equipment. If impacts are found, mitigation measures should be included in the EA. The same should be done for nearby residential properties.

If you have any questions, please call me at (425) 233-6416.

Sincerely,

Robert Grumbach, AICP
Director of Development Services

CC: Joe Willis, Donna Hanson, Medina City Council

Response to City of Medina:

41. It is a common practice to have concurrent SEPA and NEPA comment periods when we issue an Environmental Assessment. We adopt the EA as our SEPA checklist because it is the document that provides information on project effects. We do not issue a SEPA Notice of Action Taken until after a FONSI is issued for a project. That allows us to ensure that we have received all of the comments and determine that we do not have significant impacts and/or need to reissue the SEPA determination for some reason.

42. These points are addressed below in comment response numbers 43 through 47.

43. The most recent transit usage data has been added and is included in this FONSI in Attachment 1, pages A1-4 through A1-5.

44. We understand that King County Metro is facing a revenue shortfall that could potentially affect their cross-lake operations. Their response to this revenue shortfall is unknown and we will not speculate on how it may affect their operations.

45. The performance of the SR 520 corridor and other nearby facilities will be monitored before and after the project is implemented. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) will be evaluating the performance of the overall Lake Washington Urban Partnership. Overall travel demand patterns will be monitored, and this will included collecting data on highway, transit, and local arterial performance. More general information about how USDOT plans to monitor the Lake Washington Urban Partnership can be found here:

    http://www.upa.dot.gov/evaluation/assessingperformupa/index.htm

    In addition the State Legislature, in ESHB 2211, indicated their intent to reconsider the tolling policy for the corridor if tolls on SR 520 significantly alter the performance of nearby facilities. This will require monitoring the performance of these facilities.

Currently no adverse impacts to transit systems are anticipated, so no mitigation measures are proposed.

46. The 520 Tolling Implementation Committee was created by the Legislature in 2007 with House Bill 3096 to evaluate issues related to the SR 520 tolling concepts. One of the tasks of the Committee was to provide recommendations to the Legislature on potential mitigation for impacts from the diversion of traffic from SR 520.

    The Committee included a number of measures that would require Legislative action or would be implemented by others. Several of the mitigation measures are drawn from the Lake Washington Urban Partnership Program and are being implemented by others.

    It is important to note that the work of the Committee was done outside the context of NEPA and SEPA. In this EA, we have described mitigation measures for impacts we identified in our analysis. If we did not identify impacts, we did not include mitigation measures.

    WSDOT has already developed a coordinated transit implementation plan with King County and Sound Transit that includes the relevant elements of the Lake Washington Urban Partnership. For more information:

    http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/D329E6C5-BF91-4EAC-8B95-9D58A2B498F6/0/Final_HCTP.pdf

    The transportation analysis for the Build Alternative includes approximately 25 percent more transit service hours in the cross-lake corridor that would be made possible by the 45 new buses to be acquired as part of the Lake Washington Urban Partnership. This increase in transit service hours was included in the model analysis per King County Metro Transit's request and guidance. These additional service hours, in combination with existing service hours should be adequate to serve the forecasted increase in daily transit ridership.

    In Senate Bill (SB) 5433, the Legislature provided a revenue source that King County can use to operate the new buses.

In summary, King County can impose an additional regular property tax levy for transit-related expenditures. The Legislature dedicated a portion of this tax to expand transit capacity along SR 520 by adding core and other supporting bus routes.

To date, the Legislature has not appropriated toll revenue from SR 520 to fund transit operating costs on the corridor.

47. The EA identifies a 26 to 32 percent increase in transit ridership, not a 30 percent shift to transit. The expected shift to transit is approximately three percent of the people using SR 520. We expect no impact, and therefore no mitigation is proposed. In addition, refer to responses 45 and 46.

48. The Lake Washington Urban Partnership includes funding for King County Metro to expand park and ride capacity at locations serving the SR 520 corridor. They are currently expanding the Redmond Park and Ride and plan to expand capacity at the South Kirkland Park and Ride. The Houghton Park and Ride in Kirkland currently has excess capacity.

    The Evergreen Point Bridge Park and Ride had seen steady utilization over the past eight years despite increases in transit ridership during that period. During that same period, the nearby South Kirkland Park and Ride has been at or over capacity. This suggests that utilization of the Evergreen Point Bridge Park and Ride is not sensitive to increases in transit ridership on the SR 520 corridor. It is unlikely that any increase in transit ridership related to this project will substantially change the utilization.

    If a potential transit user encounters a full park and ride they are likely to a) not use transit and drive to their destination; b) drive to another park and ride; or c) park in the neighborhood adjacent to the full park and ride.

    As stated above, the 26 to 32 percent increase in transit ridership is equivalent to only a three percent mode shift on SR 520. If that three percent does not make the mode shift and continues to drive, it is unlikely to substantially affect the overall conclusions of our transportation analysis.

If monitoring of park and ride use identifies a problem related to tolling SR 520, WSDOT will work with affected jurisdictions to develop a remedy. However, WSDOT currently has no funding to contribute to any solutions that may be identified.

Also see response number 46 for more information.

49. See responses 50 through 53 below.

50. According to a memo dated December 12, 2008 from WSDOT to the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee describing traffic diversion, when SR 520 tolls are in place, traffic actually drops on local arterials with direct access to SR 520. See the text added to this FONSI in Attachment 1, page A1-6 for more information.

51. See response to number 45 above. When SR 520 is tolled, traffic will drop on direct access routes such at 84th.

52. See response to number 45 above. The Legislature has not created a toll mitigation account.

53. There is no adverse impact expected to the local street system, so no mitigation has been identified.

54. Existing guide signs on routes approaching SR 520 that guide drivers toward the Evergreen Point Bridge will be modified to inform drivers they are approaching a tolled facility. These signs include those encountered by drivers approaching the I-5/SR 520 and I-405/SR 520 interchanges plus the signs encountered by drivers approaching on-ramps to SR 520. Additional guide signs may be installed along approaching routes to ensure that drivers have adequate opportunity to choose an appropriate alternate route before entering the tolled facility.

    Other new signs include new regulatory signs and toll rate signs on SR 520. The new regulatory signs will be located near the tolling location and contain information about enforcement, penalties, and other regulatory topics. The new toll rate signs will be installed on SR 520 in each direction prior to the last on-ramp and off-ramp before the tolling location. The signs will incorporate dynamic message signs

to inform drivers of the current toll rate. There will be two to four of these signs. The final locations of these new signs will be chosen to avoid or minimize any effect on the surrounding environment. With the proposed signing, we do not anticipate a notable increase in traffic through Medina.

55. Heavy vehicles account for three percent of the traffic utilizing SR 520 to cross Lake Washington during the morning and evening peak periods. Based upon the 2006 DEIS for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, the majority of the heavy vehicles are categorized as single-unit trucks, amounting to 75 to 80 percent of heavy vehicle traffic. Single units are 2-3 axle trucks and buses.

    Very few heavy vehicles that are classified as double units (trucks with trailers) or larger vehicles use SR 520. Given the signing proposed for routes approaching the toll facility and the generally high level of knowledge commercial vehicle operators tend to have about the highway system, it would be a rare, exceptional event for a large truck to inadvertently reach the exit at 92nd without knowing it is heading towards a toll facility. Because of this, we do not anticipate any notable adverse effects due to heavy vehicles diverting onto the local street system at 92nd Avenue and do not plan any further analysis or any mitigation.

56. WSDOT will comply with the ordinance and obtain a variance if necessary.

57. The lighting that will be used for tolling will be visible light that is shielded and pointed at the road deck, or will be infrared light. In either case, this will not affect the environment in Lake Washington.

    The existing illumination at the east end of the SR 520 Evergreen Point Bridge is on luminaires mounted at 30 feet above the roadway without any shields to prevent the light from spilling into the adjacent area. Measurements of light spillage taken near more modern 250 watt luminaires that include shielding along SR 520 near the Arboretum suggest that light levels adjacent to the bridge likely range between 0.01 and 0.45 foot candles (fc). The light of a full moon is

typically 0.03 fc. These observations represent the existing conditions along SR 520 and the east end of the Evergreen Point Bridge.

Based on what is used at other toll facilities around the country we expect that the lighting used for tolling on SR 520 will use up to a 175 watt light source, a lower power level than existing lights on the bridge. Unlike the existing lights, the new light source will be shielded to limit light spillage to adjacent residences and water. Light levels will be adjusted to provide sufficient light to capture clear images of front and rear license plates. Since the new lighting will have lower power than existing luminaires, will be mounted at a lower height to the roadway than the existing luminaires, and will be shielded to prevent light spillage, we expect that the new lighting will not affect the environment in Lake Washington.

May 6, 2009

Mr. Paul W. Krueger
WSDOT SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Manager
401 2nd Ave S Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Krueger:

Thank you for the opportunity to Comment on the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project. This letter is a summary of our comments on the Environmental Assessment. A set of comments that address some of Kirkland's main concerns in greater depth is included as an attachment.

58 The City of Kirkland supports replacement of the SR 520 floating bridge and recognizes tolling as an important mechanism for funding that project and the main reason for tolls at this time. We also understand that early tolling of SR 520 is a requirement for the 520 corridor to receive Federal Urban Partnership grant funding. Both of these principles are supported by the City of Kirkland's Roadway Pricing Policy Statement, which is attached to this letter.

59 The Environmental Assessment assumes that auto diversion from SR 520 to surrounding freeways and arterials will be small. This assumption is supported by the modeling developed by the Tolling Implementation Committee (TIC). However, because the modeling is subject to error, *a mitigation program as suggested in the TIC report (see next page) should be a part of the Variable Tolling Project. Careful monitoring of traffic diversion, including diversion to arterials, and specific funding for mitigation of these impacts should be part of the project.* Our Pricing Policy also supports this strategy.

60 Pairing high quality transit service with tolling is a theme throughout Kirkland's Roadway Pricing Policy Statement. Forecasts for decreased vehicle miles of cross lake travel with implementation of tolling are encouraging, as are forecasts for increased transit ridership. Because transit ridership is expected to increase by 30% under tolling it will be important that new transit service and additional coaches are available to carry the increased passenger loads. Coaches are likely to be funded through the Urban Partnership grant, but funding for new service has not been identified at this time. *Therefore, the Environmental Assessment should not assume adequate service and the project should include mitigation for the subsequent impacts.* Additionally, added Park and Ride capacity may be needed, in particular at the South Kirkland Park and Ride. The underutilized Houghton Park and Ride may also be a possible source of capacity. *As with traffic diversion, the transit related mitigations called for in the TIC report should be incorporated into the project.*

123 Fifth Avenue • Kirkland, Washington 98033-6189 • 425.587.3000 • TTY 425.587.3111 • www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

61 We are pleased to see the proposed mitigations intended to minimize adverse effects on low income or limited-English proficient populations. Again, this is an important principle in our Pricing Policy.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Kirkland City Council

By James L. Lauinger, Mayor

Letter to Paul W. Krueger
May 6, 2009
Page 3

Excerpt from Tolling Report*, prepared by the Tolling Implementation Committee for the Washington State Legislature, January 28, 2009 Page 36. Mitigations relevant to Kirkland Comments:*

Committee mitigation recommendations related to tolling include:

• System-wide instrumentation and traffic monitoring
– Additional coverage would be needed on 522.
– Local access roads may need to be added such as Ballinger Way, NE 145th Street, and Juanita Drive.

• A toll mitigation account to respond to traffic diversion effects would be set up to fund the noted mitigation strategies and to find other mitigation as necessary. A joint state/local process would be developed to decide which projects should be implemented to mitigate the actual effects of diverted traffic once tolling begins. Funds from the account would be focused on the six-year period following tolling authorization.

• A coordinated transit implementation plan developed by WSDOT, King County and Sound Transit.

• Transit service expansion via the Urban Partnership Agreement in the 520 corridor and possible other improvements to transit service in response to anticipated or actual traffic diversion.

• Transit-related improvements such as new or expanded park-and-rides should be added, including in the I-90 corridor, if it is tolled.

• Local jurisdictions support new transit service in the corridor. The Urban Partnership Agreement would fund the purchase of 45 new buses, but operational funds are needed.

• Funding to operate transit needs to be identified and secured. Using toll revenues to pay for that service is a policy decision to be made by the Legislature.

City of Kirkland Roadway Pricing Policy Statement

May, 2008

The City of Kirkland generally supports roadway pricing.

Roadway pricing appears to be an effective tool for better managing our transportation system while at the same time being able to generate some additional revenue to leverage against existing revenue sources. We support early tolling of SR 520, tolling of I-90 when SR 520 is tolled and implementation of HOT[1] lane systems on I-405. Our support assumes that potential impacts to Kirkland are considered before and addressed after implementation of any such roadway pricing program.

Revenues from pricing may be used for a variety of purposes, but there must be a reasonable nexus between collection and spending.

Revenue need not be confined to paying the capital costs for construction of the facility where it was collected. Besides funding construction, examples of reasonable uses for pricing revenue include: transit service on the priced or parallel facilities, mitigation of pricing impacts like diversion onto non-priced routes and operations/maintenance of the priced facility. Pricing revenues should supplement not supplant current revenue sources.

Pricing for management must have clear objectives.

Pricing can be optimized to meet various objectives such as maximizing revenue, maximizing person trips or minimizing vehicle miles of travel. The objective for pricing will vary depending on the system being priced. This objective will typically be set by the agency operating the priced facility. However, prior to implementation of pricing, it is important that impacted jurisdictions have an opportunity to comment on the pricing objective.

Any pricing efforts must include careful consideration of potential negative impacts.

Before pricing is implemented funding should be designated to mitigate impacts from pricing. A comprehensive system of measurements should be made before and after pricing is implemented to evaluate its impacts especially with regard to traffic diversion. This is particularly important when considering early tolling of SR 520. In order to minimize negative impacts of pricing, choices such as high quality transit must be provided on priced corridors. Predictable and reasonable tolls will also help to minimize negative impacts.

It is important to consider the needs of low income users of priced facilities.

Experience from other parts of the county show that low income users are supportive of pricing systems both before and after such systems are implemented. With electronic tolling it is relatively easy to reduce the cost of pricing to individual users through subsidies. Low income users may benefit most from viable alternatives to pricing such as high quality transit.

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[1] High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes – combine HOV and pricing strategies by allowing single occupancy vehicles to gain access to HOV lanes by paying a toll. The lanes are "managed" through pricing to maintain free flow conditions. HOT lanes are in operation now on SR 167.

Detailed Comments from City of Kirkland

62 **Transit demand versus capacity.** The EA assumes that there will be a sizable increase in transit ridership, between 26% and 32% depending on the toll scenario. It cites the fact extra transit capacity will be needed, however such capacity is not funded. The question remains: if the EA assumes transit service but such service is not available what will be the impacts? Therefore, there is a significant impact, increased transit demand, that is not mitigated. Previous environmental studies on SR 520 have also failed to answer this question.

63 **Transit service analysis.** Because of the increased demand for transit caused by tolling, the EA should analyze current transit service (load factors, platform hours, etc) and future transit demand to understand the type and location of future transit service that is needed. The EA mentions that a number of coaches may be available for future service but does not explore whether or not this is an adequate number of coaches or where they should be deployed. The EA references transit analysis completed as part of the 2006 DEIS for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV project. This analysis is out-of-date, particularly because of the significant and documented increase in transit ridership over the last few years. In addition, King County Metro is facing significant reductions in transit revenue and is considering reducing service levels throughout the system. The EA needs to identify how the shift from vehicles to transit will be accommodated - otherwise such a significant shift to transit appears to result in a significant impact to that mode of travel.

64 **Park and Ride analysis.** Similar to the transit service analysis, there is no analysis of current or future Park and Ride demand. In Kirkland, South Kirkland, Houghton and Kingsgate Park and Rides each service routes that cross SR 520 and will certainly be impacted by tolling on SR 520. Recently published park and ride utilization rates by PSRC indicate usage has increased over the last three years for most parts of King County. Like transit service, current and future demand should be analyzed to understand the impacts of tolling on Park and Ride facilities and appropriate mitigation should be part of the project.

65 **Diversion of traffic from SR 520.** The EA does not investigate the diversion of traffic from SR 520 to local streets. A paragraph at the bottom of page 5-2 describes that the model used is inadequate for exploring this question. This is not a sufficient treatment of the topic. As for other routes, the EA should include a clear and more detailed explanation of why diversion will be minor. Only fairly broad statements concerning temporal changes in trip making and reduction in trip making are now in the EA. What types of trips are not being made? If, for example, they are home-based work trips, it is unlikely that such shifts in land use patterns would take place over the "interim" time line that is proposed for this project. Therefore, the assumptions in the EA may be incorrect and these incorrect assumptions may lead to impacts that are not mitigated.

66 **Monitoring of traffic diversion.** The EA assumes that auto diversion from SR 520 to surrounding arterials will be small. Much of the analysis is based on the regional travel demand model which focuses on high level assumptions and regional freeway travel behavior. Mitigation of impacts to local arterials is not identified in the EA because the

analysis of traffic diversion was only evaluated at a very high level. Due to the difficulty in evaluating possible local traffic diversion, the EA should identify a traffic mitigation program to monitor possible impacts tolling may have on local arterials. The monitoring program should compare with and without tolling performance measures for specific arterials throughout the study area based on input from local agencies. Kirkland is particularly concerned about corridors in the northern part of the City and our proposed annexation area. Many of those corridors already serve a high proportion of traffic from SR 522, one of the main corridors where traffic diversion might occur. Tables 4-5 and 4-6 in the Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix E) are of particular interest because they indicate no likely change in travel times or speeds along SR 522 with implementation of tolls. Changes in travel times and speeds are just one example of the type of traffic data that should be monitored to truly determine and ultimately address possible impacts to the local arterial system. Specific funding should also be identified and allocated towards mitigation that could address local impacts as they arise.

67 **Purpose of the project.** Traffic congestion relief and funding for the SR 520 Bridge replacement appear to be joint purposes of the Variable Tolling project. The EA should further explain why each of these purposes is important. Providing revenue to complete the SR 520 bridge replacement project is a key purpose of tolling. If tolling revenue is not supplemented with other revenue to build the entire project, how is early implementation of tolling along SR 520 going to ensure the bridge is replaced?

68 **Land use changes.** Page 5-23 of the EA states that there will be "no effect on employment trends in the region" as a result of the project. This statement seems inaccurate, if fewer trips are being made across the corridor, or they are being shifted in time or route and some of these trips are work trips, it is likely that employment trends will change. The EA should have further explanation of why it is expected that there will be no effect on employment trends.

Response to City of Kirkland:

58. Thank you for the comment and attachment.

59. The performance of the SR 520 corridor and other nearby facilities will be monitored before and after the project is implemented. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) will be evaluating the performance of the overall Lake Washington Urban Partnership. Overall travel demand patterns will be monitored, and this will included collecting data on highway, transit, and local arterial performance. More general information about how USDOT plans to monitor the Lake Washington Urban Partnership can be found here:

    http://www.upa.dot.gov/evaluation/assessingperformupa/index.htm

    In addition the State Legislature, in ESHB 2211, indicated their intent to reconsider the tolling policy for the corridor if tolls on SR 520 significantly alter the performance of nearby facilities. This will require monitoring the performance of these facilities.

    There is no adverse impact expected to the arterial system, so no mitigation has been identified.

60. A 26 to 32 percent increase in transit ridership is expected and is equivalent to a three percent mode shift on SR 520. Funding for new transit service has been provided for in SB 5433.

    The Lake Washington Urban Partnership includes funding for King County Metro to expand park and ride capacity at locations serving the SR 520 corridor. They are currently expanding the Redmond Park and Ride and plan to expand capacity at the South Kirkland Park and Ride. When new transit service is implemented, park and ride capacity will be taken into account.

    If monitoring of park and ride use identifies a problem related to tolling SR 520, WSDOT will work with affected jurisdictions to develop a remedy. However, WSDOT

currently has no funding to contribute to any solutions that may be identified.

61. Thank you for the comment.

62. See response to comment number 60 above.

    Currently no adverse impacts to transit systems are anticipated, so no mitigation measures are proposed.

63. The transit analysis for this project is based on best practices and cannot speculate on factors that are unknown at this time. However, King County Metro and Sound Transit will identify which routes will receive increased service through their respective service planning processes. The transportation analysis for the build alternative includes additional transit service hours at the request and guidance of King County Metro – see response to comment number 46. In addition, the most recent transit operations data is included in this FONSI in Attachment 1, pages A1-4 through A1-5.

64. See response to comment number 60 above.

65. According to a memo dated December 12, 2008 from WSDOT to the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee describing traffic diversion, when SR 520 tolls are in place, traffic actually drops on local arterials with direct access to SR 520. The assumptions in this memo about trip making choices state that people will switch from driving to transit, switch to other travel times, switch to a different destination, or switch routes. These are the same assumptions described in the EA.

66. See response to comment number 59. To date, the Legislature has not created a toll mitigation account.

67. The explanation of the purpose of the project is described in Chapter 2 of the EA. In addition, ESHB 2211, which authorizes tolling on SR 520, describes that toll rates shall be set by the tolling authority (Transportation Commission) on a variable schedule to maintain travel time, speed, and reliability on the corridor. While tolls generated by the project would be used to help finance the bridge

replacement per legislative direction in ESHB 2211, ensuring the bridge is replaced is not part of the purpose of the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project.

68. There are not necessarily fewer trips being made across Lake Washington, the trips are being made using different modes and during different times. This should not affect employment trends because the jobs are not going away due to tolling.

King County
Department of Transportation
201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

May 11, 2009

Paul Krueger
WSDOT Urban Corridors Office
401 Second Avenue South, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Paul:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the State Route 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment (EA) distributed March 2009. The EA provides useful information about the impacts variable tolling may have on the public and on the environment, and we agree that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment.

We would like to thank the Washington State Department of Transportation and the State Legislature for their leadership in implementing the nation's first all-electronic variable tolling program prior to completion of the new SR 520 Bridge. The King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) continues to support the use of variable tolling on the existing SR 520 Bridge as one component of a cross-Lake Washington tolling program to provide immediate congestion relief. This program is critical to not only financing a new SR 520 bridge, but also as a traffic management tool providing long-lasting benefits.

Despite the benefits of implementing a SR 520 bridge variable tolling program, certain policy decisions have yet to be made that will affect the quality of transit service if not addressed before tolling is implemented. When tolling is implemented on the SR 520 Bridge, data forecasts show that transit demand will increase by 15 to 35 percent in the corridor as more residents look for alternatives to paying a toll. This will require King County Metro (Metro), the largest provider of service through this corridor, to increase transit service connecting communities on each side of the bridge—an impossible task as Metro is facing a growing revenue shortfall over the next several years. To make transit a viable alternative to paying tolls, the following issues must be addressed before implementing tolling on the SR 520 Bridge.

69

Additional revenue to expand Metro Transit service on SR 520

The SR 520 Urban Partnership application anticipated the growth in demand and need to increase transit service as a result of tolling the corridor. To accommodate the increase in transit demand the federal award funded the purchase of 45 buses—34 for Metro and 11 for Sound Transit. The award also included improvements to transit stops along the corridor, including real-time bus arrival information and an expansion of park-and-ride capacity; however, the federal award did not include funding to operate the new buses. Metro has been clear that a new ongoing revenue source is needed in order to provide the additional transit service identified in the SR 520 Urban Partnership application. The cost estimate for implementing Metro service identified in the plan is about $3.8 million dollars annually. With Metro sales tax revenues coming in significantly under forecast due to the national economic recession, identifying an ongoing revenue source for this service is even more important.

70

Toll exemption for public transit

Tolling transit that crosses the SR 520 Bridge will impose an additional annual operating cost of approximately $600,000 to Metro, a cost that would likely be incurred through a fare increase or service reductions by transit riders crossing the SR 520 Bridge. Either alternative would make transit a less attractive travel option, which is inconsistent with the intent of the Federal Urban Partnership program. Additionally, if Metro was forced to increase the transit fares or reduce service levels, this would place an additional burden on those who rely on transit as their only means of transportation.

71

Tolling SR 520 and Interstate 90 (I-90) is critical to ensuring long-term regional mobility

The King County Department of Transportation believes that both Lake Washington bridges should be tolled to achieve optimum performance of the system and to generate sufficient revenue for necessary improvements. The EA does not address the long-term impacts of not tolling I-90. The population in the Puget Sound Region is expected to grow by 1.7 million by 2040, putting significantly more vehicles on our roadways. The EA focuses on tolling SR 520 in the near term to generate revenue for a replacement bridge and to manage traffic in the corridor until 2016. The reality is more vehicles will fill our roadways in the future, and congestion on I-90 will severely impact the operability of our transportation network. Implementing variable tolling on the SR 520 Bridge is a great first step, but variable tolling on I-90 is critical in managing the future growth of our region.

72

Minimize adverse effects on low-income population

The EA presents several strategies for minimizing adverse effects of the project on low-income or minority populations including customer service outlets, outreach, and working with social service agencies. Another strategy WSDOT should consider is providing social service agencies with transit passes for low-income or minority persons adversely affected by tolling. Increased transit service on SR 520 will make transit a more viable alternative to driving, giving all residents, including low-income and minority persons, more opportunities to use fast and frequent transit service for cross-lake travel.

73

We hope that the draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the SR 520 bridge, to be issued in the fall, addresses the following issues so that transit can continue to be an effective alternative to tolling once the bridge replacement project is completed.

Removal of the Montlake freeway station

The draft SR 520 SEIS should discuss the impacts of, and identify mitigation for, the removal of the Montlake Freeway Station as proposed in all Westside replacement options for the SR 520 Bridge. The Montlake Freeway Station is a critical component of cross-lake transit service, providing access to 355 daily bus trips for transit riders between Eastside and Westside communities and employment centers such as the University District, Capitol Hill, Kirkland, Totem Lake, Overlake, and Redmond. To offset the loss of this critical access point, an increase in direct service between the University District and Eastside communities requires 65,000 to 85,000 additional service hours at a cost of $6 million to $8 million annually.

Maintaining transit access and increasing direct service to the University of Washington is an essential component of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. Without the Montlake Freeway Station or funding to increase direct service to the University District, many current riders will experience a reduction in service. This will reduce the viability of transit as an alternative to paying a toll between several of our region's strongest transit markets. Establishing a source of operating revenue is an issue that needs to be addressed in light of the planned removal of the Montlake Freeway Station. If ongoing funding is not identified, we suggest that the Montlake Freeway Station be retained in all future alternatives considered to replace the SR 520 Bridge.

Construction impacts on transit

The SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project and the Eastside Transit and HOV Project construction activities will affect transit operations and are likely to cause traffic delays and disruptions. Increased congestion and lane closures will lead to increased travel time for buses crossing Lake Washington; such delays will increase the cost of providing transit service. These projects should include funding to mitigate the impact of slower transit operations on existing schedules during construction.

One tool identified to help King County offset additional service costs and meet the requirements of the Urban Partnership Agreement is the property tax authority granted by the State Legislature in the 2009 legislative session. The Legislature's recent passage of Senate Bill 5433 authorizes King County to assess a property tax up to 7.5 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value to fund transit, with the first penny dedicated to fund service in the SR 520 corridor. King County will be further exploring the feasibility of this option to reduce the impact of our current budget shortfall and to provide additional service in the SR 520 corridor.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment, and feel confident that this valuable analysis will guide our region forward in implementing a tolling program that mitigates congestion and pays for transportation improvements. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please address them to Ron Posthuma, Assistant Director, King County Department of Transportation, at 206-684-1007 or via e-mail, at ron.posthuma@kingcounty.gov.

Sincerely,

Harold S. Taniguchi, Director
King County Department of Transportation

cc: Laurie Brown, Deputy Director, King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT)
Ron Posthuma, Assistant Director, KCDOT
Kevin Desmond, Metro Transit General Manager, KCDOT

Response to King County:

69. As King County is aware, in SB 5433, the Legislature provided a revenue source that can be used to operate the new buses. An additional regular property tax levy can be imposed for transit-related expenditures. The Legislature dedicated a portion of this tax to expand transit capacity along SR 520 by adding core and other supporting bus routes.

70. Thank you for the comment. The Transportation Commission will establish the toll policy for SR 520.

71. Thank you for the comment.

72. Thank you for the suggestion. One form of payment that will be allowed to pay for tolls is an EBT card.

73. These comments address the bridge replacement project, which is separate from this project. We forwarded your comments to the SR 520 Team who is currently working on the Supplemental DEIS for the bridge replacement.

City of Bellevue
Post Office Box 90012 • Bellevue, Washington • 98009 9012

May 11, 2009

Mr. Ron Paananen, SR 520 Project Manager
Washington State Department of Transportation
Urban Corridors Office, 401 2nd Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Paananen:

The City of Bellevue, as a community dependent upon safe and reliable SR 520 operations is pleased to provide you with our comments regarding the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment. We have been very engaged in the SR 520 HOV and Bridge Replacement Project for over ten years and are pleased that tolling of SR 520 as a regional priority and a long-time integral component of bridge replacement funding is advancing. We have reviewed the EA document and listed below are our key concerns.

Bellevue's Chief Concerns (not shown in priority order):

74 1. ***Travel diversion and mitigation measures.*** We are concerned that the EA document is silent with regard to anticipated impacts on local arterials as a result of tolling SR 520. We ask that not only WSDOT maintain a strong analysis commitment to this project, but that local governments be directly consulted in any and all impact analysis and mitigation considerations. Such analysis should not be limited to state highways: local arterials need to be carefully analyzed as well. Moreover, we urge WSDOT to work directly with local governments to craft assumptions for the traffic modeling work as well. Finally, while we appreciate that the analysis concerning state highway showed only a minimal volumes increases (0-4%) we remain concerned that order of magnitude affects could be felt on operational performance, particularly at bottlenecks in the system. We ask that WSDOT carefully monitor and mitigate as conditions shift.

75 2. ***Clarifications concerning I-405.*** To the extent WSDOT is relying upon to-be-built improvements to I-405 to assist with diversionary affects to I-90, we are concerned that the lack of additional I-405 improvements could mean greater impacts on Bellevue's north/south corridors like 148th Avenue and Bellevue Way. We urge WSDOT to closely monitor I-405 and surrounding local arterials and be prepared to mitigate traffic diversions as they occur.

76 3. ***Public and Emergency Vehicles.*** We understand from the EA document that 3+ HOV vehicles will have free use of the toll lanes. We also understand that emergency vehicles will be refunded in cases of emergency. Is there a more simplified way to implement this? We encourage you to consider exemption of all public safety vehicles.

77 4. ***Transit Assumptions.*** The EA analysis assumes additional transit service levels. Specifically, the EA document assumes a 25% increase in transit service hours through the corridor generating 26-32% increase in transit ridership. We understand that capital costs are covered by the Urban Partnership grant. If those service levels are not realized, how might WSDOT mitigate the impact attributed to additional auto trips? Moreover, was any assessment of transit service demand vs. seats available conducted for the current time frame and 2016 when the new bridge is to open? If not, we suggest that WSDOT conduct this work to better gauge transit service demand and service needs. Finally, how might the transit operations requirements of the Urban Partnership be met especially given Metro's and Sound Transit's suppressed revenue levels for transit? The EA suggests broadly that at sources will be needed from other sources.

78 5. ***Impacts Attributed to Construction Staging.*** We understand this project will require minimal construction staging. We urge WSDOT to clarify the impacts of simultaneous construction of multiple projects in this corridor and alternative corridors (I-90's Two-Way Transit/HOV Project, East Link, etc.). The EA analysis did not consider simultaneous construction on SR 520 itself. In short, we request a cumulative impacts assessment of construction of all projects in study area. It will be critical to monitor and mitigate for these impacts over time.

79 6. ***Public Information and Outreach.*** Introducing variable tolls on SR 520 next year is very significant, and as such, will require a variety of communication methods to ensure comprehensive public awareness of this project. We would like to know more about your plans in this regard. Moreover, we will be happy to collaborate with your staff to augment communications using our City resources—web, mailers, etc. that are routinely provided to our citizens. Success of this project hinges largely on the extent to which citizens are well advised to their travel options and have a good working understanding of how to use the tolls lanes.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide you comments. We look forward to close coordination with WSDOT as you near launch time early next year. Attached is a more detailed list of technical concerns by reference in the draft EA document.

Sincerely,

Goran G. Sparrman, P.E.
Director, Transportation Department

Attachment

cc: Bellevue City Council
Steve Sarkozy, Bellevue City Manager
Diane Carlson, Bellevue Intergovernmental Relations Director
Kim Becklund, Bellevue Transportation Policy Advisor

Attachment to May 6, 2009 Letter from City of Bellevue
Detailed List of Technical Concerns

80 1. Within the Executive summary it describes that tolling will occur between I-5 and I-405. While consistent with the UPA, this may be misleading, as described in the body of the EA, tolling will only occur between the last exit points eastbound and westbound. (Page 1-1)

81 2. With respect to tolling rates, and revenue, as described on page 1-2, tolling revenue may be used for other transportation improvements beyond replacing the bridges. Recent actions by the Legislature EHSB 2211 are restrictive in the current use of the tolling revenues. This section should be revised accordingly.

82 3. As described the am and pm peak periods are between 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., respectively. If the significant portion of trips are associated with peak work commute, with 11% to 18% lower traffic on SR 520 following tolling implementation, a table demonstrating the projected mode splits and associated values within and outside of peak periods would be very helpful. (Pages 1-3, 5-5, 5-6)

83 4. Regarding tolling rate and revenue, the technical analysis discusses the complexity in evaluating tolling method, rate, and diversion. It would be helpful to summarize in the EA at what tolling rate would interim tolling be less likely to encourage congestion relief or vice versa have more significant diversion rates, which may also have added impact. (Pages 1-2, 4-3)

84 5. Regarding the noise analysis, the Executive Summary in the document indicates that average speeds will increase and travel times will decrease. Thus, with higher average speed on the corridor (increased speed from 5 MPH to 15 MPH), and reduced congestion, what level of increase in noise is expected?

85 6. The Jacobs Carter Burgess Memorandum and Appendix E suggest that the diversion analysis did not included local arterials "as they do not carry traffic across Lake Washington." The principal arterial streets carry significant traffic to/from SR 520, I-405, and I-90. Thus, to fully evaluate the transportation and traffic considerations, the analysis should include other principal arterial street diversions and traffic shifts that will occur within the study area.

86 7. Based on subsequent shifts in arterial street traffic that may be diverted to/ from SR 520, I-405, and I-90, other potential impacts or reductions should also be disclosed to fully assess and evaluate cumulative impacts of the alternatives, including, but not limited to congestion, noise, air quality/emissions. (Pages 1-7, 5-5, 5-40, Appendix E).

87 8. The EA reflects interim tolling through completion of the SR 520 project improvements that will encompass separate improvements, each with an independent and potentially overlapping phase. Page 1-7 describes that there will not be any "noticeable cumulative effect on travel patters in combination with the construction of these projects." To better understand the relationship or difference in the diversion of traffic

Attachment to May 6, 2009 Letter from City of Bellevue
Detailed List of Technical Concerns

between phasing of construction and tolling, please clarify and distinguish the difference in volumes.

88

9. The Executive Summary describes a positive effect is that transit service improvements will make it easier for low-income users to find alternatives to avoid paying the toll on SR 520." While a broad representation, it is not clear what service hours are to be implemented with the tolling assumptions and based on transit rates how it may be a viable alternative. Do the assumptions also include other measures allowing transit rates for low-income users to remain comparable to costs without tolling?

Example, what assumptions are made regarding transit service rates and how they may or may not increase to provide such service hours, subsequently the associated costs for potential low-income persons that are directed toward transit as an alternative.

89

10. The Memorandum provided by Jacobs Carter Burgess, describes provisions and measures to address that the "Urban Partner will provide discounted or free access for vehicles with 3+ occupants." This information is not contained in the body of the EA further reflecting how it is proposed to be implemented. (See page 5-17 "toll will be charged to all bridge users).

90

11. While the purpose of the project is described focusing on elements of the Urban Partnership, the EA makes little or no reference regarding the vulnerability of the bridge components, which may lead toward potential impact, and what catastrophic failure would mean to regional congestion. Meaning is not tolling also a measure to mitigate potential catastrophic failure in generating necessary revenue, and should catastrophic failure occur it may have other significant impacts?

91

12. Page 4-1 describes the extent of improvements, including provisions for a backup generator for the tolling system that may be placed in the event of power outage. The EA does not adequately address measures for screening, noise mitigation, or spill prevention measures that will be implemented to protect adjacent land use and shorelines from impacts that may be associated with such measures (permanent or temporary).

92

13. Page 4-4 provides tolling scenario rates expressed in 2007 dollars. Appendix E reflects traffic analysis based on 2010 and 2016 volumes. With more current economic analysis having been completed by the tolling committee, based on more current rates, and that the traffic modeling is based on 2010 and 2016 volumes, the two should be in the same year to fully and equally evaluate diversion, potential impact, and mitigation relative to the EA.

93

14. Page 5-2 provides a short discussion relative to determining diversion of traffic onto other cross-lake routes. With the I-90 HOV/Transit project yet to be completed and LRT implementation to follow, how does the diversion and transit analysis address the potential overlap on two significant cross-lake routes, and assumptions regarding cumulative impact? (Page 6-9 reflects that Sound Transit expects to start construction in 2013 with the East Link LRT.)

Attachment to May 6, 2009 Letter from City of Bellevue
Detailed List of Technical Concerns

94 15. Page 5-6 provides a summary regarding accident analysis along the SR 520 corridor. The data is based on records between 2000 and 2002. The data is based on the 2006 DEIS, which is currently being updated. The analysis should reflect more current data to more accurately evaluate both potential benefits with a projected reduction in congestion and associated elements with diversion to other corridors or local arterial streets.

95 16. Page 5-6 should provide additional information regarding the hours of potential temporary lane reductions, main line and/or ramp closures to implement the proposed improvements. This should also reflect a temporary diversion of traffic, which should also be described regarding potential impact, although it may be negligible.

96 17. Page 5-10 discusses project benefits that tolling and subsequent congestion relief will have on emergency response times. While many agencies are party to Mutual Aid agreements, and the public receives significant benefit to the emergency services provided by police and fire, such public safety elements should be exempt from tolling, and not limited to reimbursement if an "emergency," as there are other active passive measures related to monitoring, enforcement, and safety serving the public and the region.

97 18. Page 5-27 discusses how lighting over the roadway and in the vicinity of the gantry is envisioned to be implemented. Adjacent residential land use should be protected or shielded with appropriate cutoffs from additional glare or spill over of light sources associated with implementing tolling systems.

98 19. Page 6-11 discusses other Active Traffic Management techniques that will be implemented along the corridor, yet there is little discussion in where such measures will be implemented and how potential issues regarding visual impact, lighting, and how temporary or permanent impacts may be mitigated.

Response to City of Bellevue:

74. According to a memo dated December 12, 2008 from WSDOT to the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee describing traffic diversion, when SR 520 tolls are in place, traffic actually drops on local arterials with direct access to SR 520. See the text added to this FONSI in Attachment 1, page A1-6 for more information.

    Currently no adverse impacts to local arterials are anticipated, so no mitigation measures are proposed.

75. Monitoring will occur as described above.

76. The EA does not state that 3+ HOV will have free use of the toll lanes. WSDOT is continuing to study ways to provide a discount to 3+ HOV vehicles. Emergency vehicle refund policy decisions are made by the Transportation Commission. For the EA, we assumed that the policy would be similar to what is in place on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.

77. As stated, the EA identifies a 26 to 32 percent increase in transit ridership, which translates into a three percent shift to transit. This shift is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the transit system. See response to comment number 74 above for monitoring plans that includes transit.

78. The other construction projects in the area have or will address construction staging impacts of their own. The SR 520 Variable Tolling Project construction will be completed before the other projects start. It will not contribute to adverse cumulative construction staging impacts.

79. WSDOT will implement a multi-phase campaign to educate drivers about electronic tolling and to ensure that the successful market penetration goals are achieved for the *Good To Go!*™ program. WSDOT will conduct market research, develop and execute effective advertising concepts, institute a focused media relations plan, and implement a multi-faceted outreach and education campaign. The public activities will be launched in late 2009, with an intensified effort beginning in early 2010, leading up to the opening of *Good To Go!*™ customer service centers in summer 2010.

WSDOT values the City of Bellevue's interest is participating in this public education and outreach effort. As we finalize plans for how to maximize our activities, we will call on the City of Bellevue to provide input and support to make this launch a success.

80. Thank you for the comment. This has been clarified in the errata in Attachment 1 of this document.

81. This section has been revised in the FONSI to update the EA.

82. Mode split data and analysis can be found in Chapter 3, Existing Conditions of the *Transportation Discipline Report* in Appendix E of the EA.

83. Our analysis looked at the likely range of toll rates, which reflect an effort to balance the need for congestion reduction and the need for revenue from the tolls.

84. With an increase of an average speed by 10 miles per hour, noise would be expected to increase by 2 dBA, which is not perceptible by most people.

85. See response to comment number 74 above.

86. No substantial change in arterial traffic is anticipated, therefore cumulative impact analysis is not appropriate.

87. The level of traffic volumes as they relate to each individual construction project cannot be separated. See response to comment number 74 above for traffic monitoring.

88. There is no assumption of transit fares increasing as a result of this project.

89. The tolling memos were written before the EA began. The text in the body of the EA is more accurate, specifically the text on page 3-6 that describes potential discounts for 3+ vehicles.

90. This project does not deal with the necessity of bridge replacement. That is a separate project being undertaken.

91. More detail has been added to the FONSI regarding the generator in Attachment 1, page A1-3.

92. The toll rates are described in 2007 dollars, but the rates used in the transportation analysis were assumed to increase yearly at an inflation rate of 2.5 percent.

93. See response to comment number 74 above for diversion and transit impact monitoring.

94. We have looked at the most current accident data and it does not change the results of the analysis.

95. Plans for potential lane closures and required diversion will be developed with the construction plans. Closures will occur as infrequently as possible and will typically occur during nighttime hours.

96. The Transportation Commission will decide the toll policy for emergency service providers. For the EA we assumed that the policy would be similar to what is in place at Tacoma Narrows Bridge.

97. Lighting that will be implemented for this project will be shielded and pointed at the road deck, or infrared lighting will be used.

98. Active Traffic Management is not part of this project. A separate environmental process was conducted to address this aspect of the Lake Washington Urban Partnership.

SOUNDTRANSIT

May 11, 2009

Paul Krueger
SR 520 Variable Tolling Project
Washington State Dept of Transportation
401 2nd Avenue S, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Paul:

I am transmitting Sound Transit's comments on the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project Environmental Assessment issued in April 2009. Overall, we found it to be a fine document and as a result we have only minimal comments as follows:

99

- The East Link project is identified as being 18 miles long, extended to downtown Redmond and including 14 stations (page 6-9). Correction: the project being evaluated in the environmental review process includes light rail all the way to downtown Redmond, but the project funded in the Sound Transit 2 Plan includes light rail to downtown Bellevue and Overlake Transit Center, for a total of 14.3 miles with nine stations.

100

- Regarding the additional ST Express service funded in the Sound Transit 2 Plan, page 6-10 notes three specific routes with potential increased frequency (Routes 545, 550 and 554). In addition, Routes 555 and 556 are under consideration but this has not been determined yet. The Sound Transit Board will take action on specific service increases as part of the annual Service Implementation Plan process. Because the Board has not yet acted to fully implement the additional bus service hours included in the plan, it is preferable to us that these improvements are referred to for now as "potential" improvements.

101

As a general comment, there is growing consensus among local transit agencies that tolling revenue should be used in part to offset added transit operating costs directly related to tolling. Implementation of tolls on SR 520 will price some travelers out of the market; will divert some travelers to other routes; and will definitely increase transit mode share across Lake Washington.

Increasing transit ridership is a constant we strive to do, but at a time when all our routes are operating with capacity loads and sales tax revenues are down considerably in the region, it will be increasingly difficult to raise the funds needed to pay for the added service. Increased transit service across Lake Washington has to be considered as mitigation for the loss of travel options to the segment of our traveling public that will no longer be able to afford driving.

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SOUNDTRANSIT

102 As a transit agency we would be eager to partner with WSDOT on providing a comprehensive regional solution to cross-lake travel. My feeling is that King County Metro would as well. The Sound Transit Board of Directors feels strongly enough that they adopted language in ST2 as follows:

> "The agency will seek legislative authority to replace or substantially reduce its reliance on the sales and use tax as the primary funding source for regional transit improvements, consistent with all contractual commitments. In order to replace the revenue that would be lost by reducing or eliminating the sales and use tax, the agency will seek legislative authority to raise an equal amount of revenue from other sources more directly related to regional transportation such as tolls, user-based fees, vehicle or other transportation related taxes."

I look forward to continuing to work with the State Department of Transportation on the implementation of the SR 520 program.

Sincerely,

Gregory A. Walker, AICP
Policy and Planning Officer

c:
Ric Ilgenfritz, Executive Director
Andrea Tull, Senior Planner
Perry Weinberg, Environmental Compliance Manager

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Response to Sound Transit:

99. Thank you for the comments. The East Link language has been corrected in the FONSI.

100. Thank you for the comment. Sound Transit added trips to the routes listed in the EA on June 1 as part of the Sound Transit 2 service expansion.

101. Thank you for the comment. This action would require Legislative approval.

102. Thank you for the comment.