



# SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program



I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

## SR 520 West Approach Bridge North Project Monthly Public Meeting – Summary

Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Graham Visitors Center

2300 Arboretum Drive East, Seattle, WA 98112

### Attendees

#### WSDOT

- Brian Dobbins, WABN Construction Engineering Manager
- Kerry Pihlstrom, ROTW Engineering Manager
- Ethan Bancroft, ROTW Communications
- Emily Namiki, WABN Communications

#### Flatiron West, Inc.

- Virgil Curtis, Deputy Project Manager

#### City of Seattle

- John Arnesen, WABN, Seattle Department of Transportation
- Lyle Bicknell, ROTW, Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development
- Connie Zimmerman, ROTW, Seattle Department of Transportation

### Meeting overview

On April 6, WSDOT and the contractor, Flatiron West, Inc., cohosted a monthly public meeting and invited the local community to learn about upcoming construction activities on the SR 520 West Approach Bridge North Project (WABN) and updates on the remaining, now funded, west side sections of SR 520, the “Rest of the West.” Approximately 30 members of the public attended. The monthly meeting is an informal forum where community members can learn about progress on the WABN project and ask WSDOT staff and the contractor questions about construction activities.

#### WABN project overview: Brian Dobbins

WSDOT is constructing a 6,000-foot-long bridge which will connect three westbound lanes of the new floating bridge to the Montlake area. Other [key design features](#), changes and improvements of the WABN project include:

- Two general purpose lanes and one HOV lane.
- Extending a new 14-foot-wide regional shared-use bicycle/pedestrian path from the new floating bridge to the Montlake interchange and existing city of Seattle paths.
- Removing the R.H. Thomson “Ramps to Nowhere,” westbound SR 520 off-ramp to Montlake Boulevard and westbound SR 520 off-ramp to Lake Washington Boulevard.

### **WABN current work: Brian Dobbins**

- Crews are currently completing the following work:
  - **Girder delivery:** Through 2016, crews will deliver 383, 150-foot long girders. Girders are delivered via I-5, East Lake Washington Boulevard and 24th Avenue East to access the MOHAI staging area to the temporary work bridge for installation.
  - **Work east of Foster Island:** Crews continue to install columns, falsework to support future girders and isolation bearings east of Foster Island.
  - **Work in MOHAI area:** Crews have started building finger piers from the temporary work bridge near the MOHAI staging area. From the finger piers, crews will install casings, shafts, columns, isolation bearings and girders for the new WABN structure.

### **Upcoming WABN work: Virgil Curtis**

- The following work is scheduled for the next month:
  - **Arboretum Waterfront Trail closure (April 9 to 18):** For public safety, the trail will be closed to allow crews to install steel piles adjacent to the trail. Crews will work as quickly as possible to complete this work and reopen the trail.
  - **Work trestle removal and installation:** Crews continue to remove finger piers east of Foster Island and use the material to install finger piers west of Foster Island. Impact hammering to install piles is restricted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

### **Floating Bridge grand opening: Brian Dobbins**

- Thanks to those who were able to join us the weekend of April 2 to 3 for the Go Long celebration to open up the new floating bridge.
- Approximately 50,000 individuals had the chance to walk, run and bike across the new structure before it opened to traffic.

### **SR 520 highway closures: Brian Dobbins**

- Floating bridge crews will use two weekend SR 520 closures to shift traffic to the new floating bridge:
  - **April 8 to 11:** Full SR 520 closure from Montlake Boulevard to 92nd Avenue Northeast. Westbound lanes of the new floating bridge open to traffic at 5 a.m. on Monday, April 11.
  - **April 22 to 25:** Full SR 520 closure from Montlake Boulevard to 92nd Avenue Northeast. Both eastbound and westbound lanes of the new floating bridge open to traffic at 5 a.m. on Monday, April 25.

### **Rest of the West Project overview: Kerry Pihlstrom**

- The Rest of the West is now fully funded via the 2015 Connecting Washington package. This legislation includes a funding cashflow, which spreads out funds from 2015 through 2029.
- The SR 520 Rest of the West project elements are being constructed in order to replace aging and vulnerable structures, as well as enhance mobility for all modes of travel.

- WSDOT has been working for many years on the project design in Seattle. Most recently, we worked in 2014 to further refine the design and resolve specific areas and elements that needed work following the 2012 Seattle Community Design Process. Our work in 2014 resulted in a draft 2015 Final Concept Design Report and public comment period. This is the design we are working from today, which was unanimously endorsed by the Seattle City Council in 2015.
- Based on when funds are available, WSDOT has identified the next construction phase. We are now working to develop contract documents and coordinate with the city of Seattle, and also conduct more public outreach. These contract documents are being written to reflect the extensive work we've done with the public and the city on the design of these remaining improvements.
- The next planned phase for the "Rest of the West" is scheduled to begin construction in 2018 and include the:
  - **West Approach Bridge South:** A bridge parallel to the West Approach Bridge North that will carry three eastbound lanes of traffic when complete.
  - **The Montlake interchange and lid:** A new lid that provides open space and a multi-modal transportation hub. The interchange will also include a new "land bridge" connection over SR 520 to the east of the lid and Montlake Boulevard improvements between approximately East Roanoke Street and East Hamlin Street.
- These planned phases will use a design-build contracting approach. WSDOT went through a decision making process called Project Delivery Method Selection Guidance to determine this. Design-build is a method of project delivery in which WSDOT executes a single contract with one entity (the Design-Builder) for design and construction services to provide a finished product. The Legislature has also strongly encouraged WSDOT to pursue design-build method for large projects over \$2 million in value, including the 520 Rest of the West.
  - Benefits of design-build contracting include a greater opportunity for innovation, a potentially shortened timeline, and a transfer of risk to the contractor.
- Continued public outreach will take place prior to and during construction.
- Future phases of the Rest of the West include:
  - The Portage Bay Bridge and 10th and Delmar lid. This phase will begin construction as early as 2020.
  - A second bascule bridge across the Montlake Cut.

**Key priorities for WSDOT and the City of Seattle: Kerry Pihlstrom and Lyle Bicknell**

- As we've demonstrated, the City remains a key partner to WSDOT in this next phase of work.
- WSDOT will continue to work with the city to meet their objectives including:
  - Fulfilling design visions developed with the Seattle Design Commission, the City of Seattle, and the broader community.
  - Building on past work to document urban design criteria for future construction contracts.
- The City of Seattle will continue to work with WSDOT to meet their objectives including:
  - Fulfilling the direction of City Council Resolutions 31427 and 31611.

- Seamlessly connecting pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and vehicles.
- Ensuring proper respect for state and federal historic guidelines.
- Advocating for city and stakeholder interests.
- Promoting design excellence.
- From now through June, our coordination with the city is focused on ensuring that the urban design criteria are incorporated into the project and that we are meeting our project commitments.

### How to stay informed: Kerry Pihlstrom

- **City coordination:** We are currently working closely with the Seattle Design Commission to address key urban design issues. We are also working with city staff to fulfill key project commitments, discuss key topics and technical items such as permits, utilities, and future maintenance. WSDOT is also moving into contract development and preparing for construction.
- **Public outreach:** This year, public outreach will continue in separate meetings and online. We're sharing briefings to community groups (ongoing, by request), and plan to host an in-person and Online Open House early this summer. These open houses will provide us with an opportunity to share refined design renderings and other updates from our work with the City. Note: the WABN monthly meeting will continue to focus on construction activities for that project.

### Key comments and questions

The summary below highlights key comments, questions and responses posed during the discussion. The summary is not verbatim but represents the themes of the comments and responses.

#### WABN

- **Question:** Many people take the westbound SR 520 off-ramp to East Lake Washington Boulevard (via the 24th Avenue East overpass) to travel north on Montlake Boulevard which leads to traffic back-ups on Montlake Boulevard and on 24th Avenue East, north of the off-ramp. Would conditions improve if cars could turn right on red at the westbound SR 520 off-ramp to Montlake Boulevard?
  - **Response (City):** Traffic has always been an issue in this area. Initially we saw many vehicles using the westbound SR 520 off-ramp to East Lake Washington Boulevard to travel north on Montlake Boulevard, but fewer vehicles are doing this now. There is limited capacity on Montlake Boulevard so adding more green time on Montlake Boulevard will back up traffic on East Lake Washington Boulevard and vice versa. The City will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation to make improvements where possible.
- **Question:** The light at the westbound SR 520 off-ramp to Montlake Boulevard has only increased delays. Why is this light necessary? Why can't drivers just merge as they did before?
  - **Response (City):** It is not possible for drivers to merge as they did before. The traffic configuration has changed with two right-turning lanes coming off the off-

ramp. A light is necessary to facilitate the turning traffic and a safer crossing for bicycles and pedestrians across Montlake Boulevard. Also, when bicycles and pedestrians approach the intersection, visibility is limited because of the railing and the structure of the bridge which makes it difficult to see approaching traffic.

- **Comment:** During peak hours, there are higher volumes of bicycles and pedestrians on Montlake Boulevard. During non-peak hours, it is necessary to allow drivers to turn right on red.
- **Comment:** I think it is worth looking at that intersection during the next 10 years of construction. I commute by bus and am surprised by how long the pedestrian walk signal is to cross the off-ramp and how many cars line up in that two-lane off-ramp during the time it takes me to walk across the off-ramp.
- **Response (WSDOT):** The plan for the final configuration of SR 520 has always been to remove free rights in the Montlake area in order to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian movement. The traffic signal at the westbound SR 520 off-ramp is also necessary to accommodate future direct access ramps and the transit on top of the lid as well as bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.
- **Comment:** Since adding the new traffic signal at the intersection of Montlake Boulevard and the westbound SR 520 off-ramp, the eastbound SR 520 off-ramp to Montlake Boulevard has been very congested. Some drivers cut through the neighborhood to avoid the traffic and congest local streets.
- **Response (WSDOT):** Thank you for passing along that feedback. WSDOT and SDOT traffic engineers continue to monitor the intersection to help keep traffic flowing while also realizing the safety features of the new traffic light.
- **Question:** When will 24th Avenue East reopen for bicycle and pedestrian usage?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** The bicycle/pedestrian path across the 24th Avenue East bridge over SR 520 is currently planned to reopen at the end of the WABN construction in the summer of 2017. WSDOT and the City are working to determine if this path can remain open during the next phase of construction. (This is consistent with the message WSDOT and SDOT have agreed to.)
- **Question:** Bicyclists speed through the alleyways near East North Street which makes it very dangerous for residents trying to exit their driveways. Can the bicycle and pedestrian detour be adjusted to divert bicyclists on East Roanoke Street?
  - **Response (City):** Rerouting the bicycle and pedestrian detour is not possible at this time because the sidewalk is not wide enough between East Roanoke Street and East North Street.
- **Question:** Why hasn't the section of sidewalk on Montlake Boulevard, south of East Lake Washington Boulevard been widened and upgraded? This section of sidewalk could have been used as part of the bicycle and pedestrian detour route.
  - **Response (City):** As part of a City project, the 23rd Avenue Corridor Improvements Project, the City is making transit stop and some signal improvements to 23rd Avenue and 24th Avenue in Capitol Hill, south of Montlake. Minor sidewalk enhancements and improvements could potentially be a part of this project. In the future, East Roanoke Street is also planned to provide a non-motorized connection for an at-grade route to travel from the Portage Bay Bridge into the local greenway system, including the new land bridge east of Montlake Boulevard.

- **Question:** There is a “white plastic mountain” between Montlake Boulevard and 24th Avenue East, south of Hamlin Street. When will this be removed?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** Under the white plastic sheet are trees and large root stumps from Old Canal Reserve area. Many of these trees will be replanted on Foster Island in spring 2017.

### Rest of the West

- **Question:** After completion of the entire SR 520 corridor, how will I travel going east and west on SR 520? (in the ultimate configuration)
  - **Response (WSDOT):**
    - **Westbound:** If you are traveling westbound, and are coming from Lake Washington Boulevard you will turn right, and on top of the lid there will be two left turn pockets to take you to westbound SR 520. You can continue to use the current route and make the U-turn, but you won’t have to.
    - **Eastbound:** The eastbound SR 520 on-ramp from Lake Washington Boulevard in the Arboretum will be removed when construction begins on the West Approach Bridge South (WABS). Additional capacity for general-purpose traffic is currently planned to be added at the eastbound loop on-ramp to SR 520 at Montlake Boulevard. This will help compensate for the traffic that currently uses the eastbound on-ramp through the Arboretum. Carpools can access eastbound SR 520 through the new direct-access ramps that will be in place on the new Montlake lid.
- **Question:** Why was the flyer stop moved from SR 520 to the top of the lid?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** WSDOT has tried to keep the highway footprint as narrow as possible based on public feedback. The flyer stop was relocated to the Montlake lid to minimize property impacts in collaboration with key stakeholders such as King County Metro.
- **Question:** Will transit service on the new Montlake lid serve a similar function as the current Montlake flyer stop during peak hours?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** During peak times, we anticipate that the additional signal timing needed to allow transit to exit SR 520, move through the Montlake interchange and continue back onto SR 520, would not be feasible. To ensure transit alternatives with the new lid configuration, there will be more transit service to the University District area during peak times, where riders can access the University Link Light Rail station to travel to downtown Seattle.
- **Question:** Why doesn’t WSDOT monitor air quality in real-time during construction?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** WSDOT evaluates the anticipated effects of its projects on air emissions. Generally, air quality analysis determines if air pollutant concentrations with our projects will exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect human health and welfare. Mitigation is evaluated for projects that may not meet the NAAQS standards.
  - WSDOT currently does not perform ongoing air quality monitoring in “real time” at project construction sites. Regulatory agencies do not require project level monitoring and they conduct regional scale long term monitoring themselves.

Localized air quality is highly dependent on constantly changing weather and wind patterns. As a result, monitoring at the project level will only reflect temporary pollutant concentrations over a very small area. In contrast, when WSDOT models traffic air pollutant levels, the worst-case atmospheric conditions are modeled at multiple locations to reflect infrequent conditions that could occur. Although construction activities may generate some temporary dust and odors in the immediate vicinity of the construction activity, our studies have found that the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program is not expected to cause or contribute to violations of the NAAQS.

- **Question:** Will a second bascule bridge be constructed?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** The Connecting Washington funding includes funding for the construction of a second bascule bridge across the Montlake cut. This is planned to occur in the last phase of construction. The Seattle City Council has stated in the past that they would prefer for the funding to be used to construct a bicycle and pedestrian only bridge as well as implementing ITS and Transit Improvements along Montlake Boulevard. We are continuing to work with the city on a plan for this project element.
- **Question:** Why can't you construct a grade separation of Montlake Boulevard as an overpass over the Montlake Cut?
  - **Response (WSDOT):** During the planning phases of the project, WSDOT evaluated a number of design alternatives for the Montlake interchange, including various bridge alignments, local street alignments, tubes and tunnels, and more. The 2010 Preferred Alternative design analyzed in the project's Final Environmental Impact Statement and approved in the Record of Decision rebuilds the Montlake interchange with an at-grade solution to optimize vehicle traffic within the constraints of the urban interchange, improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity, and implement a context sensitive design within a historic district.