Seattle Community Design Process
Dec. 7, 2011 Public Session
Public Comment Summary

Overview

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted the third public session of the Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP) on Dec. 7, 2011 at the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) in Seattle. Approximately 130 people attended the event, and approximately 195 individual written comments were received.

At the session, attendees were able to view a series of informational boards that provided the following information:

- SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV program overview
- SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV project overview
- Seattle Community Design Process background information
- SR 520 sustainability goals and objectives
- Information on how to read the materials and participate in the workshop
- Locator map of available staff and technical experts at the workshop

Information on tolling was available in a separate area and people were able to obtain *Good To Go!* passes and accounts.

Members of the public were able to view information at a series of work stations organized by key geographic areas along the Seattle side of the SR 520 corridor. These areas included:

- Roanoke
- Portage Bay Bridge
- Montlake – Shelby/Hamlin
- East Montlake – Water's edge
- Montlake – East Lake Washington Boulevard

Workshop focus

WSDOT staff presented a range of design opportunities that were developed from previous public input that could be further explored for each respective area. Workshop participants were able to view and discuss these design opportunities, and share their feedback through writing comments on post-it notes, drawings, and formal comment cards.

Workshop accomplishments

In general, people were pleased to see drawings of these design opportunities presented in perspective format, which were easier for participants to understand than standard plan views. People indicated they wanted to see more design drawings and additional information and

analysis on the potential impacts on noise, views and traffic of the proposed design opportunities. Because of the complexity of these potential trade-offs, feedback was often conflicting in certain areas. There is a continued interest in the following topics:

- Traffic
- Noise
- Views

Other frequently discussed topics include:

- Bicycle and pedestrian connections
- Open space

Below is a summary of the design opportunities presented at the public meeting and the general themes of public feedback received regarding the design opportunities for each geographic area. This summary is meant to capture the larger themes of the public's written comments and conversations with staff and *is not inclusive of all the individual comments received*. All verbatim comments have been recorded in a separate document that is being used by WSDOT and the SR 520 design team to inform their design decisions as they continue to explore possible design refinements through the Seattle Community Design Process. WSDOT and the SR 520 design team will use this public feedback to analyze the potential trade-offs of the current proposed design opportunities as the Seattle Community Design Process moves forward. Public input will continue to play an integral role in shaping the project and there will be future opportunities for participation.

Roanoke area: *(includes 10th and Delmar lid and I-5 interchange):*

Design opportunities explored:

- Terrace the 10th Avenue and Delmar Drive lid to accommodate various types of small-scale, community-oriented activities.
- Provide a bicycle/pedestrian connection from Federal Avenue East to the 10th and Delmar Drive lid to enhance community connections.

Main topics discussed:

- **Noise and views**
  - People are concerned that the lid area might be too noisy to enjoy.

- **Traffic and parking**
  - Community members living in the Roanoke area indicated that there are problems with local traffic congestion and limited parking in the area. They are concerned that parking and local traffic will become worse with the creation of the lid.
  - People provided various suggestions about how to prevent increased local parking and traffic problems, including:
    - Provide parking access cards for those living adjacent to the area.
    - Do not put amenities on the lid to prevent people from wanting to drive to the area.

- **Bicycles and pedestrians**

- The area is important for bicycle and pedestrian connections. These connections are often difficult due to the steep slopes. The design should look at opportunities to make these connections easier.
- Bicycle and pedestrian paths should be safe. There are particular concerns about conflicts with vehicles.
- People provided a variety of specific suggestions for bicycle/pedestrian routes and connections, including:
  - Creating connections to Interlaken Park and Roanoke Park.
  - Maintaining the Roanoke stairs (but also make them safer).

- **Lid**
  - People provided various suggestions for activities and uses for the lid. These suggestions were often conflicting as they included both active and passive uses. Examples of specific suggestions include:
    - Dog parks
    - Tennis courts
    - Waiting areas
  - Safety is an important concern in this area. The lid needs to be activated to ensure safety.
  - People have suggested planting mature trees on the lid to help provide privacy for neighbors and make the area seem quieter.

- **Connectivity**
  - The area should connect visually and physically to other park amenities and trail networks, such as Roanoke Park and Montlake Playfield.
  - The community stairs serve an important connection that should be maintained.

- **Under bridge areas**
  - People suggested that the Boyer area should be designed as an open community space with shoreline access.
  - The under bridge areas should be safe places that provide connections and activities to discourage crime and encampments. People provided various suggestions for how to make these areas safe and active, including:
    - Increase safety patrols
    - Allowing for “eyes on the street”

Portage Bay Bridge area:

Design opportunities explored:

- Create a continuous, green connection around Portage Bay that builds upon the existing formal and informal trail infrastructure.
- Explore bridge structures that enhance the activities in the bay, the natural beauty of the area, and also produce a signature bridge.

Main topics discussed:

- **Noise**
  - People want more information on noise in this area and options for noise mitigation.

- Participants expressed concerns that nearby green areas, such as the 10th Avenue and Delmar Drive lid and Montlake Playfield may be too noisy to enjoy.

- **Bicycle and pedestrian access**
  - People requested that the Boyer area under the bridge becomes a community park. This park could provide shoreline access.
  - Many people indicated they would like bicycle and pedestrian access across the bridge.

- **Bridge structure**
  - People want the bridge to be attractive, but also allow for good views from the shoreline and on the bridge.
  - There were several comments regarding people's likes and dislikes of the specific bridge types shown. For example, there are conflicting preferences for a cable-stayed bridge vs. non cable-stayed bridge.

Montlake – Shelby/Hamlin area:

Design opportunities explored:

- Lower the general purpose westbound off-ramps to help reduce noise and visual impacts on the nearby residences.
- Provide a bicycle/pedestrian-only bridge over the general purpose westbound off-ramps on the north side of the lid to help eliminate conflicts with vehicles.
- Move the retaining wall north of the general-purpose westbound off-ramps to the south and away from the East Hamlin Street homes to enhance visual quality.
- Locate parking under SR 520 to maximize open space in the park. Provide landscaped buffers between the Shelby/Hamlin neighborhood and the lowered westbound off-ramps to help enhance visual quality.

Main topics discussed:

- **Traffic and parking**
  - Residents of the Shelby/Hamlin area are concerned about cut-through traffic and traffic back-ups in their neighborhoods. People provided a wide variety of suggestions for how to prevent traffic congestion and improve local access. Examples of specific suggestions include:
    - Reducing the number of signalized intersections
    - Eliminating left turns for single occupancy vehicles on Lake Washington Boulevard from 24th Avenue East
  - In general, there was wide support for moving the recreational parking underneath SR 520 with some discussion about access to parking and alternative suggestions for moving parking south of SR 520 to the Arboretum.
  - There were some questions about the need for parking at East Montlake Park.

- **Noise**
  - People want to reduce noise as much as possible and provided various suggestions to reduce noise, which often included using more noise walls and moving traffic away from impacted residences.

- **Lid**

- There are several conflicting ideas regarding the lid configuration. For example, some people believe the lid should be shortened to allow for parking to be located under SR 520 to create more valuable space in other locations (such as East Montlake Park). Other people believe the lid provides the most valuable open space and should be as large as possible.
- There were also conflicting ideas regarding lid programming. For example, some people thought that the lid could be best used as an extension of the Arboretum, while others thought it could be best used for active purposes such as children's play structures.

- **Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections**
  - People want safe, easy and effective bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections to and from the lid, throughout the adjacent neighborhoods and other nearby areas such as the University of Washington.
  - Bicycle and pedestrian safety is a main concern and some participants suggested that specific routes be designed for bicycles and pedestrians only.

East Montlake – Water's edge area:

Design opportunities explored:

- Move the eastern Montlake lid portal and West Approach Bridge abutment further west from the water's edge to create more open and safe space at the shoreline for a bicycle/pedestrian path and improved sightlines.
- Change the elevation of the transit/HOV direct access ramps to allow for better views for bicyclists and pedestrians at the shoreline.
- Create a better use of park space (specifically in East Montlake Park area) by locating recreational parking under the bridge structure.
- Make the stormwater facility fit more naturally in the shoreline setting by moving it closer to the water's edge.

Main topics discussed:

- **Noise**
  - Potential noise is still a primary concern in this area with the presented shortening of the lid, moving of the bridge abutment and/or lowering of the ramps. People want to understand the impacts and how noise can be mitigated.

- **Parking**
  - People liked the idea of moving the recreational parking under SR 520. It was often suggested that more open space in the East Montlake Park area is more valuable than open space under the bridge along the shoreline.
  - There were various suggestions for how to develop the parking area, including creating a park and ride and reducing parking availability altogether.

- **Lid portal/abutment setback**
  - There was a general split in support for moving the portal and/or bridge abutment further west from the shoreline.
  - Those who liked the setback cited various reasons that often included allowing for an opportunity to move recreational parking and create more valuable park space in the East Montlake Park area.

- Those who did not like the setback cited various reasons that often included a loss in valuable lid space and increased noise with a shorter lid, as well as concerns about the quality and safety of the additional open space created under the bridge structure.
- There were several requests for additional visual analysis to help people understand the visual and noise impacts of a shortened lid.
- There were several conversations about the overall sustainability of the lid in its largest configuration, including cost, greenhouse gas emissions, and environmental and social equity.

- **SR 520 ramps**
  - People who commented on the movement of the ramps often stated that lowered ramps are favorable because they allow for better experiences along the shoreline and reduce the visual impact of the structure.

- **Lid ventilation**
  - People commented on the ventilation structures required for the 1,400 foot lid of the baseline design. Participants suggested changing the lid configuration (e.g. shortening the length) so ventilation is not required. If ventilation is required, people suggested screening the vent shafts with landscaping and/or artwork.
  - People are concerned about the location of the vent stacks and any potential pollution or other adverse affects to the nearby homes.

- **Stormwater facility**
  - Participants provided various suggestions for where to locate the stormwater facility and how to integrate it into the surrounding natural environment and other projects such as King County's Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project.
  - There were conversations regarding the integration of sustainability measures into the stormwater facility through active and passive technologies. There was also discussion of the area providing sustainability educational opportunities.

Montlake – East Lake Washington Boulevard area:

Design opportunities explored:

- Separate the local residential traffic from the regional/arterial through traffic from 24th Avenue East with a one-way local access road (eastbound only).
- Improve bicyclist and pedestrian linkages to the Arboretum and the Shelby/Hamlin neighborhood.
- Add landscaped medians to recreate a boulevard character and screen views of traffic from adjacent residences.

Main topics discussed:

- **Noise**
  - People are concerned about the possibility of increased traffic noise, particularly near Miller Street and from increasing cut-through traffic.

- **Traffic**

- There is concern that traffic congestion and back-ups will increase in this area as a result of the removal of Arboretum ramps and re-routed traffic on 24th Avenue East and Lake Washington Boulevard.
- Cut-through traffic is a key concern and people want a design that can help reduce or prevent it.
- Those who do not support the local access road have various concerns, including that the option will increase cut-through traffic in the nearby neighborhoods and other areas such as the Arboretum, and also lead to an increase in noise.

- **Bicycle and pedestrian**
  - There were suggestions to lower Lake Washington Boulevard to allow for a pedestrian bridge at 24th Avenue East that would help provide easy access to the lid.

- **Roadway configuration**
  - People favored the idea of a local access road at Lake Washington Boulevard.
  - Participants also provided a variety of suggestions of how to reconfigure the local access road and nearby intersections to make them more useful and convenient for the community. Examples of specific suggestions include:
    - Extend the local access road further down Lake Washington Boulevard
    - Provide a wider buffer of trees along Lake Washington Boulevard
    - Allow a U-turn at 24th Avenue East