

Meeting Summary
SR 520 Legislative Workgroup Town Hall
Tuesday, November 24, 2009
6 to 8 p.m.
University of Washington, Center for Urban Horticulture

Attendees:

In attendance:

- Sen. Rodney Tom, Workgroup co-chair
- Rep. Scott White, Workgroup co-chair
- Sen. Ken Jacobsen, Workgroup member, Westside Subgroup Member
- Barbara Gilliland, Workgroup Administrator

Welcome and Introductions (Sen. Tom and Rep. White)

Sen. Tom and Rep. White, Workgroup co-chairs, welcomed the group to the Town Hall meeting. They thanked everyone for their hard work and cooperation during the Workgroup process. They explained the purpose of the town hall as an opportunity for the Workgroup to share their draft recommendations for SR 520 and hear feedback from the public.

Legislative Workgroup Presentation (Barbara Gilliland)

Barbara Gilliland, Workgroup Administrator, presented on the draft recommendations made by the SR 520 Legislative Workgroup on November 17, 2009. Ms. Gilliland reviewed the workgroup's objectives as stated in Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2211. The Workgroup had two objectives.

1. To recommend corridor design options within the set \$4.65 billion budget.
2. To recommend a financing strategy to meet that funding target.

She stated that the workgroup heard from a variety of community representatives, jurisdictional representatives, resource and permitting agencies and other stakeholders throughout the process. Ms. Gilliland stated that the community groups also further refined the options analyzed in the SDEIS to develop new options, Option A+ and M. Option A+ combined design elements from Option A and L. Option M builds off of design elements included in Option K. The Workgroup identified Option A+ as their draft recommendation to move forward for public comment. The rationale for choosing Option A+ includes:

- It meets the purpose and need of the project and complies with statutory requirements to implement a six-lane (four general purpose and two HOV lanes) bridge replacement project.
- It meets the transportation needs of the corridor with the least impact to the surrounding environment.
- It can be constructed within the \$4.65 billion financial threshold.
- The impacts are covered within the current Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

- It meets the needs of transit providers within the SR 520 corridor and on local surface streets.
- It has broad based support from local communities including the University District Community Council, Ravenna Bryant, and Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Park and regional organization including the University of Washington, Seattle chamber, King County Metro, and the Eastside Transportation Partnership.

The Workgroup also recommended a financing strategy that includes the following:

- Use of the base funding previously identified, including early tolling of SR 520.
- The creation of, and early tolling of HOT lanes on I-90 as soon as is practicable.
- The remaining gap to be filled by new FEDERAL or STATE revenue, to be identified in the next year or two.
- IF THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN, THEN general tolling of I-90 to fill the gap no sooner than 2014.
- The group also recommends the pursuit of cost savings by further refinement of cost estimates and design.

The Workgroup will consider public feedback received by Dec. 4, 2009 and submit a final report to the governor and legislature on Jan. 1, 2009.

Public Comment (Members of the Public)

COMMENT [1]: Thanks for giving me this opportunity. I am with the Arboretum Foundation. We have developed guiding principles. The Arboretum is made up of 230 acres of horticulture beauty in a busy city. It is a resource for all, including the University of Washington who uses Arboretum for a research facility. Many of the people here tonight use the Arboretum for recreation and education. There are currently thousands of cars zooming by when we are using the Arboretum because cars use the road as an on-ramp to SR 520. As the bridge grows, so will traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard and that is unacceptable. The road was originally intended as a simple boulevard. There was damage to the area when bridge was originally built in 1962. What we'd like to see the Legislative Workgroup do is prevent future damage to the park. Protect the visual and physical appearance of the Arboretum and fully reimburse the Arboretum for loss of property. Avoid harm, preserve and restore, respect design, and make design improvements to the draft recommendation.

COMMENT [2]: I am a parks and open space advocate. I am here today to support the Arboretum and Botanical Gardens Committee to reduce traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard through the Arboretum. This principle can be made true by removing the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps within Option A+. Removing ramps will save waterways from adverse impacts. Too much conversation about this project is about trip proliferation and not enough is about trip reduction and ways to achieve trip reduction. People are using the boulevard for shortcuts to Capitol Hill and downtown, etc. We need to think creatively about trip reduction – there are other ways to reduce traffic without building another ramp.

COMMENT [3]: I am a Hawthorne Hills resident. Hawthorne Hills has fully supported community groups and thanks the groups that have participated in bringing us to Option A+. We find that it is the most economical, the most effective and community-friendly option. For community interests, this option allows us to work together north and south to figure out a good traffic solution. We fully support the A+ option.

COMMENT [4]: I represent the Friends of Olmsted Parks. I want to talk about the environmental impacts and traffic in Arboretum. What we are calling A prime is A+ without the ramps. We support A prime, but not A+. A prime and A+ are different and we don't need the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps. There is too much impact even without the ramps. A prime shows a reduction in traffic in Arboretum by 2030 and A+ increases traffic. A+ lids are unacceptable.

COMMENT [5]: I am a resident of Capitol Hill. The only solution without financial cost is a 4-lane transit-optimized bridge. The state is burdened with satisfying a wide constituency. This option came together by politicians in Olympia who represent voters outside of Seattle. We need to look to our own city for leadership. This is an opportunity for Seattle. The footprint should be in the existing corridor and we don't need a 6-lane bridge. Seattle needs a regional transportation plan with improved public transit. Please look at an effective transit-oriented solution that is solved by the local residents. What is needed is a four-lane bridge with a 21st century regional transit center. This bridge should be planned by Seattle and for Seattle.

COMMENT [6]: I am Fred McConkey, the mayor of the town of Hunts Point and am representing the Eastside Mayors Association. I've personally been working on this effort for 19 years. We [Eastside Mayors Association] all support Option A+ because it fits within the budget of \$4.65 billion. All other options are over budget and it will be hard to get more money than this. Option K and L both have permitting issues so this option is the most permissible. We want to move forward as soon as possible in case the bridge fails anytime soon. We don't want it to fail soon and can foresee what would happen if it did go down. We are in favor of a six-lane, four general purpose plus two HOV lanes in each direction, configuration. Please get this done so it is completed by 2016.

COMMENT [7]: Mark Nelson, Mayor of Medina, seconded the comment provided by Mayor McConkey.

COMMENT [8]: I live in Montlake and drove here in a single occupant vehicle this evening. It has been a long process. What I've been doing is following the information generated over time. I feel sucker-punched because what has been promoted is A, K or L and all these renderings and all of the sudden there is a sub-option. The ramps and options that are included were not what we were evaluating all this time. Just because the transit wants it, doesn't mean we can do it. The first five people who spoke tonight said they don't want the ramps under Option A+. One group who likes the option said don't put the ramps in there. Even the proponents of the new options don't like the A+ ramps. The way this is drawn makes no sense. I understand there is a safety issue. If it is a safety issue, fix the safety issue. Don't build something for no reason. Think in terms of decades – the decade of impact that this will have on things like pedestrian access, the Olmsted system is 100 years in making. Please take this into consideration.

COMMENT [9]: I'm with the Bellevue Downtown Association and wish to express our support for the option recommended by the Legislative Workgroup. It is a viable design option and finance plan. The health of the community is tied to safe, effective cross-lake mobility. There are decades or more of challenges – coming to an agreement on an option that meets the budget, purpose and need and meets transit needs. There is no easy way to solve it, but it is way past time to fix the problem. We used to want an eight-lane bridge. I think that six lanes is better than four and there is a need for compromise. Compromise is a fine art and it is a fine art to master. Time to move on and get it built. We appreciate the hard work that has been involved in this process. This project will ultimately benefit jobs and the quality of life on both sides of the lake.

COMMENT [10]: I use the 520 bridge every day to go ride on the eastside. I live in Madrona and I like the access that I get from the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps and I would hate to lose it.

COMMENT [11]: I am the President of University District Community Council. We initially supported a 4-lane replacement for the 520 bridge. Because a six-lane option is more feasible, we now support A+, but please eliminate the Arboretum ramps. Our main reason for supporting this option is that it has far less impacts on Foster Island and McCurdy Park and it preserves the corridor. Preserve what is there and has been there for over 45 years. There is too much traffic for the other options to work and the other traffic into our neighborhood. A tunnel would cost lots of money and will have too many impacts on fish and habitat which is why you will have a permitting problem.

COMMENT [12]: I am Chairman of the Seattle Chamber and have lived in northeast Seattle since 1965. In 1998, I was asked by the Chamber to represent the business community on this project. SR 520 is essential to the quality life and economic vitality. Everyone knows the bridge has a risk of structural failure and that the solution requires decision leadership. The process has taken far too long. It is important to expedite what remains to be done and seek legislation this session. Any of the options on the table could provide a path forward. Option A + seems best aligned with our considerations criteria - it improves transit, minimizes environmental issues, and is within budget. This option has lots to offer the surrounding neighborhoods and larger community. This option enhances the urban setting, vistas, and everything else that is part of our goals. It accommodates the best travel and transit times, is within budget and can be done at a lower cost.

COMMENT [13]: I am from Montlake and feel sucker-punched. I am reading the handouts and the broad based support from local communities is one of your priorities? I don't get it; support from the affected communities? I don't see Montlake, Laurelhurst, the bicycle club and other supporting it. Higher profile and less green space? Another draw bridge? I don't think we are helping pedestrian access or the livability of the Montlake neighborhood. I support the tunnel going under the lake. Cheaper is not always better.

COMMENT [14]: I have one main message: protect the Arboretum. I am here on behalf of the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee. They already spoke to guiding principles. I live in Montlake. Protect the Arboretum.

COMMENT [15]: I might get a little emotional. I grew up in Montlake. I have followed this project and have had to deal with all of the traffic and all the traffic that is backed up at Montlake all my life. I have had to drive through University Village, University of Washington campus, over University Bridge, and to Montlake and to my neighborhood because traffic is backed up. I live by Seattle Yacht Club. When the bridge goes up, traffic gets backed up in all directions and you can't move through the Montlake corridor. I don't see that as a viable option that does anything for anyone living in our community. Who supports this of the communities near the corridor? If you look at the broad based support, none of the communities directly involved support this option, nor does Spkr. Chopp or Rep. Pedersen who voted against this.

COMMENT [16]: I am a resident of Montlake and live on Montlake Boulevard, right by the bridge. The option that has been selected has an extreme fatal flaw and that is that it has another bascule bridge. That is a choke point. If this is a 50 year solution, look at peak travel times out that far, and the back-up on 24th Avenue and north going that direction. It will be absolute gridlock during the boating season. How will I get around my neighborhood? It will be the same capacity moving across the bridge, but massively increasing traffic amounts. This is a tremendous problem.

COMMENT [17]: Thank you for the work that you've done. Thank you WSDOT for collecting information and giving it to us. I was involved in the mediation. We support A + without the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps. The criteria is sound except that the Lake Washington Boulevard ramps are a trade-off between environmental values and transit efficiency. Olmsted and nature is very important to the human psyche. This takes priority over efficiency of travel. We recommend a package that includes corridor management agreement with government jurisdictions. A corridor management agreement would have programs to encourage transit and HOV usage and would have a land use elements. We encourage that the state be authorized to make advanced acquisitions for mitigation. Wetlands can be acquired but once the economic conditions improve, they will be much higher and we will get much less for the money.

COMMENT [18]: I am a North Capitol Hill resident of 25 years and my community council doesn't speak for me. I also serve on the boards Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks and a director of the National Association of Olmsted Parks. I think the basic idea of expanding the highway is deeply flawed. We need to be talking about mobility and sustainability, and it is not about six lanes or eight lanes. We do not back the A + plus Option. From the beginning, we have been supporting Option A and keeping the ramps out of the Arboretum. The Arboretum is the heart of the citywide Olmsted vision. This is open space that gives us calm. This option is like putting a bomb in the middle of the system. This is a significant historic resource and a natural resource that lives on for all of us and we need to treat it with better respect.

COMMENT [19]: I represent Lake Washington Boulevard and my neighbor. I am very concerned about any of these options. Every day you wake up and noise is high and carbon monoxide is above national standards. I have not seen an EIS on any of the options. In order to make a good decision as a citizen, I need to see that. Where will the lid be? What are the details? Residents along the Boulevard that live 60 feet from the "crater" need to know these things.

COMMENT [20]: I am on the Laurelhurst Community Council. I participated in mediation. I want to reinforce that the communities most affected do not support Option A+ or A. They

support plan M, a tunnel under the Montlake Cut. Our communities are isolated. We have very limited access to get out. We are stuck at the five-lane intersection. There is planned growth for University Village and Children's Hospital. 42,000 vehicles down the pike each day. Option M has 24-hour access unlike an option with a bridge. A tunnel connects to the transit and connects to Sound Transit. Secondly, we are concerned about cost estimates. The tunnel is only \$50 million, and yet the estimate has ballooned to \$1.2 billion. We are already looking at a \$2 billion deficit problem. This is not going to get built in the next several of years. We want a complete environmental impact statement and we need to see more cost estimates. Our vote is for Option M and to retrofit the existing option. Also, the pontoons are too massive and too high. They are 14 feet in the air and we want them closer to five feet.

COMMENT [21]: I am a former state transportation commissioner. In 1978, we examined SR 520 and were looking at widening it. We decided on HOV lanes on the Eastside. I represent Ravenna Bryant Community Association. The A supporters are interested in getting more people involved and more information out. It is obvious from the testimonies this morning and evening that there is a lot of information that is not correct. I am appalled at some of the things that have been claimed. A+ is a good option for transit, it is environmentally friendly and it is an affordable and sustainable solution. We have been working on the westside design for 12 years and it is time to make a decision. Federal and state gas taxes are declining. We have climate change to deal with, CO2 pollution, we are trying to make this work at a time that there are many changes going on for transportation in the region. We represent a large group of people that want the A+ option. I have handouts that will tell you more about issues and the amounts of dirt that tunnels create. Tunnels create 40,000 truckloads of dirt.

COMMENT [22]: I live in northeast Seattle in the Wedgewood community and have spent quite a few hours sitting in Montlake traffic. I currently work in downtown Seattle and have to go to Bellevue for meetings. I have to figure out how much time I need to give myself to get over to the Eastside for meetings. You never really can judge so I always have something with me to read so that I don't waste any time. I urge you to get this project moving along. I have lots of friends who do not live where they work. We need mobility in this region. We need a solution that accommodates transit. We need the project to continue moving forward.

COMMENT [23]: I live near University Village shopping mall. I have a question because I don't understand what people want to do if we take out the exits and on-ramps in the Arboretum? It's fine to remove these, but how are we going to access the bridge if the ramps are gone?

COMMENT [24]: I am the Chair of Transportation and Land Use Committee of the Sierra Club Cascade Chapter. I thank the Legislative Workgroup for their hours of effort. Selection of Option A+ is certainly on the right track, but there are five key problems with A+ that need to be corrected. 1. Get rid of ramps to and from Lake Washington Boulevard – that is a mistake from the 1960s and we can remove them. 2. Retain the flyer stop at Montlake Boulevard and keep transit connections. 3. Get rid of idea that it is four lanes general purpose plus two HOV lanes and think of it as four lanes plus transit. 5. Design the bridge to accommodate light rail in a six-lane footprint. The only tunnel built in the area should be for light rail. On the financing side, we need to get I-90 fully tolled right away.

COMMENT [25]: I have a comment on A+. I live on East Lake Washington Boulevard. I live with the impact of traffic going past my house, but it was not my expectation that I would have an exit ramp coming to my house. I did not think all of this traffic would be coming into my community. It is a great disservice to the residents of the neighborhood. I want to protect the environment, I want to reduce congestion and protect flora and fauna, but I wish there would be more consideration for the people who live there other than the flora and fauna, etc.

COMMENT [26]: I live in Ballard. I drove for Metro transit for 13 years and occasionally drove the route 255 bus across the SR 520 bridge. The lanes out of the Arboretum are a mistake. They are unsafe and back up traffic. They need to be changed. The idea to taking out the freeway station and just the idea that you need to compensate Metro and give them more operating hours. We are becoming a big area and HOV lanes don't work. HOV lanes are like a standing parking lot and transit lanes are better. Plan for transit lanes or make them convertible.

COMMENT [27]: I am a 12 year veteran of the project and serve on the Montlake Community Council and am part of the coalition for a Sustainable 520 that includes Madison Park, Laurelhurst, Montlake, North Capitol Hill, Roanoke Park and Portage Bay. I understand and share frustration over the process. Thanks to WSDOT who I have much respect for and who have done hard work on the plans that we are criticizing. The reason it has taken 12 years is that we keep putting plans out that aren't going to work. The ghost ramps are a testament to that it is difficult to build a highway that is acceptable and are going to work for the affected communities. A+ deserves and F- for the transportation plan that it intends to solve. Our group has decided that it is an illusion to think that there is any way to pay for it without tolling I-90 and applying all the funds here. We understand the problem thoroughly and want to help solve it. We understand constructability and this plan won't hold up under scrutiny. We will work for or against you, depending on the choices you make.

COMMENT [28]: I live on Lake Washington Boulevard, right across from where the ramp will go. I don't think you understand - this is horrible for us. I have kids. This will be five-six years of construction and when it is done, there will be a ramp out the front of my house. This plan will clog the system. There will be traffic. We already have problems getting out of our driveway. Ramps mean more traffic in front of our neighborhood. The process is unbelievable. This is real to us. A+ is supported by the Eastside, but not by the neighborhoods that are affected. When I moved into this neighborhood, everyone thought there was no way they would ever do that. My kids are affected under this option. I urge you to consider this. A+ is a horrible option. Just think if you had kids there. This is very serious for us. When they tried to put ramps out before, they stopped because people stood in front of bulldozers and we will do that.

COMMENT [29]: I am here representing the Green Alternatives Coalition. I have a green handout if anyone wants one. WSDOT has not well served this process. The SDEIS fails to analyze a four-lane transit optimized alternative. They have been calling it a no-build alternative, but the four-lane is not a no-build. The four-lane alternative is an expansion with wider traffic lanes, wider ramps and it would accommodate considerably more traffic, but not overwhelm I-5, neighboring streets and I-405. It would provide transit improvements and would be free flowing through tolls and other meters. The four-lane option is the only alternative that does not need a second drawbridge. It would have many enhancements. All the enhancements of the six-lane alternatives can be applied to the four-lane alternative. The four-lane alternative is affordable and

environmentally sustainable. I insist WSDOT study this alternative. It can deliver enhancements that the six-lane cannot and is affordable and environmentally sustainable. A prime and A+ are billions of dollars beyond reasonable costs.

COMMENT [30]: I was born in Seattle. I lived on the Eastside and am now back in Seattle and have been in the city for over 25 years. This whole process is impressive with the time and effort, but the fundamental problem for our neighborhood is where construction will have a direct impact. We don't know what the top of Portage Bay and Roanoke Park will look like. When you look at other run-off areas, there is too much impact. Under this option, I still don't understand where all the Eastside traffic will go when they get to I-5. The state should look at peak load pricing. Secondly, if anyone believes there is consensus for directly impacted neighborhoods, there is not. The neighborhoods will have to face heavy construction problems and there is no support except possibly for Option M.

Sen. Tom, Workgroup co-chair, thanked the public for their comments and adjourned the Town Hall Meeting.