

Jan. 11, 2019

Questions and answers regarding the Montlake Market property

Below are questions the SR 520 Program received as part of the Nov. 7, 2018, Montlake properties public meeting. These questions and answers are specific to the Montlake Market property.

BUILDING STRUCTURE and MARKET PROPERTY

- 1. Although the legislative directive does not address preserving parking for the building, is it understood that parking needs to be a part of preserving the market?**

Yes, WSDOT understands that availability of parking likely would be important to successful business operation.

- 2. Have you considered using the market building as a job site area?**

WSDOT has considered that, but we first need to determine if the building can be saved while we construct the Montlake Project's elements.

- 3. Is there also a potential that the gas station could be saved?**

No. The gas station is directly affected by the Montlake Project. When we rebuild the eastbound SR 520 off-ramp to Montlake Boulevard and the boulevard itself, at least three of the four driveways in and out of the property that primarily serve the gas station have to close permanently because the new overpass and adjoining ramps must be built a few feet higher than they are today. In addition, the regional shared-use trail will cross the property where a station gas pump and canopy now exist.

- 4. If WSDOT acquires the property and the market is demolished, what will happen after the completion of SR 520 construction?**

After the property is no longer needed for SR 520 construction purposes, WSDOT will complete a surplus process and sell the remaining portion of property not needed for the permanent improvements.

- 5. Has the state acquired the market and 76 properties yet?**

The courts have ruled that the property is needed for public use, and the Legislature has acknowledged that WSDOT needs to acquire the property to construct the project's improvements. We expect to complete the property acquisition sometime in 2019.

- 6. Have you talked to the owners about taking a 45-degree cut off the building?**

We have not discussed the feasibility of this option with the property owner. We first need to determine if it's possible to save the building, which WSDOT, our contractor and the city of Seattle are discussing during the practical design process. If we determine that taking a corner off the building is potentially a feasible way to save the structure, we will then coordinate with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections on the permitting for such a modification to the building.

PRACTICAL DESIGN WORKSHOP PROCESS

7. Can community members observe the practical design workshop? If not, could you record the meetings?

The practical design process is a series of meetings, spread over several weeks, involving contract negotiations between WSDOT and its Montlake Project contractor. While we are committed to examining all the potential solutions suggested by members of the public – as well as by the property owners, our engineers, city officials and the contractor – these contract discussions cannot be held in a public forum.

WSDOT, however, is engaging the public in the decision-making process regarding the Montlake Market. We provided our contractor and the participating city of Seattle representatives all the public comments made during the Nov. 7 public meeting at St. Demetrios, as well as the questions community members posed that night. The SR 520 community liaison, David Goldberg, is working to represent the community's interests in the practical design meetings. Along the way, we are engaging with your elected representatives in the 43rd District – who authored the market proviso – to share the market building preservation options and their implications, and get public feedback.

On Jan. 30, we will meet once again with the community to discuss the suggestions considered for preserving the building, provide an overview of the proposal from our contractor, Graham Contracting Ltd., and discuss the status of the options still on the table. We also will solicit feedback on the potential scenarios and their tradeoffs. If there still are key, unanswered questions or more analysis is necessary after the Jan. 30 community meeting, we will come back for another round of community feedback.

8. How are you going to weigh the different factors regarding “maximum extent practicable”?

Public feedback will be an important part of weighing the factors. At this time, WSDOT and the contractor are working to evaluate the factors, including corridor safety, traffic congestion, project cost, project duration, environmental implications and impacts to transit and nonmotorized travelers. We will bring information on those factors back to the public for feedback on Jan. 30 in order to weigh the trade-offs associated with several scenarios.

9. In a practical sense, how will WSDOT ensure it complies with "maximum extent practicable" and who will be responsible for determining that it does?

We are following the Legislature's directive, in part, through the practical design process, and in part through our community engagement efforts. During the practical design process, we are discussing all of the community suggestions regarding ways the market could potentially remain.

WSDOT, with feedback from the public and in consultation with elected officials, will make the final decision based on the engineering analysis, cost impacts, and schedule risks.

10. Will you consider both the monetary cost and the cost to the community in your evaluation?

Yes, monetary cost and effect on the community will be factors considered in the decision. Effects on the community that will be considered include safety, health, traffic congestion, project duration, and impact to transit and nonmotorized travelers.

11. Who will be advocating for the community during the practical design process?

The WSDOT team knows the community is concerned about the loss of the market and is doing its best to advocate for the traveling public and the community during the practical design process. The SR 520 Ombudsman, David Goldberg, is participating in all of the practical design meetings. A key aspect of his role is to represent the community in these meetings. SR 520 Program leaders have taken all the feedback and questions we received during the Nov. 7 public meeting at St. Demetrios to the practical design process.

We also will meet again with the community on Jan. 30. We will lay out the market-preservation options we discussed, and how each option would affect both the Montlake Project and the community at large. We are currently evaluating the tradeoffs associated with each option and we anticipate that by the Jan. 30 meeting, there still may be tasks that require more time to complete. We'll bring the expected cost ranges for the feasible options identified. During that follow-up public meeting, we'll give the community an opportunity to weigh in on the information and options that come out of the practical design sessions. In addition, the 43rd District legislators periodically meet with the SR520 Program and David Goldberg, and they also are representatives of the community's interests.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

12. Why did you direct the bidders to assume that the market would be removed? That seems backward.

The request for proposals for the Montlake Project informed all bidding contractors of the legislative proviso to preserve the market building "to the maximum extent practicable." The request for proposals also required the selected contractor to participate in the practical design process – now ongoing – to evaluate options to preserve the building. Even with those efforts, however, the possibility remained that the building might need to be removed. In case that happened, WSDOT wanted to get the most competitive bid possible for that element of work from each contractor.

13. The bidding process did not include preservation of the market as a criterion. By excluding preservation of the market as a constraint in the RFP, the contractor that could have provided the best solution for preservation may not have been selected. Giving all contractors an opportunity to provide views on market preservation would have cost WSDOT nothing. Why wasn't it done?

WSDOT used the bidding approach that we felt provided the public the most effective way to reduce cost impacts and schedule risks – while still allowing us to work with the selected contractor team to determine whether the market building could be preserved.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

14. Why did it take so long for WSDOT to come to the community to ask for feedback?

WSDOT opened bids and announced the selected contractor for the Montlake Project in October 2018, and held a public meeting in early November. This allowed us to share information with the public about the market property, get community feedback, and then discuss it in the practical design workshop meetings with our selected contractor and the city of Seattle. This timing allowed WSDOT to have a shorter interlude between the public meeting, the practical design workshop, and the follow-on public meeting.

15. When community outreach was done on the lid, was the impact on Montlake Market presented to the neighborhood? I don't think we knew the impact of the lid on Montlake Market.

The Montlake lid, whether built or not, has no direct effect on the Montlake Market building. The rebuilt Montlake Boulevard overpass will have to be elevated about 4.5 feet to meet the federally required clearance above the roadway, comply with current structural codes, and accommodate site constraints. As the Montlake Project's design progressed from an early conceptual stage, WSDOT determined that various other factors also would affect the market property. (The factors are discussed below in our answer to question #16.) WSDOT disclosed these impacts in a number of public meetings and other community-outreach activities.

ENGINEERING / CONSTRUCTION / STAGING ISSUES

16. If the lid were removed from the Montlake Project, would that allow you to save the market?

At this stage, after a decade of community engagement and environmental sign-off, legislative direction and funding for the project, and with a contractor prepared to start work, removing the lid is not a viable option. The proposal for the lid and its ultimate configuration emerged from engagement with the neighborhood and broader Seattle community over a decade prior to the start of SR 520 construction. Building the lid is a promise WSDOT cannot break unilaterally.

Speaking hypothetically, whether or not we were to build the lid, the Montlake Boulevard bridge over SR 520 must be reconstructed because the widening and reconstruction of SR 520 will disrupt the supports of the current overpass. The new overpass must be about 4.5 feet higher than it is today to meet federal standards for highway clearance, comply with current structural codes for a reconstructed overpass, and ensure that the freeway safely crosses above a regional sewer line. At the same time, Montlake Boulevard itself must be rebuilt both to meet the new elevation and to improve roadway durability and accommodate increasing bus traffic. To keep Montlake Boulevard operating during this work, existing lanes of traffic and sidewalks would have to be shifted. All of these factors make it likely, knowing what we know today, that use of the market/gas station property still would have been necessary.

We are still working through the practical design process to determine whether the market building itself can be preserved. WSDOT will continue sharing regular updates on that process and seek feedback from community members and elected representatives as we work toward an ultimate determination.

17. Why don't you use the area inside the loop ramp and the vacant land across the street for staging? Could you also use some of the NOAA property north of SR 520 for staging?

WSDOT is making its own right of way along the SR 520 corridor available to the contractor for staging. This includes the area inside the loop ramp and the undeveloped land immediately west of the loop ramp. The land just north of SR 520 and west of Montlake Boulevard is owned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). We're currently working with NOAA to acquire a portion of this federally owned land. The acquired land will be used for bicycle and pedestrian connections.

18. How do you know that the construction access pit for the waterline needs to be the size you show it on your graphics? What if you don't need that much space?

The construction access pit shown in the graphics at the Nov. 7 meeting represented WSDOT's design concept. Graham's proposal includes a pit that is smaller than WSDOT's concept. Graham's design is in the preliminary stage and it is Graham's risk to make the alternative approach work. If there are challenges as the design advances, then Graham may have to use another approach. A smaller pit may allow more space for maintaining Montlake Boulevard traffic during construction.

19. How will you keep traffic flowing during this work?

We expect that the contractor will have to complete a number of traffic shifts in order to keep traffic flowing during Montlake Project construction. Our Montlake Project contract restricts the contractor to closing traffic lanes only during specific times – primarily off-peak hours or weekends. We believe the traffic shifts needed to keep weekday traffic flowing will affect the Montlake property. These shifts are among the reasons why WSDOT is acquiring the property.

20. Can we move the market onto the lid? Can we do the market in a tent structure?

The lid's current design, based on years of interaction with the community, the Seattle Design Commission, the Legislature and other stakeholders, features landscaped open space for public gatherings and recreation, a transit hub, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and an improved Montlake interchange. Placing a commercial business on the lid would not conform to the approved design plan. In addition, the lid would not accommodate customer parking, which might be necessary for business operations. Whether a market could operate in a tent is a question for the business owner.

21. Can we make the lid even higher to reduce risk to the sewer?

Raising the lid higher would cause an even greater impact on Montlake Boulevard and the surrounding properties. We are attempting to limit the project's impacts as much as possible.

22. Why is the sidewalk just south of Montlake Market 14 feet wide? It is more important to preserve the market than provide excessively wide sidewalks.

The planned 14-foot-wide sidewalk along East Roanoke Street connects to local and regional trails. This sidewalk is on city right of way and will not intrude on the market building.

23. I have looked at many iterations of maps of the plans but I still don't have a clear picture of what has finally been settled on. Tonight [Nov. 7] we learned about bike/ped routes alongside the market that will connect up with the Delmar/Roanoke overpass and a route along E. Roanoke on the south side of the market, but aren't these redundant? I can't tell since I don't have the details. I also can't understand how this lid has now been reduced in size/scope from what I first saw and I am still trying to grasp how gradual the 4.5-foot height change will be and if it will feel like a bit of a hill.

The city of Seattle considers the 14-foot-wide sidewalk on East Roanoke Street part of the local shared-use-path network, and Roanoke Street is part of the local greenway connection to the Arboretum. The path to the north of the market property is part of the state's shared-use path network and will be a key connection to the future Portage Bay Bridge extension of the SR 520 Trail.

As for the height of a rebuilt Montlake Boulevard overpass and lid, the grade change will be gradual and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act's requirements for grade change. The Montlake Boulevard overpass will gradually slope down to meet the existing street grade at the NOAA driveway to the north and at East North Street to the south.

24. What if WSDOT purchased that condemned land further down from the market and offered the market that space (condemned house above park)?

WSDOT is not aware of any condemned property in the area.

25. Is it possible to put a liner in the sewer pipe? Wouldn't this procedure lower the risk or eliminate the risk of the sewer pipe breaking or cracking at any point?

To protect in place the two sewer lines in the Montlake-interchange area, WSDOT is requiring the project contractor to install specially reinforced pavement over the existing pipes. Regarding the potential installation of a liner in the sewer pipes, this may be feasible and could potentially lower risk of a future break or crack. However, there are a number of relevant considerations. We anticipate that installation of this type of liner would result in a significant cost and also could reduce capacity of this pipe. Additionally, the pipe is continuously flowing, meaning that significant pumping would be required to potentially enable installation of a liner. While a liner might reduce the risk of damage to the pipes, it would not eliminate the risk.

26. No mention was made of how WSDOT will aesthetically screen these construction areas. What will you do for screening?

Our Montlake Project design-build contractor is required to provide fencing around all staging areas and submit a "Maintenance During Construction Plan" that addresses screening. The plan will outline how the contractor is performing additional site maintenance and taking additional measures to protect the public and contractor personnel. WSDOT will review and comment on the plan before it is finalized, taking into account the community comments we've heard. In addition, the Montlake Project contract has incentives for limiting community and environmental impacts, encouraging the contractor to go above and beyond the requirements.

27. Since you are buying the property at the SE corner of Montlake and Lake Washington Blvd. (2209 E North St.), the issue of temporary lane movements and the 54-inch water line are no longer as much of an issue, are they? Can't you just tear down the garages to install the 54-inch line?

WSDOT's contractor must connect the new, replacement water line to an existing city water line. The existing line is not located where the garages are, so removing the garage structures would have little benefit. WSDOT's purchase of this property, however, improves our contractor's ability to install the replacement water line. The contractor has a plan to reduce the size of the construction access pit, which may provide more space for temporary lane movements.