



SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Executive Committee Meeting Summary

May 19, 2005

1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Introduction

Aubrey Davis, Washington State Transportation Commission, welcomed the committee and provided a general update on the project since the last Executive Committee Meeting in January. The Transportation Partnership Package (TPP), which includes \$500 million for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, was approved by the legislature in May. The inclusion of the \$500 million for the project is a strong recognition of the need for this project. Three changes have resulted from legislation passed in Olympia: 1) WSDOT is a cabinet-level agency reporting to the Governor as opposed to reporting to the Transportation Commission; 2) language in the TPP requires the project to “reach agreements with the incorporated towns or cities that represent the communities affected by the SR 520 project”¹; and 3), if regional funding is not obtained by January 2007, the funds in the TPP could be re-allocated.

Study Updates

Project Director Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT, provided an update on each of the special studies below.

Geotechnical drilling began last week collecting soil samples from the bottom of Lake Washington. The drilling will be complete sometime in June.

The Lake Washington Blvd. ramp closure study is in progress, with preliminary results showing that the majority of trips would use 23rd Avenue to access SR 520 from Madison Park and Capitol Hill, indicating that improvements in the surrounding local network would be needed to accommodate additional traffic.

The quieter pavement study is nearing completion and will be released this summer. The study notes several areas that remain in question, including durability, constructability, and how long the noise abatement lasts. The study recommends selecting test sites in Washington State and securing funding to test these technologies.

¹ Sec. 305 (3) The department shall not commence construction on any part of the SR 520 bridge project until agreements have been reached with the incorporated towns or cities that represent the communities affected by the SR 520 project.

As part of the Transit Origin and Destination Study, a survey was conducted with SR 520 transit users on April 28th. Approximately 800 surveys were completed and are currently under analysis with the summary report expected in June. Results of this report will help to better understand the current usage of the transit flyer stops.

The Madison Park Bike/Pedestrian Connection Study is about to begin. The City of Seattle Department of Transportation is leading the community outreach, with WSDOT providing technical analysis.

A series of Seattle Parks Workshops have been underway with the Seattle Parks Department, University of Washington and the Arboretum Foundation. The purpose of these workshops has been to develop ideas for what the Arboretum and adjacent parks could look like after the SR 520 project is built.

6-Lane Alternative

Maureen provided an update on the work done since January to refine the 6-Lane Alternative and develop additional options to be considered for this alternative. WSDOT initiated this effort when it became clear that the 6-Lane footprint developed for the Draft EIS was too big, especially in sensitive areas of the Arboretum and the densely populated neighborhoods of Seattle. In addition to WSDOT's efforts to reduce the footprint, several leaders from the Montlake community brought forward an idea for a high-level bridge through Portage Bay with a new bridge across the Montlake Cut connecting with Pacific Street.

Maureen welcomed Julie Meredith back from maternity leave and introduced John Milton as the chief engineer.

Eastside Options

Julie Meredith, WSDOT, reviewed the following Eastside options that will be included in the Technical Appendix:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Path to the North
 - Gentler grade compared to double crossing under 520
- No Evergreen Point Freeway Transit Stop
 - Highlights bus property acquisition
 - Smaller footprint
 - Not a stand alone option
 - Combines two freeway transit stations into one
- South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – 108th
 - Benefits include the decrease in routing time
 - Drawbacks are the increased footprint, not optimal geometric design, effects to streams and wetlands
- South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access – Bellevue Way

- Benefits include the bi-pass for transit resulting in reduction of travel time

Questions / Comments:

Mayor Rosemarie Ives, City of Redmond, asked if the Park-and-Ride is valuable, why not sell property and develop the WSDOT property that currently houses a DOT maintenance facility into a Park-and-Ride? Connie Marshall, Sound Transit, remarked that the development of the WSDOT property would be a great idea. This is a comment that has not come up before. Access is difficult but the project team will look at the feasibility of turning the property into a Park-and-Ride.

Rosemarie Ives noted that this is a project to bust all past paradigms.

Seattle Options

John Milton, WSDOT, reviewed the following Seattle Design Options that will be included in the Technical Appendix:

- No Montlake Freeway Transit Stop
- High 6-Lanes with Pacific Street Interchange
- 6-Lane Alternative with Pacific Street Interchange
- Second Montlake Bridge

The project team is looking into the option of eliminating the Montlake Freeway Transit Stop as a way to reduce the lane-width through Montlake and Portage Bay. John stated that this option saves approximately 40' through Montlake.

Another design option is the addition of a second bascule bridge across the Montlake Cut just east of the current Montlake Bridge that would be similar in design to the existing bridge.

The project team is looking at the possibility of removing the SR 520/Montlake Interchange and replacing it with a new interchange at Pacific Street. Eliminating the Montlake interchange would narrow the 6-Lane Alternative across Portage Bay. There would be a new crossing of the Ship Canal from SR 520 to Pacific Street, with the interchange occurring adjacent to the Arboretum near Marsh Island. The Pacific Street Interchange could be applied to either a high-level structure or the currently proposed 6-Lane Alternative. The interchange over Marsh Island would be a full diamond interchange with 3 traffic signals.

Intersection design considerations could include separate pedestrian traffic that travels above Montlake with a lowered intersection at Pacific St. and Montlake.

Question / Comments:

Councilmember Dave Asher, City of Kirkland, asked where the HOV lane would go with the Pacific St. Interchange.

HOV would continue to I-5. Direct access ramps would be provided to the Pacific interchange in the westbound direction.

Director Grace Crunican, City of Seattle, asked if the Pacific St. Interchange was the location of the future North Link station?

Yes, this option would provide better connectivity to the proposed North Link station at Husky Stadium.

Dave Asher asked if the Montlake flyer stop would be moved to Pacific/Montlake?

Yes.

Dave Asher asked where HCT would go?

It would be parallel or near this alignment. A challenge will be the 110' height of the bridge. Jim Parsons, a Parametrix consultant acting as the strategic advisor for the Transit Study, remarked at issues of profile/alignment to make sure platforms worked. There should be more information in a few weeks.

Rosemarie Ives asked what ships need the 110' clearance?

Two research vessels from NOAA and the University of Washington occasionally access Lake Washington.

Councilmember Richard Conlin, City of Seattle, suggested that elected officials get federal agencies to meet with NOAA and UW to reduce boat sizes and thus the height of the bridge. They need to work around this.

Board member Connie Marshall, Sound Transit, noted Sound Transit needs a financial commitment because the height will inhibit HCT. The public should not have to pay for this.

Grace Crunican, City of Seattle, noted that there is a need to make sure that the stakeholders of Marsh Island, Portage Bay, and the University of Washington are consulted on issues related to Sound Transit.

Maureen clarified that this is just a concept as a result of issues that have been brought up. There are trade-offs on all sides. We've been talking to organizations and agencies that may be affected.

Rosemarie Ives commented that Jim Parsons' work is well received.

David Asher asked if the Montlake flyer stop would be removed because no one uses it?

No. It would help us to narrow the footprint and we would have to replace that function. The Montlake flyer stop is highly used. Its location is not ideal and we would hate to replace that function in the same location.

David Asher asked if travel to the UW is the only function to use Montlake?

No. People do use it as part of UW travel, but it is also used for Eastside destinations.

Richard Conlin asked for clarification on what the term “raised pedestrian access” really means.

There would be a raised pedestrian/bike structure over Montlake Blvd. This would entail lowering Pacific Street about 8'. We are trying to protect the University of Washington's historic view shed known as the Rainier Vista.

Richard Conlin asked if this would have capacity to handle pedestrians and bikes?

Yes. This will help get them to the Burke Gilman Trail.

What is the difference in feet between the current and high-level?

The high-level is approximately 54' taller.

David Asher reminded the committee that they made a decision to ensure HCT on the corridor. He asked if the pontoons/land sites would be able to accommodate HCT and not eliminate modes.

That is our goal. We're trying to make sure that there is not a depth issue. This is part of scoping work with Sound Transit and Metro this summer.

Director Dave Dye, WSDOT- Urban Corridors Office, stated that originally the project had a “No Preclude” attitude with the assumption that HCT would not be throughout the corridor. We are faced with significant challenges regarding right-of-way. The current location of lids and center walls would be a huge impediment in 20-25 years.

Richard Conlin noted that it is important to change the vocabulary from “Not Preclude” to “Ensure the Ability to Include”. He noted that we should be showing how light rail and other modes might look. There is logic in making HCT an aspiration to connect whatever is East-West with North-South.

It would make sense not to preclude and it would be nice to ensure – but we should determine where the logical place is to have these conversations.

Connie Marshall noted that if we are out for discussion, Bus Rapid Transit will be considered first. If there is more mass transit than that, it will be addressed in Sound Transit's Phase Three Plan.

Dave Dye noted that if we want to guarantee HCT in the corridor in the 6-Lane (4 + 2) alternative, it would require at least 50'. There are issues to be sorted out.

Rosemarie Ives stated that she would echo the above comments. She recommended the project team have a grand vision with the 520 corridor, making a difference in the kinds of support and purpose spun to voters. Rosemarie noted that what is our weakest link could be pivotal for funding possibilities. She ended by stating that this is an inspiring discussion today – keep up the good work.

Next Steps

Maureen discussed changes as WSDOT becomes a cabinet agency. Maureen informed the committee that over this summer WSDOT would be sitting down with each city to talk about opinions/consensus on the preferred alternative and what each city's vision for the corridor is. In September, we will be talking about these discussions.

Maureen reviewed the schedule and noted the new date of the DEIS, and the desire to get the preferred alternative in the draft and prepare for another regional measure.

Dave Dye ended with an overview of the process to be done before next fall, and that the next RTID needs to agree on what the integrated program might look like. He commented that an agreement needs to be made at a global level and then we would bring it down to issues at a local level.

Public Comment

Larry Sinnott, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks:

A few facts:

- Lake Washington Blvd. is park property
- Average traffic volume:
 - 17,000/day at 25 mph
 - 18,700 on 23rd Ave E
- An older Origin and Destination study showed that 306 people cut through the neighborhood to avoid I-5/Montlake traffic
- High-level Pacific
 - Really an Arboretum interchange, the Pacific Street Interchange label is misleading

Jonathan Dubman, Montlake Community Council:

- Thanked the project team for hard work
- This is the best display of public and agency cooperation he has ever seen
- WSDOT is doing its best with extraordinary level of constraints
- It is apparent that the key concept is direct connection to the Montlake Cut. This thick-span bridge lays the groundwork for HCT in the future. It makes a lid at Montlake for a park, adds bicycle access to the Burke-Gilman Trail, and fixes the bottleneck on Montlake Boulevard.
- The new alternatives fulfill the mission of the corridor, by moving goods and people.

Will Knedlik, SR 520 Users Coalition:

The following text was copied verbatim from a letter

When the Redmond City Council formally approved Microsoft Corporation's plans for enlarging its world headquarters by more than 2 million square feet of office space – at just after midnight yesterday – the State Route 520 corridor indisputably became the most critical economic artery for our state, both today, and hopefully for many years to come.

Unfortunately, when state-and-local government officials delay in addressing urgent needs as quintessential as the world's second-oldest floating bridge for several decades – in central part because of the City of Seattle's more than 30 years of insistence on preventing a meaningful study of any reasonable option which does not meet its political *mantra* – major information developed by one generation of elected officials can literally be lost to the next.

In addition, as this never-ending planning process has continued for more-than-three decades now, the actual voices of daily SR 520 users have become less influential as agency bureaucrats and consulting-firm operatives have developed eyewash open houses, complete with marginal cookies and cheap punch, to replace genuine input with event-managed data.

Nor do 60,000, twice-daily SR 520 users – rather evenly divided between Seattle-and-Eastside residents – have a single identifiable seat at this table, despite financial plans calling for taxpayers to pay higher state gas taxes, to volunteer to adopt greater local taxes, and to hand over either tolls from an auto or else higher fares when we ride bus rapid transit.

In America, we call this **taxation** – indeed **triple** taxation – **without representation**.

Further, because of an almost total lack of meaningful input from 60,000 daily users of the SR 520 bridge, the current planning process is focusing **less** attention on resolving the central choke point, both for congestion on Interstate 5 and also for traffic from the Eastside, than was being directed to the Mercer Weave when I began to work toward a resolution, for my constituents in the 45th legislative district, and first encountered obstruction in 1977 to engineering the essential solution for this accident zone of delay, destruction and even death.

Finally, nothing is **now** being done to use well-understood economic tools to resolve daily gridlock in the corridor, **today**, by providing free-transit service at least until a needed engineering solution can be constructed using enormous excess taxes being collected from Eastside taxpayers by Sound Transit, or to finance huge costs to build HOV lanes and other elements for high-capacity transit through the **missing link** on SR 520 in our state-adopted HOV system. These lanes are essential for Sound Transit to fulfill its regional HCT obligations. Therefore, Sound Transit should be assessed one-third to one-half of the **total** bridge-replacement costs to that agency.

To obtain meaningful input from taxpayers who use the corridor, the SR 520 Users Coalition requests that membership of this Executive Committee be expanded to seat eight members, who now commute regularly across the Evergreen Point floating bridge, including one each from Seattle and Eastside, commuting by auto, bus, carpool and vanpool. You have forgotten who pays for this!

Executive Committee Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Asher, Dave	City of Kirkland City Council
Burleigh, Mary-Alyce	City of Kirkland Mayor Alternate
Conlin, Richard	Seattle City Council
Crunican, Grace	City of Seattle
Davis, Aubrey	Washington Transportation Commission
Dye, Dave	WSDOT
Ives, Rosemarie	City of Redmond
Leonard, Jim	Federal Highway Administration Alternate
Marshall, Connie	Sound Transit
Mathis, Daniel	Federal Highway Administration
McConkey, Fred	Town of Hunts Point
Sanchez, Susan	City of Seattle Alternate

Project Team Attendees:

Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT
 Julie Meredith, WSDOT
 John Milton, WSDOT
 Paul Krueger, WSDOT
 Marj Press, CH2M Hill
 Brad Phillips, Parametrix
 Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix
 Jim Parsons, Parametrix
 Lindsay Yamane, Parametrix
 Suanne Pelley, EnviroIssues
 Bryan Jarr, EnviroIssues
 Elizabeth Faulkner, EnviroIssues

Public Sign-In:

Name
Amick, Jean
Sinnott, Larry
Mega, Matt
Salamie, Ralph
Dubman, Jonathan
Rice, Mian A.
Cairns, Bryan

Masek, Chris
Gaudette, Karen
Dewey, Peter
Gunby, Virginia
Anderson, Tom
Hadley, Jane
Rudalow, Robert H.
Fellows, Rob
Parsons, Jim
Allen, David
Minor, Michael
Cushman, King
Kofe, Will
Weed, Mark A.
Newstrum, Len
Grigsby, Daryl

Public Comment Sign-In:

Name	Organization
Sinnott, Larry	Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks
Dubman, Jonathan	Montlake Community
Knedlik, Will	SR 520 Users Coalition