

SR 520 Floating Bridge and Landings: Drawspan Obstruction Common Questions—Updated 12/22/14

Q & A:

1. When will the drawspan be obstructed?

Marine access to the center drawspan in the existing SR 520 floating bridge will be permanently blocked as early as Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015. Note that this date is the earliest that the drawspan will be closed. This date may change due to weather-dependent activities and the dynamic nature of construction. For the latest information on drawspan obstructions, please visit: [SR 520 drawspan information](#).

2. Why is the drawspan being obstructed now?

As we continue to construct the new floating bridge, we are joining the longitudinal pontoons which form the spine of the new bridge. In early 2015 we will be ready to join the middle pontoons, which will completely block access through the drawspan.

3. Why can't WSDOT delay obstructing the drawspan?

This is an expected part of our floating bridge construction sequence. We distributed notices to mariners about this navigation change in 2012 and included this information in our environmental documents. In order to build the bridge, this is a necessary step. We expect the new floating bridge to open to traffic in spring 2016.

4. How many drawspan openings have there been since construction began?

There were 623 drawspan openings between April 2012 and Dec. 1, 2014.

5. How will boaters get around the floating bridge?

- Vessels less than 45 feet tall will continue to use the west navigation channel.
- Vessels between 45 and 58 feet tall will use the east navigation channel, which will be cleared prior to the obstruction of the drawspan.
- Vessels between 58 and 70 feet tall will not be able to navigate beyond the floating bridge for approximately 16 months while crews work to complete construction of the new floating bridge and remove the existing east approach.
- Once the drawspan is obstructed, vessels larger than 70 feet tall will no longer be able to navigate beyond SR 520.

6. What is the cause of the east navigation channel height restriction?

The navigational height clearance on the east navigation channel will be temporarily restricted to 58 feet due to the placement of the permanent column at [Pier 1](#) near the Medina shoreline. This new structure is just north of the eastern edge of the east navigation channel. This prevents navigation through the highest/eastern section of the navigation channel.

Please see the online [graphic](#) which illustrates the changes to SR 520 navigation channels between early 2015 through late 2016. The east channel will be opened at 58 feet when the center drawspan is obstructed. This will be the temporary height clearance until the existing bridge is removed in late 2016. Once the existing bridge is removed from Lake Washington the clearance for the new east navigation channel will be 70 feet, which matches the height of the I-90 East Channel Bridge.

7. Is the 58 foot east navigation channel height restriction measured at summer levels?

Height clearances for navigation channels on Lake Washington are established based on the average water height of Lake Washington when the lake is at its higher level during the summer months. Please note that these heights are not absolute. We recommend that all boaters use the black and white channel clearance markers posted on bridge columns in the navigation channel prior to attempting to navigate through the channel. These markers provide a more real-time estimate of channel clearance.

8. Is there any way to fit boats taller than 58 feet through the channel?

No. Due to the close proximity of the permanent structure to the east navigation channel, we advise boaters to remain within the posted channel configuration and use their best judgment when adhering to the posted clearance markers. This online [graphic](#) which illustrates the changes to SR 520 navigation channels between early 2015 through late 2016 provides additional guidance.

9. What will the clearance be on the new bridge?

The west navigation channel will continue to be 45 feet tall. The new east navigation channel will have a maximum clearance of 70 feet, after the existing bridge has been removed.

10. What is WSDOT doing to accommodate boaters who cannot go through the east navigation channel until the existing bridge is demolished?

WSDOT has provided significant early notification of the upcoming changes and has contacted all boaters with vessels greater than 58 feet tall to notify them of these changes to navigation. Additional accommodations will not be provided for boaters affected by the changes to navigation clearances due to construction activities.

11. How can I stay informed about changes to the closure of the drawspan?

Notifications about the upcoming closure of the SR 520 drawspan will be distributed through a number of outlets including the Coast Guard's Local Notice to Mariners, Twitter, local media, and specific emails to boaters. To be added to the boater update list, please email SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov.