



Meeting Summary
SR 520 Legislative Workgroup - Westside Subgroup Meeting #2
Thursday, October 8, 2009, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
The Center for Urban Horticulture

Attendees:

In attendance:

- Representative Scott White, 43rd District, Subgroup Chair
- Speaker Frank Chopp, 43rd District
- Representative Jamie Pedersen, 43rd District

- Representative Larry Springer, 45th District
- Senator Ken Jacobsen, 46th District
- Senator Dan Swecker, 20th District

Not in attendance:

- Senator Ed Murray, 43rd District

Welcome and Introductions (Rep. White)

Rep. White, Westside Subgroup chair, introduced himself as the chair of the group. He reviewed the agenda and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Rep. White amended the agenda to allow for Mayor Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue, to present first.

Eastside Update (Mayor Degginger)

Mayor Degginger, City of Bellevue, introduced himself, and stated his appreciation of the workgroup's effort. He stressed the importance of the SR 520 corridor as a link between the major economic development drivers for Washington state. He also noted the forecasted growth in employment and housing units for the City of Redmond to illustrate that Bellevue and Redmond will continue to grow as urban centers.

Mayor Degginger stated that replacing and improving SR 520 should not be delayed, especially the Eastside Project that already has agreement on the design and configuration. He concluded by stating his support for completing the new corridor by 2016 with an affordable decision on the west side of Lake Washington. ([Slides 52-58](#) in the presentation include additional information.)

Transportation Operations for Westside Options (Michael Horntvedt)

Michael Horntvedt, SR 520 Transportation Manager, presented transportation operations analysis for the three Westside design Options A, K and L currently being analyzed in the supplemental draft environmental impact statement. All figures presented were compared to No Build traffic volumes projected for the year 2030. He presented on the following topics: ([Slides 4-23](#) in the presentation include additional information.)

- Cross-lake travel with the 6-Lane Alternative.

- Effects of SR 520 program on transit operations.
- Montlake vicinity traffic volumes and average travel times.
- Operational issues for Option A, Option A with suboptions, K and L.
- Current effects from the Montlake Bridge openings.
- Effects from Montlake Bridge openings on Options A, K and L.
- Primary transit paths on SR 520 and in Westside neighborhoods.
- Peak transit travel times for local buses.
- Peak transit travel times to and from the SR 520 corridor.
- Operations during construction.

QUESTION: None of these scenarios include more than four general-purpose lanes on the floating bridge section, correct? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *That is correct.*

QUESTION: What is the Montlake Triangle? (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *This is the area between Montlake Boulevard, Pacific Street, and Pacific Place, which is adjacent to the University of Washington's Husky Stadium.*

QUESTION: The openings of the Montlake Bridge take about five minutes? That is a huge number. (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *Yes, it seems like a long time, but it really does not have a huge impact on the transportation system.*

QUESTION: Regarding Option A and its suboptions, the base option closes the ramps, whereas the suboption keeps them open. How does that compare to today? (Rep. White)

RESPONSE: *One problem we have is that if we closed the ramps today, we do not currently have an alternative solution to accommodate those trips that would divert to Montlake Boulevard. There would be backups onto SR 520, which would be a problem if there were no additional improvements at the existing Montlake interchange.*

QUESTION: I am concerned about this process and the traffic analysis being out of date because there have been updates to Option K. Do you have any analysis of the Option K hybrid? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *We have not yet completed simulations for the SDEIS suboptions. Only a qualitative analysis has been completed for the Option K hybrid.*

Community Design Update (Option A and L proponents)

Larry Sinnott, Option A, and Mark Weed, Option L, presented an option, referred to as the A+ Hybrid option. Mr. Sinnott stated that the proponents of Option A and L have recently come together to commit to a successful local and regional solution. Both the Option A and L proponents presented the A+ Hybrid as viable path forward.

Mr. Weed stated that the new option would provide for strong transit connections and congestion relief, create jobs, provide an affordable solution and reduce construction and operating impacts on the environment, residents and adjacent businesses and facilities. He also stated that while much agreement has occurred, the groups will continue to work with WSDOT and other

stakeholders to refine this new option. The [handout](#) provided by the presenters is available on the Web site.

QUESTION: You [Mark Weed] represent the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, correct? Regarding the ability to ‘expand pontoons’ that you mentioned, you know that there are only four general-purpose lanes? The concern of the community is expansion for high capacity transit only. What is the Chamber’s position? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *Yes, that is where we stand as well. The Chamber is in agreement, that there would be only four general-purpose lanes and the expandable pontoons would proved for future high capacity transit. (Mark Weed)*

QUESTION: Is there any indication that the neighborhood organizations immediately adjacent to the corridor support this option? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *We had a meeting with Montlake neighborhood residents a few weeks ago where many of the neighbors were in support of Option A and disappointed that the Montlake neighborhood is viewed as supporting Option K. (Larry Sinnott)*

QUESTION: How does Option A meet the state law that requires a direct connection to Sound Transit’s future light rail station near Husky Stadium? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *The transit connection is improved with the addition of a second bascule bridge. All of the options make the same transit connections to the Montlake Triangle area.*

QUESTION: Will you work with these various groups [community organizations, transit agencies, stakeholder proponent groups]? Has this happened yet? The point of this workgroup and subgroup is to work together, and develop a solution. I hope that work is being done to look at all of the options. (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *You will see later in our presentation how we are working with the proponent groups to develop new options that are in line with the goals of the communities. This is an ongoing work effort and we hope it will help inform this group’s recommendations. (David Dye)*

QUESTION: Regarding Montlake and its neighbors, what do the community councils and/or representative think about this? Did they dislike it? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *The Eastlake neighborhood supports Option A. The north end communities supports Option A. We have had some dialogue with the Montlake Community Council and will continue to reach out with our new option. (Larry Sinnott)*

COMMENT: Until very recently we were two separate options. We have also spoken with Laurelhurst recently. (Mark Weed)

QUESTION: In legislation a year and a half ago we included a requirement for a direct connection to the Sound Transit station, so they [SR 520 transit and light rail] really connect, as there is a lot of money being spent there. (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *We have met with King County Metro, and will work to get the service to where it needs to be. A question for Metro and Sound Transit is how can any of the options be better for transit? We agree that the option must be well connected and well used. (Mark Weed)*

RESPONSE: *There is no distinction between options in that regard. (Larry Sinnott)*

Rep. White thanked the Option A and L proponents for their time and efforts to work together. He requested that WSDOT look at the new A+ Hybrid option and work with the group on refinements and additional analysis.

Option K Hybrid Conceptual Design (K proponent)

Fran Conley, Option K proponent, presented on the goals of the Option K Hybrid and stated that she represents all the communities contiguous to SR 520 as well as the boating and maritime communities. She stated that the goals of the Option K Hybrid are to achieve better mobility, especially for transit; preserve the natural environment; and avoid new impacts to those working, living and traveling in the area.

Ms. Conley stated that the Option K proponents have worked with WSDOT for several months to improve the original Option K. She concluded by stating that the Option K proponents will continue to work with WSDOT and meet with the proponents of the A + Hybrid. The [handout](#) provided by the presenters is available on the Web site.

Dave Warner, SR 520 Westside Project Manager, highlighted the key features and potential benefits of the Option K Hybrid. He described the following components:

Option K Hybrid

- Eliminates the below-ground interchange by moving ramps connections to different locations.
- Provides for left hand on- and off- ramps that combine general-purpose, HOV and transit. This is a potential issue for transit reliability.
- Increases the height of the SR 520 mainline profile between the Montlake shoreline and Foster Island to reduce costs and in-water fill that was required in the original Option K.
- Considers modifications to the land bridge at Foster Island that could reduce costs and environmental impacts.
- Based upon a qualitative analysis, the local and freeway operations of the Option K hybrid would operate similar to the original Option K. The SR 520 team is still evaluating the operations of the Option K hybrid.

([Slide 25](#) in the presentation provides a conceptual graphic to reference.)

QUESTION: Realizing that this new Option K hybrid is less developed, what is the best estimate regarding the potential cost savings, and where this plan stands? (Rep. Springer)

RESPONSE: *Even if the savings were \$700 million, there would still be a \$1.2 – 1.3 billion dollar budget gap.*

QUESTION: Has there been any formal cost estimating done on this new option? (Rep. White)

RESPONSE: *No, but at first glance the new option does help decrease the construction costs compared to the original Option K. However, I want to caution you that there is more design and cost analysis that WSDOT needs to conduct. Also, more mitigation funding may be required than assumed for the original Option K tunnel. (David Dye)*

QUESTION: How tall is this [the tunnel]? How far up into the cut would the tunnel be? (Rep. Pederson)

RESPONSE: *It would not extend into the Cut. The top of the tunnel would be at the bottom of the Cut. At a conceptual design level, we have placed the top of the tunnel about 30 feet from the water level.*

QUESTION: You've stated that there is an increasing profile, but the grade would be less? How is this possible? (Rep. White)

RESPONSE: *In the original Option K, the sequential excavation method (SEM) of tunneling limits the depth of the tunnel so the grades are steep to the north. The grade of the SEM tunnel is nine percent. We are currently looking at the tunnel depth for the immersed tube and trying to improve the grades.*

COMMENT: Rep. White thanked Mr. Warner for his comments and encouraged the proponents of Options A, K and L to work together.

Montlake Bridge Openings (Austin Pratt)

Austin Pratt, US Coast Guard, presented information on the Montlake Bridge openings schedule and regulations. He stated that the Coast Guard is the sole authority on bridges, and is responsible for setting opening limitations. He discussed the issue of opening the Montlake Bridge, and then highlighted the dilemma between opening the bridge, which is necessary to get boats through, and causing traffic congestion on the local streets. Mr. Pratt stated that there is no limit on the length of time that a bridge can be open. The Montlake Bridge is one of the most restricted bridges in the Seattle area due to its location, and is already closed for the maximum time allowed for a bridge to have restricted openings. The restricted openings coincide with the boating season.

Restrictions occur at the following times:

- May 1 – Sept. 1; 7 – 9 a.m. and 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.
- Sept. 1 – April 30; 7 – 10 a.m. and 3:30 – 7:00 p.m.

QUESTION: How does the boating community respond to the bridge opening and closing? Do they just wait for it to be opened? (Senator Swecker)

RESPONSE: *Generally boaters will wait outside of the Montlake Cut. The draw bridge captain has the right to wait up to 10 minutes before opening the bridge. This allows a group of boats to collect and then they can pass through at one time.*

QUESTION: What is the maximum time per day that the bridge can be closed? (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *We are close to the maximum currently. We could lengthen by perhaps an hour, but the district commander would have to be involved. There is a process that we can use to extend the closure period. It would take approximately three months.*

QUESTION: So you get one boat through for 5,000 cars? Are you required to evaluate the impact on green house gases? Does it depend on the type of vessel? (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *We are near the limit. We can't distinguish between vessel types, or force them to remove their masts to get through. That would have to be a legislative change made at the federal level.*

QUESTION: When was the federal law last changed? (Sen. Jacobsen)

RESPONSE: *Probably over 100 years ago.*

Arboretum Overview (Tom Hinkley and Dave Graves)

Dr. Hinkley, Interim Director, School of Forest Resources, University of Washington, and Dave Graves, Senior Project and Development Specialist, City of Seattle Parks Department, presented on the Washington Park Arboretum. The Arboretum is jointly managed by the University of Washington's Botanic Gardens and the City of Seattle with support from the Arboretum Foundation. Dr. Hinkley discussed the park as a resource with great value for recreation, education, and research. He stated that the goals of the Arboretum were to support an option that minimizes impacts on the Arboretum by causing the least impacts to wetlands, has the least amount of shading, and does not bisect the park by making it difficult to get from one part of the park to the other. ([Slides 28-38](#) in the presentation provide additional information.)

QUESTION: What do you estimate the value of the Arboretum collection today? (Senator Jacobson)

RESPONSE: *We estimate that the collection has a dollar value of approximately \$82 million.*

QUESTION: Is there land here (referring to slide 29)? Where did it come from? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *At one point in the history of this area some of this land was used as a dump.*

COMMENT: I walk the Arboretum quite a bit, and want to preserve it. We need to look back at history systematically. It's funny that the Corps [of Engineers] is concerned with the amount of fill in this area that is needed to build Option K. (Rep. Chopp)

QUESTION: In that picture (referring to slide 28), is the vessel dredging or depositing materials? (Sen. Swecker)

RESPONSE: *This picture could have been part of the original SR 520 construction, and could be dredging or depositing.*

Transit Operations (Kevin Desmond and Greg Walker)

Kevin Desmond, King County Metro, and Greg Walker, Sound Transit, presented and answered questions on the positions of the two transit agencies regarding the Westside design options. Mr. Walker gave a broad overview of regional transit and the future of Sound Transit's planning, especially for light rail, in the area. Mr. Desmond followed with more specific interests and concerns of King County Metro. He highlighted the impact to the transit system and operations that would result from the removal of the Montlake freeway flyer stop. He concluded by stating that King County Metro supports Option A with suboptions. ([Slides 39-49](#) in the presentation provide additional information.)

QUESTION: If bus rapid transit is the chosen technology for the SR 520 program, why do we need expandable pontoons to provide for high capacity transit? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *Bus rapid transit and light rail are both forms of high capacity transit.*

QUESTION: You have excluded light rail plans for SR 520, correct? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *The Sound Transit 2 plan includes bus rapid transit service on a new SR 520 bridge. Future Sound Transit plans may consider light rail on SR 520.*

QUESTION: Would you like the Montlake flyer stop to stay? (Rep. Chopp)

RESPONSE: *We stopped considering that because in the mediation process all options removed the flyer stop.*

COMMENT: We wish to work with transit, and brainstorm new ideas. We want transit to work in this corridor. (Rep. Chopp)

QUESTION: Is this flyer stop removal not good for transit? (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *Removing the flyer stop creates inefficiency, because it requires two buses for certain trips that only require one bus today.*

COMMENT: During mediation there was interest from almost everyone in removing the flyer stop in order to narrow the footprint of the corridor. (David Dye)

RESPONSE: *This is a key design issue, so we're willing to work with it. However, in the future, the bottom line is that we need to keep up our service levels. (Kevin Desmond)*

QUESTION: All plans suggest an increase in transit. Is this a win/win situation, or a balance? (Sen. Swecker)

RESPONSE: *With the splitting of the service by removing the Montlake flyer stop, we would have to add service, which adds ridership. Speaking from a long term perspective, more diversion to buses is better. We could start adding service in September of 2010, with possible property taxes going into effect. We are working with the University of Washington, Sound Transit, and the various departments of transportation. Here is a picture (referring to slide 42) of where the three bus stops will be in the Pacific/Montlake triangle.*

RESPONSE: *The Sound Transit ST2 plan included nearly 100,000 person increase in ridership, much of which taking place in the SR 520 corridor.*

QUESTION: So just to clarify, do you like Option A with the suboptions the best? (Rep. Pedersen)

RESPONSE: *Without the sub-options, Option A works far less from a transit perspective. All options are the same on the freeway section. There are big differences depending on the location of the interchange with regards to local buses. Between the options, we support Option A with suboptions.*

City of Seattle Update (Richard Conlin)

Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council president, updated the workgroup on the City of Seattle's goals for a Westside design option. He stated that the Seattle City Council has been involved

with the SR 520 program for 12 years and has engaged in many detailed discussions with WSDOT and city staff. Councilmember Conlin also stated that he was a member of the 2008 mediation panel.

The Seattle City Council has adopted three resolutions relating to the SR 520 program, 30777, 30974, and 31109. He stated that the intent of the council was to support an option that aligned with the city's principles and was based on a data-driven analysis. The council has been most attracted to Option K because the group feels that it meets the goals of the city. The [handout](#) provided by Councilmember Conlin is available on the Web site.

QUESTION: The council is attracted to Option K, you have said, because of good transit potential. However, that is in contrast with what the transit representatives have stated. (Rep. White)

RESPONSE: *By intuitive feel, a corridor without a bridge that constantly opens seemed more reliable. This could be wrong, however, and that is a good question. We would like to see more data and information on the matter. We are looking forward to the updated analysis in the SDEIS.*

Preliminary Observations and Discussions (Subgroup members)

Rep. White asked the subgroup members for their initial thoughts on the options and process.

COMMENT: I'm concerned about the process. Will it get us there? Option K has put forth more good ideas. Much of these presentations are based on old models. We don't have enough money for Options A, K or L. How do we resolve this? There is opposition to all options. What does this mean for mitigation? I am also concerned about litigation problems. We must work together. (Rep. Chopp)

COMMENT: I share some similar concerns. I am not very confident that the A, K and L proponents will come to an agreement on one option. I am worried that even if we agree, the cost estimates could be difficult and the analysis may take time. To make real progress, perhaps we need a new third party to work with all three proponent groups. Without this, there could be little results. (Rep. Springer)

COMMENT: I share the City of Seattle view: how can relying on a bascule bridge make transit reliable? This is troubling. In response to Rep. Springer, I have doubts that we can accomplish the goals of ESHB 2211 to stay at a \$4.65 billion budget, improve public safety, and have transit accommodated. Which restrictions can the legislature ease? I don't think it is possible otherwise. (Rep. Pedersen)

COMMENT: I share your concern. There is never absolute common ground. Not all people will be pleased. I agree with Rep. Chopp. I would like to avoid litigation. Proponents are actively engaging. For example, the A and L proponents are merging. Proponents of Option K are looking at cost reductions. We still have some workgroup meetings coming up. (Rep. White)

Follow-up and Next Steps (Barbara Gilliland)

Barbara Gilliland, Workgroup Administrator, spoke about how to move forward with this information. She discussed the need for a discussion about the \$2 billion funding gap.

COMMENT: There have been specific changes to options and models. Keep at it. Keep working on new options. We need to reconcile the differences. (Rep. Chopp)

COMMENT: It has been encouraging to see some agreement, with everyone working together and reaching out, as talked about today. I would like to see all the option proponents look for ways to come together. I will hold you to that. We must come together and encourage dialogue and common ground. Thank you all for attending. (Rep. White)