



SR 520 Seattle Community Design Process Final Report Cover Letter

Dec. 20, 2012

TO: Participants in the SR 520 Seattle Community Design Process

FROM: Julie Meredith, SR 520 Program Director
Washington State Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: SR 520 Seattle Community Design Process complete

The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program is a long-term investment in one of the region's busiest corridors, a corridor that connects major population and employment centers in Seattle and the east side of Lake Washington. The SR 520 Program will replace the aging floating bridge across Lake Washington and complete critical safety and mobility improvements along the corridor from I-5 in Seattle to SR 202 in Redmond. The Eastside and floating bridge segments are currently under construction.

Seattle Community Design Process

Per the 2011 City of Seattle/SR 520 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), WSDOT hosted a Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP) to refine the vision and design elements for the unfunded portions of the SR 520 Program, between I-5 in Seattle and the West Approach Bridge. From Aug. 2011 to Dec. 2012, WSDOT worked with a diverse group of SR 520 stakeholders including the City of Seattle, other partner agencies, design professionals (including the Seattle Design Commission), and the public. WSDOT also enlisted the guidance of the West Side Community Design Collaborative, a group of neighborhood participants and partner agency staff that served as a sounding board for the project team by sharing community concerns and feedback. Through this effort, the group helped WSDOT develop design ideas and refinements that were explored with the public through seven public sessions. As a result of these informative and positive conversations, WSDOT adopted a refined vision of "Nature meets City" and developed a set of design preferences based on what was heard from key stakeholders and the public.

To provide additional opportunities for input and validate what we heard through the process, WSDOT published a Draft Seattle Community Design Process report and hosted a public comment period on the design preferences. Members of the public were invited to provide formal comments during a three-week public comment period held from Sept. 14 to Oct. 5, 2012. At the conclusion of the comment period, WSDOT had received a total of 1,607 responses, including 26 letters from SR 520 stakeholder and community groups, with the majority of comments voicing support for the work completed to date. Areas that need additional work to better understand the issues and opportunities, such as the community-requested shared-use path on Portage Bay Bridge, a safer and

more efficient multimodal design for Montlake Boulevard, and better connectivity on the Montlake lid, will require additional coordination with the City of Seattle.

To conclude the SCDP, WSDOT is publishing the Final Seattle Community Design Process Report. The final report includes the adopted project vision, a list of design preferences that will guide WSDOT's work moving forward, and a summary of the SR 520 stakeholder and public comments.

Next Steps

WSDOT will continue to partner with the City of Seattle to reconnect Seattle neighborhoods and activity centers while supporting both regional mobility and multimodal travel to and through Seattle. The City of Seattle recently identified two 2013 budget actions related to these pursuits: a Montlake corridor transit reliability study and a bike and pedestrian feasibility study.

WSDOT continues to seek funding to support construction of the project as outlined in the 2011 SR 520, I-5 to Medina Project Record of Decision, with the goal of addressing vulnerability and improving mobility in the corridor. In fall 2012, WSDOT secured a Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan to construct the north side of the west approach bridge (also called the West Approach Bridge North, or WABN). This phase of construction will connect the new floating bridge to land in Seattle. The WABN will be forward-compatible with the vision and design preferences established through the SCDP, and will reflect the public's feedback to create a simple and clean structural design. The design team will use the project vision and design preferences established during the SCDP to inform future phases of design and construction.

Funding for the WABN is a major step forward for the I-5 to Medina project, and requires WSDOT to perform additional design work in coordination with the City of Seattle and other key stakeholders. In Sept. 2012, WSDOT and the City of Seattle convened a technical working group to guide the project team's development of technical design details. As an extension of SCDP coordination, WSDOT also continued to work with the Seattle Design Commission on key bridge design elements. The Seattle Design Commission approved the conceptual design of the major bridge elements, with the understanding that WSDOT would continue to coordinate with them through final design.

In 2013, WSDOT will continue to work with partner agencies, including the City of Seattle and King County Metro, to advance WABN design and construction. SR 520 staff will brief the Seattle City Council and Mayor, as well as host SR 520 Program open houses in early February. The open houses will be an opportunity for WSDOT to provide the public with construction updates and information about the next phases of planning and design for the Seattle side of the corridor, with a focus on WABN.

WSDOT continues to work closely with the Governor, Legislature, and City of Seattle to secure construction funding for the remaining elements of the Seattle side of the corridor. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Seattle through the implementation of the City of Seattle/SR 520 MOU, and to working with the public as the project moves forward in design.