

Community Stakeholder Workshop #3 – Sept. 12, 2019 Summary of Participant Comments and Discussion

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Background

Throughout the summer and fall of 2019, WSDOT is seeking the perspectives of highway users, corridor residents and stakeholders to help refine certain design features of the SR 520 Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid Project. Participants' feedback will inform and advance the project's conceptual design as we coordinate further with the city of Seattle and the [Seattle Design Commission](#). This outreach kicked off June 20 with an in-person open house and the launch of a summer-long [online open house](#). In July, August, and September, WSDOT hosted three community stakeholder workshops to seek feedback from community members and SR 520 stakeholders on specific conceptual design elements.

This specific outreach effort will conclude in October with a second in-person open house. Input received through the three workshops and the online and in-person open houses will be shared with the Seattle Design Commission and SR 520 design team. A summary of feedback received through the full process will be shared on the SR 520 Project website in early 2020.

The first community stakeholder workshop, held July 11, focused on the Roanoke lid over SR 520 and bike/pedestrian connections between the SR 520 Trail and the city of Seattle's local trail networks. The second workshop, on Aug. 15, focused on the two under-bridge areas on the east and west ends of the Portage Bay Bridge – the Bill Dawson Trail area and the Boyer Avenue East area. The third workshop, on Sept. 12, provided participants with an update on conceptual design refinements based on feedback received from the previous two workshops and via the online open house. Nineteen participants attended the third workshop and were involved in a facilitated discussion regarding the conceptual design updates. This document summarizes the discussion and feedback from the third workshop.

Workshop #3 Overview

WSDOT staff shared a presentation on the summer refinements to the Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid Project conceptual design. The presentation focused on the following project elements:

1. Bridge design
2. Bicycle / pedestrian connections
3. Bill Dawson Trail area (under the east end of the bridge)

4. The Boyer Avenue East area (under the west end of the bridge)
5. Roanoke lid

Workshop attendees, including community members and representatives from stakeholder organizations, were invited to ask questions and discuss the updated design concepts.

The following sections summarize participant comments and questions, and WSDOT responses. Comments and questions have been categorized by topic and summarized for clarity and to remove duplicate responses.

Portage Bay Bridge Design

- **Can the design-build contractor propose cost-savings and disregard the design concept being refined through this process?**
 - The design-build contract, which is a legally binding agreement, will outline which elements are prescriptive and which elements are flexible. For example, if there was a specific type of railing that was desired for the project, the design-build contract could require that the specific railing be used and the contractor would be obligated to adhere to this requirement.
- **If the contractor proposes design changes, how will the decision on whether to accept or reject the change be made and how will the decision be shared with the public?**
 - WSDOT would make the determination whether to accept or reject design changes proposed by the contractor. WSDOT would evaluate the proposed change to ensure it meets the project requirements and to determine what benefit the change provides, such as a reduction in the construction schedule.
 - The purpose of our current outreach process is to get public input on which elements are priorities and should be prescriptive in the contract, and where we can leave flexibility in the design, for example, the one- vs. two-bridge structure. We want to get input now so WSDOT can understand community and stakeholder priorities when changes are proposed by the design-builder.
- **Are maintenance agreements currently in effect for the area leading from Foster Island to the Arboretum? These areas are not currently being maintained and this is raising concern for maintenance of new project elements.**
 - WSDOT and its contractor building the Montlake Project are responsible for maintaining these areas within WSDOT right of way. We have worked with the city of Seattle and the University of Washington on agreements to maintain certain areas once the project is built. For example, through the maintenance agreement with the city of Seattle, the city is taking on certain maintenance responsibilities for the Montlake lid and trail connections. Under a separate agreement, the University of Washington will maintain the under-bridge area on Foster Island.

- The public should let WSDOT know about any current maintenance issues on Foster Island. During Montlake Construction, WSDOT is also working with Graham, the Montlake Project contractor, on certain maintenance elements in this area.
- **There are currently pipes that release stormwater into Portage Bay. Will the new design change that?**
 - Yes. The new bridge will transfer highway runoff to a new stormwater facility near the Montlake loop ramp, where pollutants will naturally filter out of the stormwater.
- **Will the expansion joints create noise as they did on the floating bridge?**
 - The expansion joints on this structure will not be the same type as the floating bridge. The joints on the floating bridge need to accommodate much more movement than is required on a fixed bridge like the Portage Bay Bridge. The expansion joints on the Portage Bay Bridge will be more similar to joints used on the West Approach Bridge. We also have commitments through the Section 106 agreement to encapsulate the joints of the Portage Bay Bridge, which will help further reduce the noise.
- **Are previous agreements for sound walls and quieter pavement still incorporated?**
 - We are incorporating 4-foot-tall barriers and quieter pavement per the Section 106 agreement. There will also be a speed reduction to 45 mph. There are no sound walls included in the design of the Seattle portion of the SR 520 Program.
- **If building a single structure, could you build the new bridge in phases?**
 - Potentially. The key challenge is that a contractor would need to keep SR 520 traffic flowing throughout construction, while staying within WSDOT's limits of construction. This is one of the questions we want to leave open for contractors in the request for proposal (i.e. to not prescribe a two-bridge structure). A single-bridge structure would have to have a significant benefit for us to choose it as a design from the contractor.
- **What is the minimum light standard on the bridge and will it change between a one- vs. two-bridge configuration?**
 - There are tradeoffs between lighting height and lighting frequency. Taller lights will require fewer individual fixtures but may be more visible to the surrounding neighborhood. Shorter lights may be less visible, but would require more light fixtures. The minimum height for highway lighting is between 18 and 20 feet.
 - The placement of the lights may change between the one- vs. two-bridge structure but the lighting requirements are the same.

Participant comments:

- Do not consider the single structure because continuity of traffic flow will be important for nighttime noise.
- Consider the single structure to minimize the width of the structure, providing fewer impacts to homes directly adjacent to the bridge.
- The lights shown in the conceptual rendering keep changing. The lights as currently shown will be much taller than they are today and there is interest for the lights to be minimally visible from the neighborhood.
 - WSDOT is currently studying lighting options for the new bridge. There are maintenance requirements that influence the type of light fixture as well as specific clearance requirements, which influence the minimum height of the lighting fixtures over the roadway.
- Extend the Roanoke lid as far east as possible. This would add to the Bagley viewpoint area and neighbors on both sides would benefit.
- Build higher noise walls to mitigate noise. Specific suggestion to mitigate noise for people experiencing the Bagley viewpoint.

Bicycle / Pedestrian Connections

- **Since the SR 520 Trail is coming from the Eastside and the new HOV connection from SR 520 is connecting to South Lake Union, why not connect the SR 520 Trail to South Lake Union along the highway shoulder?**
 - WSDOT is planning for this bicycle connection, in coordination with the city local network –, just not along the highway.
- **What does a new permit mean for prior commitments included in the earlier permit? We assumed that because this [path] was in the permit that it would be included in the final design. WSDOT did not communicate that the path would be removed. It is very frustrating that the feedback from the earlier process was disregarded.**
 - The 2012 permit was issued before we went through the Seattle Community Design Process and Westside Design Refinements, which changed the design significantly. For example, we didn't have the SR 520 Trail across the Portage Bay Bridge at that time or its connections to the local trail system networks.
 - There is some concern from the Seattle Parks Department that the waterfront path along Portage Bay would entail significant wetland impacts to construct.
 - We are coordinating with the city to understand the permitting process and establishment of permit conditions.

Participant comments:

- Reiterated the importance of separating pedestrians and bicyclists. This separation is more important than separating fast and slow cyclists.
- The shoreline trail along Portage Bay, which was part of the permit issued in 2012 and the recreational and environmental improvement plan that was part of that permit, is not shown in the current concept. It is a huge deficit that the trail is not included in this discussion.
 - The shoreline trail was included as a condition of the issuance of the Master Use Permit for Portage Bay Bridge that was covered under the Shoreline permit issued in 2012. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) is requiring WSDOT to apply for a new permit because Shoreline codes and the project design have changed since the permit was issued. WSDOT is coordinating with the city to determine timing and process for this permit, including the process to establish permit conditions.
- WSDOT should not consider the SR 520 Trail and the Portage Bay shoreline path as an either/or option since they do not serve the same purpose.
- Reiterated interest in a walking path connection between Montlake playfield and West Montlake Park. It existed for decades until the fence around the NOAA property closed it off. There is a desire to open the fence or create a walking path along the shoreline.
 - In negotiations with NOAA, WSDOT worked very hard to reach to an agreement for right of way needs for the trail connection between Montlake and the Bill Dawson Trail and it was a requirement of NOAA's to maintain the fence as its facility is required to be secure.
- Suggestion to look at the connections being made from the regional trail to the local neighborhoods and to gather data on who is walking/biking at pinch points and who is using connections.
- Connections across I-5 should include connections to the neighborhoods. Having the SR 520 Trail along the highway where there are fewer neighborhood connections is different than when you get to the neighborhoods.

Under-bridge areas (Bill Dawson Trail and Boyer Avenue areas)

- **Is activating the space at the Boyer area off the table? Could this area accommodate active uses such as ball courts?**
 - There are serious geotechnical challenges that prohibit a design that provides for active uses of the space.
- **The conceptual design for the Bill Dawson trail area looks like it will create a much better user experience than what is there today. However, if I don't want**

to use the connection at night, will there be a surface-level connection that I can take to get from the University of Washington back to the neighborhood?

- The surface-level connection will be to cross SR 520 along Montlake Boulevard at the Montlake lid.

Participant comments:

- Reiterated safety concerns for pedestrian users of both the Boyer / Delmar connection and the Bill Dawson Trail. Emphasized that long sight lines for pedestrians are important. Design so that pedestrians can confirm that these areas are safe before they enter them.
 - WSDOT is committed to integrating the principles of the Crime Prevention Through Community Design report where possible.
 - Given the feedback received at CSW #2, the conceptual design now includes improved sightlines on the Bill Dawson Trail.
- Reiterated the importance of safety and having a way out from the under-bridge area.
 - WSDOT is working through ADA conversations; we hear you about the safety requests; we're continuing to work through that.
- Redmond and Kirkland do a good job of integrating art in the under-bridge areas. Blank canvases generally don't feel inviting. There should be some place-making elements.
 - WSDOT received feedback from the Seattle Design Commission on treatments for this area and is working to update the conceptual design to incorporate those ideas.
- Reiterated desire to consider the mitigation measures outlined in the original shoreline permit. Specifically, the measures to finish the street end and include the shoreline trail that would go to Montlake and the Bill Dawson Trail. Emphasized that this would be really nice for the neighborhood.
 - We heard tonight how important it is to the community. WSDOT will continue to coordinate with the city of Seattle on next steps for defining the conditions of the permit.
- Reiterated that there is a desire from neighbors to provide this connection from the Portage Bay neighborhood to Montlake Playfield and to provide shoreline access.

Roanoke Lid

WSDOT noted that the conceptual design did not advance restrooms or a dog park because of feedback from the city of Seattle that the associated maintenance requirements make those amenities infeasible.

- **Lid renderings look really nice, however, why is there the “L” shaped piece near the Bagley viewpoint and could it be expanded? Expanding it would provide some noise mitigation for neighboring houses.**
 - The shape and size of the lid at this area is driven by constructability factors.
- **What is the current maintenance agreement?**
 - WSDOT, SDOT and Seattle Parks Department would divide maintenance responsibilities for the lid and surrounding connections. WSDOT and the city are currently negotiating a detailed agreement.
- **Did you extend the stair from Bagley down to Boyer?**
 - WSDOT is working with the city to determine how to replace the stairs while meeting ADA requirements.

Participant comments:

- Include a middle bar in any benches you put in to prevent people from sleeping overnight.
- Consider how noise will reverberate to other areas.
- Bike commuters may want to cut through the lid rather than take the SR 520 Trail as it loops around the lid. Suggestion to either anticipate this and allow it, or prevent it from occurring. Bikes continuing west will likely want to take a more direct route.