

# Chapter 7 Public and Agency Comments on the Draft EIS

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*This chapter discusses the comments received during the public comment period for the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project Draft EIS and WSDOT's general approach to reviewing and providing responses to these comment.*

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## What was the Draft EIS review process?

The Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register*, and the Draft EIS was available to the public on May 28, 2010. WSDOT accepted formal comments on the Draft EIS for 45 days, through July 12, 2010. Advertisements for the comment period included the following:

- Community and jurisdictional briefings about the Draft EIS
- Public notices announcing the comment period in local newspapers
- Project Web site announcement
- Notification posters distributed throughout the project area
- Notification mailers sent to all Grays Harbor residents
- Press release to local media

The Draft EIS was distributed to agencies, tribal nations, libraries, and members of the public who requested to be on the mailing list. The Draft EIS was also available online at the project Website for review and comment.

On June 24, 2010, WSDOT held a public hearing and open house at Aberdeen High School in Aberdeen, Washington, at which verbal comments and written comments were accepted. Listed below are other ways the public could submit written comments:

- Online at the project's Website
- Email
- Regular postal mail
- Comment forms distributed by mail and at the public hearing that could be returned via mailed during the comment period

All public comments received and WSDOT's responses are reproduced in Appendix T, Draft EIS Comments and Responses Report. In all, WSDOT received 32 submittals during the public comment period, and some submittals contained multiple comments.

## **What did WSDOT learn from the comments received during the public comment period?**

### **General Public Comments**

Overall, the general public and the Grays Harbor community support the proposed SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project; many of the comments received echoed this support. In addition to comments of support, other comment themes included the following:

- Future use of the casting basin facility site
- Economics: local or regional economy, project employment opportunities
- Project alternatives: Preferred Alternative choice, site-selection process
- Funding and cost: project cost or funding, tolling
- Public involvement: public coordination and participation

### **Participating Agency and Tribal Comments**

WSDOT has closely coordinated with agencies and tribes throughout the project environmental process. The agency and tribal comments were useful in helping WSDOT to develop the Draft EIS into the Final EIS, and their comments did not raise new topics or issues of which WSDOT was not already aware. Following are the main themes of the agency and tribal comments:

- Permits: permits for project construction and operation
- Ecosystems: comments about the ecosystem and habitats, ecological benefits
- Ecosystems mitigation: mitigation measures for ecosystem effects
- Alternatives: Preferred Alternative choice, site-selection process
- Agency coordination: coordination with agencies or jurisdictions
- Construction: casting basin or pontoon construction

## **How did WSDOT respond to the Draft EIS comments?**

WSDOT assessed all of the comments received from the public, agencies, and tribes. As needed, some factual corrections and language clarifications were made in the Final EIS. WSDOT did not receive any new information that would lead the agency to modify the alternatives

or to develop and evaluate alternatives not previously seriously considered. WSDOT believes its responses to comments, as presented in Appendix T, sufficiently explain how each comment was considered and reflected in the Final EIS.

Appendix U, the Summary of Effects Technical Memorandum, summarizes changes in effects and mitigation for analyzed elements of the environment since the Draft EIS was published.