I-90 Tolling Project

Second Scoping Summary Report

January 2014

Washington State Department of Transportation

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1

Consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan – Transportation 2040 4

2 Scoping Process 5

Outreach Overview 5

Notification of Public Comment Period 5

Public Scoping Meetings 8

Outreach to Public Service Providers 9

3 Agency and Tribal Coordination 11

4 Summary of Comments 13

Key Themes 14

Summary of Comments from the Public 15

Summary of Comments from Agencies 25

Summary of Comments from Organizations 29

5 Next Steps 32

List of Attachments

A Scoping Materials

B Comment Forms

C List of Outreach Meetings

D Scoping Comment Letters from Agencies and Organizations

Acronyms and Abbreviations

HOT	high occupancy toll
I-5	Interstate 5
I-90	Interstate 90
I-405	Interstate 405
EIS	environmental impact statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SR 520	State Route 520
SR 522	State Route 522
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

I-90 Tolling Project
Second Scoping Summary Report

1 Introduction

Public scoping is intended to encourage early communication in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to help the lead agencies gather public input and understand public concern. An initial scoping period was conducted from January 22 to February 22, 2013. During the initial scoping period, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) heard the public's concerns about the potential impacts and the need for a full environmental impact statement (EIS). After the initial scoping period, WSDOT received direction from the Legislature to conduct an EIS. An EIS provides an opportunity to evaluate the economic, social and environmental impacts of the proposal and present these findings to the public and agencies for their review and comment. This includes consideration of a range of alternatives that could achieve the purpose and need of the proposed project.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the I-90 Tolling Project was published in the Federal Register on September 26, 2013. As part of the EIS process, WSDOT and FHWA conducted a second scoping period from October 7 to November 6, 2013 and asked for public, agency and tribal input on:

- I-90 Tolling Project purpose and need
- Potential range of alternatives that might meet purpose of the project to manage congestion on I-90 and contribute revenue toward SR 520
- Potential environmental and social impacts
- Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate effects of the proposal

This scoping report describes public, agency, and tribal involvement opportunities between March and November 2013, and summarizes the comments received during the October 7 to November 6, 2013 public scoping period. The key themes expressed during the second scoping period were similar to what WSDOT and FHWA heard during the initial comment period.

WSDOT proposes to introduce tolling to the Interstate 90 (I-90) corridor between Interstate 5 (I-5) in Seattle and Interstate 405 (I-405) in Bellevue, Washington (Exhibit 1). The specific boundaries of the project's study area will be defined in the EIS. The total length of the corridor is approximately 7 miles. Before tolling could be implemented WSDOT must (1) complete the environmental review process; (2) receive FHWA approval to toll; and (3) receive authorization from the Washington State Legislature and toll rates from the Washington State Transportation Commission.

At the request of the legislature, one of the alternatives WSDOT will evaluate in the EIS is adding tolls to all through lanes of I-90, between I-5 in Seattle and I-405 in Bellevue. FHWA is the federal lead agency responsible for administering the NEPA and required approvals for this project. The I-90 and State Route 520 (SR 520) bridges are the major east-west routes linking the Seattle area and communities to the east, and together form the Cross-Lake Washington Corridor.[1] Tolling on I-90 is being considered to manage traffic congestion on the I-90 corridor and to generate needed revenue for improvements in the Cross-Lake Washington Corridor. Revenue generated from tolling I-90 would be used to fund a portion of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program that has a funding gap of $1.4 billion. FHWA and WSDOT held a second public scoping period from October 7 through November 6, 2013, as part of the project's proposed NEPA process (40 CFR 1501.7). The additional scoping period provided an opportunity for the public, agencies, tribes, and jurisdictions to comment on the project's purpose and need, alternatives, and potential effects. During the public scoping period, FHWA and WSDOT received approximately 1,315 comments, including

[1] The regional transportation plan, *Transportation 2040*, defines the Cross-Lake SMART corridor as the connected segments of I-5, SR 520, I-405, and I-90. *Transportation 2040* is available at: http://www.psrc.org/transportation/t2040/.

10 letters submitted by local agencies and organizations. Approximately 425 people attended the second round of public scoping meetings in Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Seattle. Section 4 of this report summarizes the comments received during the public scoping period.

Exhibit 1
Project Vicinity

NEPA encourages lead agencies (FHWA and WSDOT) to involve the public in decisions that affect the community. Feedback from the scoping periods will help shape the scope of alternatives and environmental analysis. When NEPA environmental review is complete, WSDOT proposes to adopt the NEPA EIS to satisfy the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements.

Consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan – Transportation 2040

In 2010, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) adopted the Regional Transportation Plan – *Transportation 2040*. The plan addresses regional mobility and accessibility and recognizes that financial resources will be scarce and investments in transportation will need to be strategic. The Regional Transportation Plan sets out broad policy direction for a sustainable future with increasing reliance on user fees and tolls, culminating in a highway network managed and financed as fully tolled facilities. It also calls for a clear relationship between tolling facility users and system benefits. A guiding principle is that toll policies should result in travel benefits for all users in the project corridor.

The proposed tolling of I-90 is listed in the 2010 Action Strategy, of the Regional Transportation Plan (Appendix A). The action strategy is for projects to be accomplished in the short term (one to two years) and includes a list of projects that comprise the Regional Ten-Year Transportation Investment Program. It lists high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes from Mercer Island to Issaquah as project 5435 and estimates the project cost at more than $30 million (2008 dollars). Appendix B of *Transportation 2040* lists projects by SMART[2] corridor. The Cross-Lake SMART Corridor includes the connected segments of I-90, I-405, SR 520, and I-5. With regards to the tolling program in this corridor *Transportation 2040* states "The I-90 Bridge could be fully tolled from Seattle to Mercer Island to ensure balanced operations when the SR 520 Bridge tolling begins, with a one-lane HOT system from Mercer Island to Issaquah in the mid-term." [3] The I-90 Tolling Project is included in PSRC's current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as project WDTOLL-1 in both documents. The STIP was approved on February 19, 2013, and the TIP was approved on June 12, 2013.

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[2] SMART stands for Sustainable, Multimodal, Accessible, Reliable, Technology.

[3] *Transportation 2040* Appendix B, page 74

2 Scoping Process

Outreach Overview

The public scoping process included a variety of public involvement opportunities and communications tools to inform the public and encourage comments on the project purpose and the full range of concepts. During the public scoping process, FHWA and WSDOT encouraged the public to be involved and comment through a variety of methods, including:

- Hosting three public meetings
- Hosting one agency scoping meeting
- Providing hearing-style verbal comment at the public meetings
- Allowing, online sign up for a verbal comment spot in advance of each public meeting
- Accepting comments through an online comment form, standard mail and email
- Sharing all scoping materials and information on the project website, including display boards, fact sheets and translated materials

The project website[4] serves as an online resource with regular updates on the EIS process and contains the library of project information for the project.

Attachments

Attachment A contains the scoping materials that were presented at the public meetings and are available on WSDOT's website. It also includes notices published during the public scoping period.

Attachment B contains the comment form distributed by mail and at the public meeting, and the form used on the online survey tool.

Attachment C contains a list of the outreach meetings that have taken place up through October 2013.

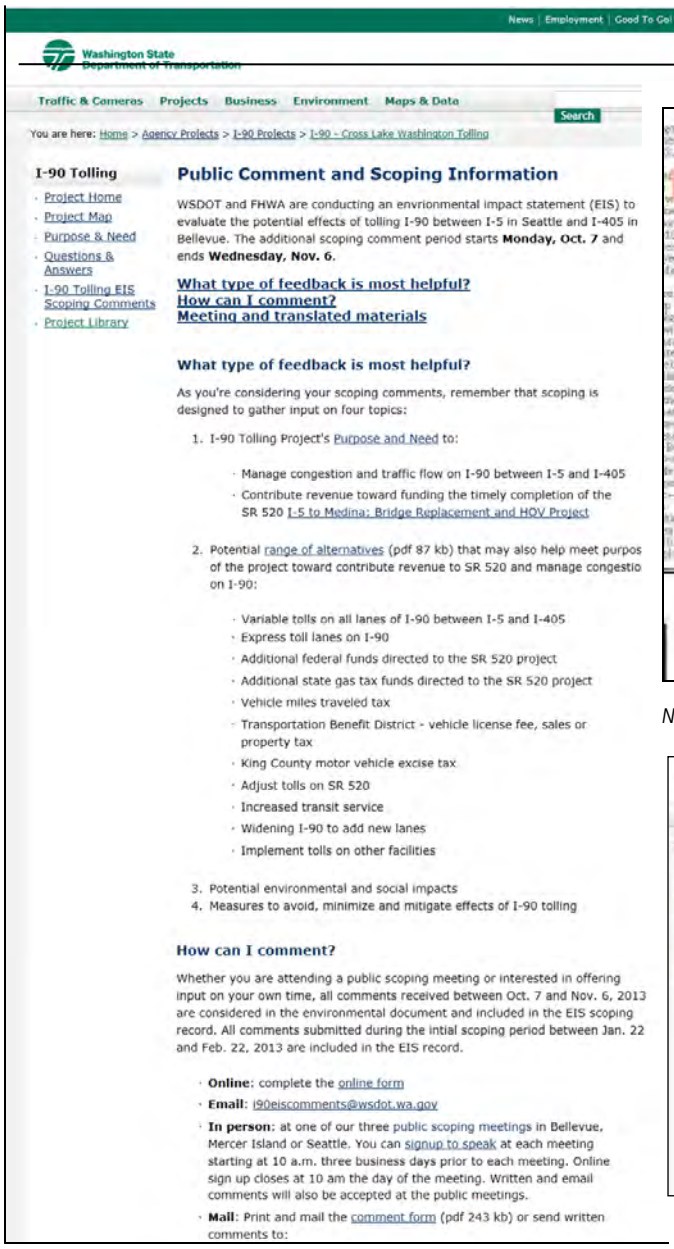
Attachment D contains the scoping comment letters received from agencies and organizations.

Notification of Public Comment Period

WSDOT conducted the public scoping period from October 7 to November 6, 2013. WSDOT advertised the public comment period and scoping meetings through:

- Direct emails to 685 I-90 Study e-newsletter recipients and to 322 environmental justice organizations/ community stakeholders

[4] http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/I90/CrossLakeWATolling/



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I-90 Tolling

- Project Home
- Project Map
- Purpose & Need
- Questions & Answers
- I-90 Tolling EIS Scoping Comments
- Project Library

Public Comment and Scoping Information

WSDOT and FHWA are conducting an envrionmental impact statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential effects of tolling I-90 between I-5 in Seattle and I-405 in Bellevue. The additional scoping comment period starts **Monday, Oct. 7** and ends **Wednesday, Nov. 6.**

What type of feedback is most helpful?
How can I comment?
Meeting and translated materials

What type of feedback is most helpful?

As you're considering your scoping comments, remember that scoping is designed to gather input on four topics:

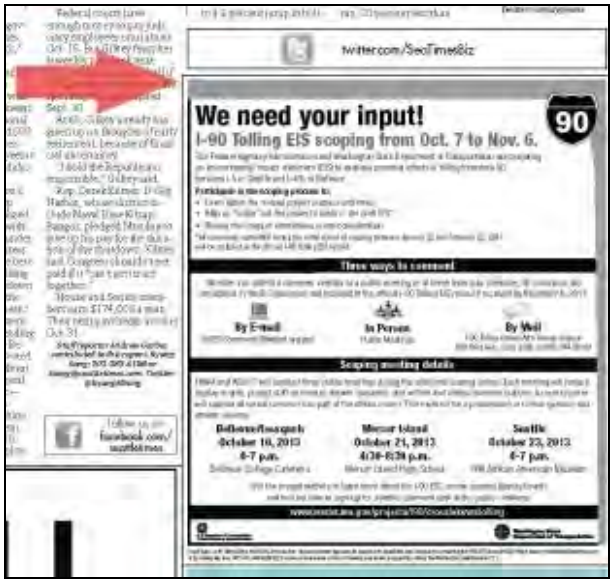
1. I-90 Tolling Project's Purpose and Need to:
   - Manage congestion and traffic flow on I-90 between I-5 and I-405
   - Contribute revenue toward funding the timely completion of the SR 520 I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project
2. Potential range of alternatives (pdf 87 kb) that may also help meet purpos of the project toward contribute revenue to SR 520 and manage congestio on I-90:
   - Variable tolls on all lanes of I-90 between I-5 and I-405
   - Express toll lanes on I-90
   - Additional federal funds directed to the SR 520 project
   - Additional state gas tax funds directed to the SR 520 project
   - Vehicle miles traveled tax
   - Transportation Benefit District - vehicle license fee, sales or property tax
   - King County motor vehicle excise tax
   - Adjust tolls on SR 520
   - Increased transit service
   - Widening I-90 to add new lanes
   - Implement tolls on other facilities
3. Potential environmental and social impacts
4. Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate effects of I-90 tolling

How can I comment?

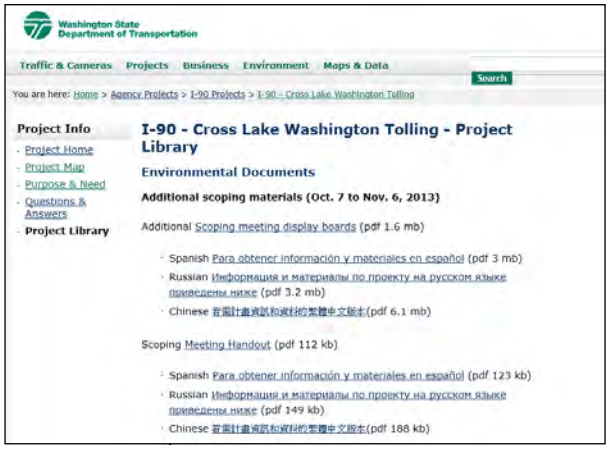
Whether you are attending a public scoping meeting or interested in offering input on your own time, all comments received between Oct. 7 and Nov. 6, 2013 are considered in the environmental document and included in the EIS scoping record. All comments submitted during the intial scoping period between Jan. 22 and Feb. 22, 2013 are included in the EIS record.

- **Online**: complete the online form
- **Email**: i90eiscomments@wsdot.wa.gov
- **In person**: at one of our three public scoping meetings in Bellevue, Mercer Island or Seattle. You can signup to speak at each meeting starting at 10 a.m. three business days prior to each meeting. Online sign up closes at 10 am the day of the meeting. Written and email comments will also be accepted at the public meetings.
- **Mail**: Print and mail the comment form (pdf 243 kb) or send written comments to:

WSDOT's website provided information and instructions on how to comment during the public scoping period.



Notice in the Seattle Times, October 1, 2013.



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Project Info

- Project Home
- Project Map
- Purpose & Need
- Questions & Answers
- **Project Library**

I-90 - Cross Lake Washington Tolling - Project Library

Environmental Documents

Additional scoping materials (Oct. 7 to Nov. 6, 2013)

Additional Scoping meeting display boards (pdf 1.6 mb)

- Spanish Para obtener información y materiales en español (pdf 3 mb)
- Russian Информация и материалы по проекту на русском языке приведены ниже (pdf 3.2 mb)
- Chinese 若需計畫資訊和資料的繁體中文版本(pdf 6.1 mb)

Scoping Meeting Handout (pdf 112 kb)

- Spanish Para obtener información y materiales en español (pdf 123 kb)
- Russian Информация и материалы по проекту на русском языке приведены ниже (pdf 149 kb)
- Chinese 若需計畫資訊和資料的繁體中文版本(pdf 188 kb)

Scoping materials available in other languages.

- Briefings with four organizations (Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Eastside Transportation Partnership, and Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce) and city officials from Mercer Island and their staff, and state legislators in the project vicinity
- Legal notice advertising the scoping meetings published in the Seattle Times
- The NOI to prepare an EIS for the I-90 Tolling Project, published in the Federal Register on September 26, 2013
- Press release posted on the WSDOT website and circulated by media outlets including dailies and weeklies, and ethnic media outlets throughout King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties
- Display advertisements ran in 24 news outlets and were translated into Russian, Spanish, and Chinese (Mandarin)
- 112 online postings on 28 community and city calendars, special interest and neighborhood blogs from September 2013 up to the meetings in October 2013
- Flyers distributed to the Bellevue school district for their community boards and offices, Mercer Island school district developed a news release for their staff and parent-teacher organizations
- 252 posters placed in Bellevue (Eastgate, Factoria, Lake Hills) Mercer Island, and Seattle (West Seattle, International District, Rainier Valley, Central District, Beacon Hill, and Pioneer Square) neighborhood businesses and community spaces
- 49,505 project reminders and updates were emailed to WSDOT listserv subscribers throughout King County, Snohomish, and Pierce counties
- 16 tweets from the WSDOT *Good to Go!* account reached 2,251 followers; retweets from the WSDOT feed reached 41,732 followers

For a complete list of outreach meetings, please see Attachment C.

Public Scoping Meetings

WSDOT held three in-person public scoping meetings in communities along the I-90 corridor. The public was encouraged to engage with project staff, review materials, and provide written, email or verbal comments. Approximately 425 people attended the meetings in Bellevue, Mercer Island, and Seattle. The meetings were held at:

Bellevue/Issaquah
October 10, 2013, 4–7 p.m.
Bellevue College Cafeteria
3000 Landerholm Circle SE
Bellevue, WA 98007
75 attendees

Mercer Island
October 21, 2013, 4:30–8:30 p.m.
Mercer Island High School
9100 SE 42nd Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040
300 attendees

Tolled Corridors Director John White discusses the I-90 EIS with members of the public attending the Seattle scoping meeting held October 23, 2013.

Seattle
October 23, 2013, 4–7 p.m.
Northwest African American Museum
2300 S Massachusetts Street
Seattle, WA 98144
50 attendees

At each public meeting, WSDOT asked participants to sign an attendance list and were given the option to sign up for email notices about the project (154 attendees signed up to receive notices at the meetings). WSDOT provided attendees with a meeting handout, a folio on the Cross-Lake Washington Corridor, a comment form, and access to translated materials upon request. WSDOT also provided copies of relevant legislation text (ESHB 2190 and ESSB 5024) and the initial scoping summary report at each meeting. WSDOT staff and project team members answered questions and explained the proposed project alternatives to participants. There was no scheduled formal presentation or question and answer session during the meetings.

Attendees were encouraged to submit written comments by completing a paper form, filling an online form or email, or submitting a verbal comment recorded by a court reporter in attendance at the public meeting.

On the project website, people were able to view all of the meeting handouts and presentation boards. Online commenters had the option to send comments via email, print and fill out the comment form, or submit their comments using an online comment form from the WSDOT website.

Verbal Comment

WSDOT provided a forum for the public to make hearing-style comments at each public meeting. Attendees were allotted two minutes to give a verbal comment to a court reporter in front of Craig Stone, Assistant Secretary of the WSDOT Toll Division and Lindsey Handel, Urban Area Engineer from FHWA. A second court reporter was provided at the Mercer Island meeting given the previous level of interest by the Mercer Island community. WSDOT offered the public two different options to sign up for verbal comment:

- Half of the available verbal comment spots were available for online sign-up three business days in advance of each meeting through a web-based service called Sign Up Genius.
- Half of the slots were reserved for in-person sign up at the meeting on a first come, first serve basis.

Outreach to Public Service Providers

Between September 26 and 29, 2013, WSDOT sent an email notice to a list of over 300 recipients and organizations associated with disadvantaged communities with low incomes and limited-English proficiency who might utilize I-90. The list of organizations was compiled from previous outreach conducted for the environmental assessment and the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project EA, and by reviewing service providers along the I-90 corridor (Rainier Valley, Central District, Beacon Hill, Mercer Island and East Bellevue). Public services providers include employment assistance, housing, mental health, domestic violence, and family services which are often supported by the

government. The email to providers and community liaisons included information on how to participate in the additional scoping period and how to receive more information or a briefing from WSDOT staff. WSDOT attached the meeting flyer, project factsheet and links to the project website for more information.

WSDOT sent a follow-up email on October 9, 2013 reminding the organizations of the scoping comment period. The email also offered translated scoping meeting display boards and the meeting handout in Chinese, Russian and Spanish. WSDOT also made these materials available on the website and had the links translated for easy access. Two recipients requested the translated files directly.

WSDOT selected the venues based on several factors including accessibility to impacted communities. Hosting the first public meeting in the Bellevue College cafeteria during hours of student dining allowed project staff to engage with a range of demographics that are not typically in attendance at public meetings. Given the interest in the issue from the Mercer Island community and previous dissatisfaction with capacity at the initial round of scoping, WSDOT selected Mercer Island High School for its spaciousness and familiarity. The Northwest African American Museum was selected for its accessibility to Seattle's ethnically and socioeconomically diverse Central District.

Eleven social service providers participated in initial briefings associated with the I-90 Tolling Project between December 2012 and January 2013. No organizations elected to meet with project staff during the October 7 to November 6, 2013 scoping period.

3 Agency and Tribal Coordination

FHWA and WSDOT sent invitations to be a participating or cooperating agency or tribe for the I-90 Tolling Project on January 4, 2013 and additional invitations April 4, 2013. Invitations have been accepted by:

Participating Agencies

- City of Kenmore
- City of Kirkland
- City of Lake Forest Park
- City of Sammamish
- City of Tukwila
- Port of Seattle
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
- Snoqualmie Tribe
- Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Cooperating Agencies

- City of Bellevue
- City of Issaquah
- City of Mercer Island
- City of Seattle
- King County Metro
- Sound Transit

The Puget Sound Regional Council and City of Maple Valley have declined to be a cooperating agency in this process. At this time responses have not been received from:

- City of Bothell
- City of Newcastle
- City of Renton
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

- Tulalip Tribes
- Yakama Nation

Due to the transition to an EIS and revised range of alternatives, additional invitations were sent to federal and state agencies between September 27 and October 3, 2013. The following agencies accepted:

Participating Agencies

- Washington State Department of Ecology
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Cooperating Agencies

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

At this time responses have not been received from:

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On September 17, 2013, WSDOT emailed all of the agencies and tribes about the upcoming agency scoping meeting on October 10, 2013. Meeting materials were sent on October 2, 2013. The agency scoping meeting was held on October 10, and WSDOT sent a summary of the meeting to agencies and tribes on October 17, 2013.

A summary of the comments received from agencies during the scoping period is included in Section 4, Summary of Comments from Agencies and Organizations.

4 Summary of Comments

During the initial scoping period in January and February 2013, FHWA and WSDOT received just over 3,400 comments. These comments are part of the overall scoping effort for this project and are summarized in the Initial Scoping Summary Report (July 2013).[5] Many of the commenters during the initial scoping period indicated they do not want tolls on I-90 and expressed concern about economic, community, and traffic impacts to both the local area and the region. Among the themes heard during the initial scoping period was the suggestion to prepare an EIS. The project now proposes to prepare an EIS so this theme was not part of what WSDOT and FHWA heard during the second scoping period. Otherwise, the themes heard during the initial comment period were similar to those expressed during the second scoping period.

During the second public scoping period from October 7 to November 6, 2013 just over 1,300 additional comments were received. These comments were received at public meetings, by mail, email, or using an online form. These included approximately:

- 187 letters, written comment forms, and verbal testimonies
- 987 emails and online comment forms
- 10 Letters from agencies or organizations
- An additional 132 emails were received that were not directly related to the EIS or this scoping period

Most of the comments received were from public citizens. One organization letter included 4,463 signatures. Comments were also received from local cities, organizations, community groups, and businesses. Copies of individual comments are available from WSDOT upon request.

As requested during the initial scoping period, a platform for verbal comments was made available at each public meeting. WSDOT and FHWA personnel were present to listen and all verbal comments were recorded by a court reporter.

[5] http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/I90/CrossLakeWATolling/ProjectLibrary.htm

All comments received were reviewed by WSDOT to identify information that could help shape the development and analysis of the project under NEPA. While reading transcripts of the verbal comments, emails, hard copy letters, and forms, the main topics were noted to help develop the list of key themes. The list of key themes is not inclusive of all the ideas shared during the comment period. Analysts also performed word searches to derive comment themes from the verbal transcripts and online comments.

Key Themes

WSDOT and the project team have reviewed all of the comments received during the public scoping period. The key themes that emerged from agencies and the public during the public comment period are summarized in this section, generally in order of the number of comments received. Key themes included:

- Opinions on Tolling
- Corridor Identification
- Purpose and Need
- Tolling Options
- Other Alternatives
- Economic Effects of Tolling
- Traffic Effects
- Effects to Freight
- Effects on the Region
- Effects on Land Use and Development on Mercer Island
- Effects on Public Services
- Effects on Community Life
- Environmental Justice
- Transit

Each of the key themes is discussed and includes representative quotes from comments received during scoping. These comments capture the relevant issues for environmental analysis under NEPA.

Summary of Comments from the Public

Opinions on Tolling

The most frequently made comments expressed by the public were opinions about tolling. Most commenters do not want tolls on I-90. Mercer Island residents are concerned they will be unfairly impacted because there is no other way off the island. Many daily commuters are concerned about the financial impact it would have to themselves and the region.

There were also a few comments expressing various levels of support, ranging from general support to support of certain options.

Opposed to adding tolls to I90

- Online comment form, King County

Don't establish a toll on I-90. First of all, it's an unfair, regressive tax on people, many of whom don't use SR-520.

- Online comment form, Seattle

I think tolling I90 is a horrible idea. We have already paid for it, and it is an interstate freeway. Not to mention the fact that all the drivers avoiding the tolls now will just head north or south around the lake, blocking local arterial routes. Also, the local eastside or seattle drivers would see little to no affect, while those of us who commute across the water for work would bear the brunt of the cost. I strongly disagree with this idea.

- Online comment form, King County

As you can tell, there are many here today that are screaming from the top of their lungs to say no I-90 to you for many good reasons. The answer is very simple. It's not about revenue here. It's about government management.

- Verbal comment, Mercer Island

You need to toll the whole Puget Sound system (I-5, 167, 520, Rt 9, 512).

- Scoping comment form, Bellevue

I think I-90 should be tolled because, let's face it, a lot of the people using it are people just trying to get out of the toll on 520. We all use the bridges, and if tolling I-90 gets 520 paid for more quickly, and therefore,

ENDS tolling altogether, then I say toll I-90! The sooner all tolls end, the better!!

- Email, King County

A toll would increase motivation to use mass transit, increase mass transit volumes, making it possible to build more mass transit, making it more convenient for everyone. Including drivers who will no longer have to compete for road space with other cars, whose occupants transition over to mass transit.

An emphatic Yes to I-90 Tolls!

- Email

Corridor Identification

Many commenters expressed that I-90 and SR 520 should not be considered a corridor, and others are against using funds generated by tolls on I-90 to pay for construction of the SR 520 project. Other comments suggested a regional perspective.

Scope of Impact Statement needs to address entire Puget Sound Region. I-90 and SR-520 does not constitute one cross-lake corridor. It serves different populations and purposes. Increased congestion on alternate routes will increase negative environmental impacts on surrounding communities.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

I-90 tolling impacts the entire Puget Sound region, including traffic of SR-522, I-5, I-405, port of Seattle and Tacoma, and communities. I would suggest WSDOT should study of origin and destination of I-90 and SR520 traffic before even thinking about tolling I-90. [sic]

- Online comment form, Mercer Island

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the I-90 Tolling Project is to manage congestion and traffic flow on I-90 between I-5 and I-405, which is in the Cross-Lake Washington Corridor, and contribute revenues to the sustainable, long-term funding for timely completion of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program and maintenance and future transportation improvements on I-90 in the Cross-Lake Washington Corridor.

Many commenters expressed that the purpose and need should be broader, that the EIS should look at the Puget Sound region and how tolling could affect traffic on other freeways.

The purpose and scope of the EIS is still too narrow; it fails to look at the broader impacts.

- Letter, Mercer Island

The EIS scope must include the entire Puget Sound region. Tolling rates on 520 are too high and not affordable to most. Current peak tool rates for a daily round trip are $3.70 x 2/day x 5 days/week x 52 weeks= $1924/year. And these are scheduled to go up significantly each year. This is causing many people to the north to use 405, 522, and I5 to get around to the north, and many people to the South to use 405 and I5 to go around to the south causing added congestion and environmental damage. [sic]

- Online comment form, Mercer Island

The problem is the proposed scope (purpose and need) divides the real world. Make the scope reflect reality: We're talking about traffic and funding for both I-90 and 520, and beyond. It's a system.

- Online comment form, Kirkland

I90 should not be tolled to pay for SR 520.

- Online comment form, King County

Tolling I-90 to pay for SR-520 is unfair, unless it's for a specific improvement on I-90.

- Online comment form, Seattle

Tolling Options

Many commenters made suggestions for different ways to apply tolls on I-90 if the roadway is tolled. The options suggested include but are not limited to reducing or not charging Mercer Island residents, and reducing toll rates.

I suggest that if I-90 has to be tolled, all traffic to and from Mercer Island be exempt from the toll.

- Scoping comment form, Mercer Island

I feel that tolls should be placed on both the 520 Bridge and the I-90 at a reduced rate of $2.00 to eliminate people avoided the toll on the 520 Bridge by taking the alternative I-90 route. I firmly believe the cost of the

bridge will be recouped faster using this approach. Plus reducing added congestion on the I-90 route.

- Email, Seattle

Low income people and small commercial vehicles (local plumbers and contractors) should have reduced or free passage on the bridge.

- Email, Seattle

I am disabled and on a limited income…If there is a disability exemption and charity assistance it might be more feasible.

- Scoping comment form, Bellevue

Other Alternatives

Many commenters expressed that a more regional means of funding should be used instead of tolling. Some of the suggestions included: considering a gas tax, vehicle mile traveled tax, vehicle excise tax, license or car-tab fees, or a combination of fees and taxes.

I believe that a more distributed approach such as car-tab, property tax, or gas tax are less painful and more fair options.

- Scoping comment form, Bellevue

A gas tax is a fundamentally more rational solution to a transportation funding problem. Some additional fees for electric cars who use the roads no differently than gas powered, or diesel powered for that matter, should be included in the scope of a fuel tax.

- Email, Mercer Island

I also support the following: Variable tolls on all lanes of I-90 between I-5 and I-405; Express toll lanes on I-90; Vehicle miles traveled tax; and Increased transit service to further reduce traffic congestion.

- Online comment form, Maple Valley

ALL alternative funding sources for SR-520 completion, including statewide motor vehicle excise tax, a statewide gas-guzzler vehicle tax, eliminating prevailing wage, not charging sales tax on road construction projects, need to be considered.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

Economic Effects of Tolling

Many commenters expressed concern about the impact it would have on jobs, businesses, and the region's economy. Several commenters also shared about how tolling could impact them personally.

In addition I have concerns that BCS could lose valuable long term productive employees who will be forced to look for opportunities that do not burden them with unjust tolling expenses.

- Letter from a business, Bellevue

A toll on I-90 will increase the cost of receiving/delivering goods for stores, businesses and individuals in both Seattle and the Eastside. If businesses pass these increased costs due to tolling on to consumers, it could make their prices less competitive. If they don't pass these costs along, it could make it harder for them to stay in business.

- Email, Bellevue

As a business person in Bellevue, quite a bit of my business comes not only from Mercer Island, but also from the Seattle area. Anecdotal evidence from the 520 bridge tolling indicates the likelihood that business will dry up if tolls are implemented. Some clients that had been traveling over the 520 bridge no longer patronize my business due to the cost, and others are taking the I90 as a lengthy but affordable alternative.

- Email, Bellevue

I am a single person, living in South Seattle (Skyway) and work in Bellevue 5 days a week. I cannot afford this additional cost of $2,000/year (as projected now). In addition, I have weekend visits to an elderly friend on Mercer Island from South Seattle which would increase my costs even more.

- Email, Seattle

Traffic Effects

Many commenters expressed concern that tolling will cause traffic to divert to other roadways to avoid the toll. Several commenters also indicated that transit is an important component and service should be increased if I-90 is tolled. Other commenters asked for analysis of traffic patterns before and after tolls were implemented on SR 520.

I-90 tolling impacts the entire region, affecting communities north and south of I-90 as well as commercial traffic from Eastern Washington, as well as diversion of traffic from the Port of Seattle to the Port of Tacoma.

- Email

I am extremely concerned that new tolls on I-90 and HOT lanes on I-405 will cause more toll-avoiders to drive through my neighborhood.

- Online comment form, Kenmore

It is important to provide alternatives for people so that the tolls do not force people to stop traveling. Improved transit should be bundled with tolls.

- Email, Seattle

In the interest of equity, some reasonable portion of the toll revenues should be committed to transit operations to increase the frequency and reliability of routes that use the I-90 bridge for any part of their route.

- Online scoping comment form, Seattle

Effects to Freight

Some commenters shared that there are challenges for delivery and freight operator travelling to/from the Port of Seattle and locations east. Tolling I-90 could impact their businesses, Port operations, and the cost of goods for customers.

I am a small business owner located in Royal City, WA. Part of my business includes delivering freight containers to the Port of Seattle on a daily basis. I am strongly opposed to the tolling of the I-90 bridge due to the fact that my budgets are already stretched so thin in this economy.

- Email comment, Royal City

The Port of Seattle is the 6th largest U.S. Seaport, and I-90 is a major commerce corridor for intermodal freight moving to and from Eastern Washington and the Port of Seattle. Placing a toll on I-90 puts the Port of Seattle and their customers at a disadvantage by adding increased costs. Increased costs will result in stakeholders seeking alternate routes that will result in more traffic and emissions rather than less. Furthermore, it could push those with warehouse leases to the North to fit their supply chains and limit their exposure to U.S. taxes and fees.

- Letter from a business, Charlotte, NC

Effects on the Region

As discussed in several of the sections above, many commenters are concerned about the effects tolling could have on the region, particularly traffic and the economy. These effects could create a barrier between populations on the east and west sides of the lake

We attend many entertainment events (Broadway shows, Symphony, live theater, sporting events, etc.) and restaurants before these events in Seattle. Adding bridge tolling fee on top of the cost of these events will cause us to look to the east side for this entertainment at a loss of revenue for the events and restaurants in Seattle.

- Online comment form, King County

Tolling I-90 will hurt businesses not only on Mercer Island, but also for those off the island in the surrounding areas. People will be less inclined to come on to the island to patronize our businesses and likewise, islanders will think twice about leaving the island to patronize businesses off-island.

Traffic congestion will most assuredly be worsened by tolling I-90, as people will re-route to avoid the tolls. This will cause a lot worse traffic on I-5 and I-405, and it is already almost unbearable.

- Email, Mercer Island

Effects on Land Use and Development on Mercer Island

Some commenters expressed concern that tolling will lower property values and harm local businesses.

Many MI businesses and service providers have clients and customers that come from Seattle or the Eastside. These businesses are worried about whether a toll would cause their customers to go elsewhere and whether that would jeopardize their ability to stay in business. … Even if the island manages to attract new businesses, it may not be able to get the ones that residents prefer.

- Email comment

Tolls will lower property values, destroy access to local employment, and damage our economy.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

I think that I want to make sure that the EIS does consider the pluses and minuses also of tolls on the property values and on the community events, the many community events they have on and off the island, and on local businesses.

- Verbal comment, Seattle

Effects to Public Services

Multiple commenters expressed concern that police, fire, teachers and other public service employees would not be able to afford tolls and would look for other jobs. Some commenters also expressed concern that tolling would affect the ability of Mercer Island residents to access hospitals.

City taxes will likely be raised to offset public workers' increase in cost of living due to the toll. Most of Mercer Island's public servants (police, fire fighters, city workers, teachers, etc.) do not live on the Island.

- Letter, Mercer Island

People crucial to Mercer Island's functioning as a community, including teachers and other employees of the educational system, employees of our government and our local businesses, tutors, religious leaders, sports referees and coaches, would also be harmed by having to pay tolls--usually at high volume traffic times-- to get to work on Mercer Island, and to get back home to their families afterwards. This is blatantly unfair.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

Tolling would be an economic blow to every community along the I-90 transportation path, and in places like M.I., it would have an especially serious effect as every school teacher, public safety officer, or business employee (who already can't afford to live here, as a rule) would have that much less 'take home' pay.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

Effects to Community Life

Many commenters are concerned that tolling will create a barrier and impact people on and off Mercer Island who commute to or across the island for activities such as volunteering, entertainment, sporting events, or to participate in educational, religious, or other activities.

We [Youth Theater Northwest] are a unique cultural resource that serves both Seattle and the east side, so tolling I-90 will have a severe economic impact on our staff, our working artists, our educators, our youth, our families, but most importantly our organization. Tolling will affect accessibility to the vital services we provide and impact the creative development of our region's children.

- Verbal comment, Mercer Island

Tolling I-90 would have a significant negative impact on Mercer Island families, businesses and places of worship. From a personal perspective, I attend a church that has a significant off-island congregation. Half of my daughters' co-op preschool does not live on Mercer Island. And none of the close friends that I made when I moved to Washington State nearly two decades ago live on the island, yet visiting with them and their families is very important to me - and I can't imagine asking them to pay a toll to come visit! From a church and preschool perspective we are completely reliant on our off-island members to complete our faith and childhood education communities. Yet they have other options, but have chosen to drive to Mercer Island because of the quality of the programs and community. But can we expect them to make the same choices if they have to pay each time they come to Mercer Island? The loss of these families, with their gifts of volunteer time, financial resources and friendship would be tragic to the Mercer Island community.

- Online comment form, Mercer Island

There are over two hundred charitable organizations in the Seattle area which will be both directly and indirectly affected by tolling I- 90, which is the primary link, by which Seattle, Bellevue and Mercer Island deliver the services to the needy in our communities. Not only do the volunteers need to be able to get the the organization's facilities but the needy need to be able to get to the provider.

- Email comment, Mercer Island

Environmental Justice

Several commenters are concerned that tolls would particularly affect low-income individuals and families from reaching jobs, educational facilities, and services.

I am disabled and on a limited income. The addition of tolling on I- 90 would affect me in a number of ways. First, I simply cannot afford an

additional toll. Secondly, it is necessary that I travel…for necessary medical care in Seattle.

- Scoping comment form, Bellevue

Effect on the Working Poor. People making low or minimum wage usually need to be at their jobs at precise times. They do not have the luxury of flex times or telecommuting. They are the engine that keeps the economy going. Many work more than one job, so they need a car in order to get to the next job on time. Tolls like those on 520 would take a huge chunk of their income.

- Letter, Mercer Island

I am a student on a low income budget, like many other people. I live in Seattle and attend Bellevue College. Right now i90 is the only way I am able to get back and forth to school, and still able to afford rent and other bills.

- Email, Seattle

Transit

Several commenters raised questions about adding more transit service, expanding park-and-ride lots, and improved transit accessibility. Commenters were also concerned with plans for Sound Transit's East Link project to put light rail on the center roadway of I-90.

Bike, walking and mass transit across the bridge should be encouraged with park and rides and good bike/pedestrian lanes.

- Online scoping comment form

*If you want to improve traffic across the lake, start by making mass transit a *viable* option.*

- Online scoping comment form, Seattle

…there is inadequate bus service to most neighborhoods on the Island. Adding insult to injury, the Park and Ride on North Mercer is grossly inadequate for the community which is forced to drive to the park and ride to get a bus off the Island, as bus shuttles are not available from the outlying neighborhoods. The Park and Ride has approximately 280 spaces, all of which are full weekdays by 7:15 AM, so in essence, the Park and Ride is unusable for most anyway.

- Online scoping comment form, Mercer Island

The impacts of Sound Transit East Link across I-90 and the loss of center lane vehicle access and new technologies should be considered in a full and complete EIS.

- Email, Mercer Island

Other Subjects

Many commenters raised concerns about other current projects. These include the SR 520 Project, where concerns were with cost overruns, perceived poor management by WSDOT, and expensive design features such as lids and parks.

Other comments were on Sound Transit's I-90 Two-Way Transit and HOV East Link Projects. These will close the center lanes on I-90 across Lake Washington, add HOV to the outside lanes of the bridges, and construct light rail lines for service between Seattle and communities on the east side of Lake Washington. The concern was primarily that construction would reduce access to and from Mercer Island longer than necessary.

Some commenters voiced concern with potential health effects from electromagnetic radiation they expect is emitted by tolling sensors.

Summary of Comments from Agencies

FHWA and WSDOT received 6 letters submitted by the following agencies:

- U.S. EPA
- King County
- Sound Transit
- City of Lake Forest Park
- City of Mercer Island
- City of Newcastle

Letters received from agencies are included in Appendix D. While their individual perspectives vary, comments from these agencies contained many of the key themes expressed in the summary of public comments. Several of the agency comments were focused on the range of alternatives in the EIS, purpose and need, and funding strategies for generating revenue. WSDOT and FHWA recognize that some of the agency letters build on the previous

letters received during the initial scoping period, which are also part of this scoping record.

Opinions on Tolling

The City continues to oppose tolling I-90.

-Letter from the City of Mercer Island

King County supports variable tolling as a transportation demand management tool. As tolls on State Route 520 (SR 520) demonstrated, tolling can decrease congestion and build transit ridership.

-Letter from the King County Department of Transportation

Alternatives

Resolution No. 13-546. A resolution of the City Council of the City of Newcastle, Washington, urging the State of Washington to approve an increase in the gas tax to cover projected shortfalls for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project; and to conduct a system wide study of tolling roadways before additional tolls are adopted.

-Letter from the City of Newcastle

WSDOT Should Consider a Wide Range of Alternatives, including "All" Funding Alternatives[25] and other Reasonable Alternatives.

[25] *While "financing options" might be a more appropriate phrase, this letter will follow the Legislature's lead and refer to "funding alternatives" as in ESSB 5024.*

-Letter from the City of Mercer Island

For the range of alternatives, please include the following:

Evaluate different tolling rates to acknowledge the different modes, efficiencies, and purposes of travel. For instance, we believe that the transit services should not be tolled because these services move people more efficiently across Lake Washington and the region.

Evaluate variable tolling rates by time of day and by congestion levels. This may provide a tool to help manage congestion and traffic flow.

-Letter from Sound Transit

Corridor Identification

WSDOT Should Define the Study Area to Include the Four-County Central Puget Sound Region.

-Letter from the City of Mercer Island

Purpose and Need

Recommendations:

- *As background information to the purpose and need, discuss how the proposed action complies with VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, PSRC's regional growth strategy and supporting transportation plan.*
- *Provide more information in the purpose and need regarding the use of toll revenues for the I-90 Bridge facility.*

-Letter from the U.S. EPA

I. The "Purpose and Need" Statement is Inconsistent with ESSB 5024.

II. The EIS Must Provide Further Background on the "Need".

-Letter from the City of Mercer Island

Traffic Effects

With this project, however, experience has shown that the Tolling Project will prompt a substantial number of drivers to avoid I-90. This toll avoidance will have substantial impacts on other areas of Puget Sound, including but not limited to the City of Lake Forest Park.

-Letter from the City of Lake Forest Park

Toll revenues collected from cross-lake travel would be the most appropriate source of funding for additional transit service needed to meet increased ridership demand resulting from tolling.

-Letter from the King County Department of Transportation

Once tolling is in place, we anticipate that there would be an increased demand for transit service…With increased demand for transit services, there would be a need for additional revenues to support the demand.

-Letter from Sound Transit

The positive and negative effects on traffic and congestion with and without the proposed project need to be analyzed, including but not necessarily limited to effects on SR 520, I-90, I-405, SR 522, and

associated local arterials. If new traffic impacts, such as congestion, safety issues, or other effects would arise, the EIS should discuss potential mitigation for these effects and who would bear the costs of mitigation.

-Letter from the U.S. EPA

Effects on the Region

We urge the State to review the impacts specific to our north end cities that would result from the cumulative consequences of regional tolling: traffic volumes and congestion, air pollution, noise pollution, transit, safety, and parking.

-Letter from the City of Lake Forest Park

King County believes that we need to move towards implementing region-wide tolling to systematically fund, manage and improve the performance of all modes comprising the Puget Sound region's highway system.

-Letter from the King County Department of Transportation

Environmental Justice and Economic Effect of Tolling

WHEREAS, tolling can result in considerable economic impacts to affected communities, residents, and businesses, especially for low, moderate, and fixed-income families….

-Letter from the City of Newcastle

Consider also the potential impacts to vulnerable populations on Mercer Island, such as, elderly, children, minority populations, and linguistically isolated communities. Specifically, neighborhoods along I-90 may have significant exposure to air pollutants. There may be negative economic impacts for a retired population on fixed income, and for low income workers who commute to Mercer Island for work. There may be negative economic impacts for low to middle class populations who live and/or work on or off the island.

Given the potential for economic, environmental and public health impacts to low income, minority, and other vulnerable populations, a systematic, regional approach using available data should be used to assess, minimize, and otherwise mitigate impacts from the proposed action.

-Letter from the U.S. EPA

Summary of Comments from Organizations

FHWA and WSDOT received 4 letters submitted by the following agencies:

- Mercer Island School District, Board of Directors
- No Toll on I-90
- Pipe Organ Foundation
- Washington State Potato Commission

Letters received from organizations are included in Appendix D. While each letter has their individual perspective, these letters contained many of the key themes expressed in the summary of public comments. All of these organizations are concerned about the economic effects of tolling.

Opinions on Tolling

Clearly, there is significant public opposition to tolling I-90. People don't like it. It is unfair. It would amount to a very high regressing new tax for using a bridge that has already been paid for once. Tolling I-90 will set up a tolling wall between east and west.

-Letter from No Toll on I-90

We believe that tolling I-90 to pay for completing SR-520 would not only place a disproportionate burden on our community and the school district specifically, but is an overly narrow, piecemeal approach to solving just one of many regional transportation needs that should instead be considered holistically and funded comprehensively in a manner that is fair to all residents of the region.

-Letter from the Mercer Island School District

Tolling Options

As a funding alternative to I-90 Tolling, the scope of the EIS should include:

1) reducing the cost of the SR 520 bridge project; and

2) increasing the toll revenue potential of the SR 520 bridge.

-Letter from No Toll on I-90

Corridor Identification

…I-90 provides the sole means of ingress and egress, the notion that I-90 and SR-520 together constitute a single "Cross-Lake Washington Corridor" is absurd.

-Letter from the Mercer Island School District

The SR 520 bridge/road project is NOT the same corridor as I-90.

-Letter from No Toll on I-90

Economic Effects of Tolling

We cannot fill our staffing needs with qualified workers without substantially increasing our compensation to offset the added expense of tolling…

In addition to direct operational costs to the district, the impact of tolling I-90 would also severely jeopardize our ability to obtain voter approval for school construction bonds and to renew our maintenance and operations levy.

-Letter from the Mercer Island School District

It would hurt commercial trucking and businesses that need to use I-90 to get products, goods, services or workers to job sites, driving up the cost of food, fuel, housing, government services, goods, and services.

-Letter from No Toll on I-90

Traffic Effects

It will not reduce congestion. Tolls on I-90 will worsen congestion on I-5, I-405, SR 522 and other roads around the north and south ends of Lake Washington.

-Letter from No Toll on I-90

Effects to Freight

Any toll on I-90 would add an additional cost for our farms delivering goods to the Port of Seattle and Washingtonians along the I-5 corridor.

It would be hard for our farms that need the crossing to absorb the cost and place both farmers, small to medium sized businesses, and the Port at a competitive disadvantage. While we do not oppose tolling as a funding mechanism for new investments in transportation infrastructure, we do believe they should be limited paying for specific projects.

-Letter from the Washington State Potato Commission

Effects to Community Life

The effects of tolling upon nonprofits including charities and the faith community must be included in the EIS.

-Email from the Pipe Organ Foundation

In summary, imposition of tolls on I-90 would clearly have profound and wide ranging effects on the entire educational ecosystem that is highly valued by our community, so it is critical that those effects be comprehensively analyzed and addressed in detail as part of the EIS.

-Letter from the Mercer Island School District

5 Next Steps

FHWA and WSDOT are using the feedback from the public scoping comments to help shape the scope of the analysis that will be conducted for the EIS. As the environmental review process continues they will be discussing the analytical approach with the participating and cooperating agencies and keeping these agencies apprised as the analysis proceeds. WSDOT and FHWA will also provide regular briefings to local agencies and community groups and other interested stakeholders.

In addition to any other alternative(s) determined to meet the project's purpose and need through the screening process, WSDOT will evaluate the environmental and transportation effects of the project in two future years in the EIS: (1) when tolling would potentially begin in 2016 and (2) for long-term effects in 2040.

If potential significant adverse effects are identified, WSDOT will develop and evaluate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures. The analysis will consider direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. All effects will be compared to a no-action alternative.

FHWA and WSDOT anticipate publishing the Draft EIS in mid-2014. Once the document is published, there will be a comment period during which the public will be encouraged to provide input. WSDOT will hold several public meetings during the comment period that will serve as hearings to receive comments. At these meetings, people will be able to learn about the project and results of the environmental analysis in an open house format. Comments will be accepted at the public meetings and throughout the comment period. In addition to the formal comment period, the public may submit comments or questions at any time by contacting:

Emily Pace, WSDOT
I90Study@wsdot.wa.gov
206-716-1116

Project information is available on the project website at: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/I90/CrossLakeWATolling/. To join the project mailing list, enter your contact information at: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOT/subscriber/new?topic_id=WADOT_304.