

Temporary relocation of Crown Castle's wireless communications facility Questions and answers

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Background:

In June 2019, WSDOT acquired the property at 2605 22nd Ave. E. where the Montlake Market and a 76 gas station were previously located. WSDOT needs the property to complete various project improvements for the reconstruction of SR 520.

A company named Crown Castle operated a wireless-communications structure – called a “monopole” – on the Montlake Market and gas station property. The pole served two wireless carriers, and two other wireless carriers had facilities on the roof of the market building. These wireless communications facilities needed to be removed from the property for SR 520 construction purposes.

Crown Castle worked with WSDOT to temporarily site a new, wireless structure at the nearby WSDOT Peninsula construction staging area. The move allows for continued emergency 911 service and wireless phone and data service for the Montlake neighborhood and the southern portion of the University of Washington campus. The new, temporary structure accommodates all four wireless service providers (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon) that used the Montlake Market property.

Below are frequently asked questions and answers regarding Crown Castle's new, temporary cellular facility.

1. Question: What is the new facility at the WSDOT Peninsula?

Answer: The new facility is a 125-foot-tall cellular communications structure. The new, temporary structure's design is a “monofir,” which resembles a fir tree. Crown Castle received a conditional-use permit from the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) for placing the structure on the WSDOT Peninsula, and the conditional-use permit specified the monofir design as the least intrusive design.

2. Question: Where is the facility located?

Answer: The facility is located near the driveway to the WSDOT Peninsula staging area, south of SR 520, near the intersection of East Miller Street and Lake Washington Boulevard East.

3. Question: How long will the communications structure be on the WSDOT Peninsula?

Answer: The new “monofir” is expected to be temporarily located in the southwest corner of the WSDOT Peninsula property until SR 520 Program construction is complete, in approximately 2029. At least 18 months before that time, WSDOT will work with Crown Castle to identify a new, permanent location for the facility off the WSDOT Peninsula. WSDOT may work with Crown Castle to explore opportunities to move the cellular facility earlier than 2029 if feasible. Upon completion of SR 520 Program

construction, WSDOT intends to transfer the peninsula property to the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department for expansion of the Washington Park Arboretum.

4. Question: Why was the WSDOT Peninsula chosen as the temporary relocation site?

Answer: To find a site that met the needs of all parties, Crown Castle conducted a site-alternatives analysis to identify the least intrusive option for this temporary facility. When identifying potential replacement sites, important factors included:

- Ensuring adequate coverage for emergency services.
- Ensuring adequate coverage for the wireless carriers' networks and avoiding coverage gaps.
- Constructing the new facility outside of most environmentally critical areas.
- Constructing the new facility in an area that would not interfere with SR 520 Program construction activities.
- Ensuring accessibility to existing fiber-optic cable needed to operate the facility.
- Minimizing and avoiding impacts to historic resources.

5. Question: Did Crown Castle look at other relocation sites besides the WSDOT Peninsula?

Answer: Yes. Crown Castle analyzed a number of private and commercial sites in the Montlake area. The residential nature of the Montlake neighborhood and the lack of available commercial properties that could provide adequate service coverage in the area made finding a new site challenging. Despite exhaustive efforts, a replacement location on private property could not be secured.

WSDOT worked with Crown Castle to evaluate potential relocation options within WSDOT right of way. Viable options within state right of way were limited, as many potential sites were located in an environmentally critical area, would not provide adequate service coverage, or were needed for SR 520 Program construction. Installing the temporary facility next to the existing staging area at the WSDOT Peninsula was the only available option.

6. Question: Why is this a temporary relocation?

Answer: As noted above, Crown Castle hadn't been able to secure a permanent relocation site, and WSDOT could not offer a permanent site on its right of way due to the needs and commitments of the SR 520 Program. Consequently, WSDOT and Crown Castle have entered into a lease for the wireless-communications facility to remain at the WSDOT Peninsula property through completion of SR 520 Program construction activities – currently anticipated for 2029. Prior to termination of the lease, WSDOT will work with Crown Castle to identify a different location for the wireless-communications facility. We anticipate that a suitable location for a permanent facility may be found within WSDOT property once SR 520 Program improvements are completed.

7. Question: Is WSDOT planning to transfer the WSDOT Peninsula to Seattle Parks and Recreation for integration into the Arboretum? Can that still happen with a temporary wireless facility located on the site?

Answer: WSDOT intends to enter into a property transfer agreement with Seattle Parks and Recreation upon completion of SR 520 Program construction, allowing the city to enhance and integrate the area as part of a future Arboretum North Entry project. WSDOT also has an agreement with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee regarding park improvements for the WSDOT Peninsula. This agreement will require removal of the wireless-communications facility from its temporary location. As such, WSDOT and Crown Castle have a lease agreement that includes moving the temporary facility off the WSDOT Peninsula upon completion of the SR 520 project, before the planned property transfer to Seattle Parks and Recreation.

8. Question: What does the temporary wireless facility look like?

Answer: The new, temporary structure's design resembles a tree. The rendering below shows a conceptual rendering of this 125-foot-tall "monofir." A monofir is consistent with city of Seattle requirements for reducing visual impacts. Specifically, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections determined that the monofir design was the least intrusive option available.



Photo rendering of the new "monofir" cellular communications facility, looking north.

9. Question: What are the construction effects of the temporary facility?

Answer: Construction of the new facility required the removal of one dead tree, located within WSDOT's construction staging area.

Crews will work throughout the spring of 2020 to complete final steps of construction, including landscaping around the exterior of the new facility.

10. Question: What are the operational effects of the facility after construction is completed? Will there be any noise or visual effects?

Answer: After construction of the facility is complete, the only operational noise from the facility will come from cooling fans. In accordance with city of Seattle requirements, Crown Castle has installed a 10-foot-tall concrete wall around the wireless facility to secure the facility and keep operational noise levels within the allowable limits of Seattle's noise code.

To address visual effects, Crown Castle's plan includes painting the concrete wall hunter green, and planting vegetative screening around the wall. The vegetative screening will contain a variety of plant species varying in height and foliage type. A landscape architect selected the vegetation in consultation with the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee to match the surrounding Arboretum ecosystem. The selected trees and bushes will visually cover most of the wall, although portions of the wall may still be visible, especially when the vegetation is first planted.

11. Question: What permits and environmental review were completed for this wireless communications facility?

Answer: Crown Castle applied for and received a conditional-use permit (Record #3032615-LU) and a building permit (Record #6691118-CN) from the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections in 2019. The corresponding applications, public comments, and permits can be viewed on the [Seattle Services Portal](#). Also, WSDOT completed a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reevaluation that includes a Section 106 cultural and historic resources process with the concurring parties. In accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, WSDOT consulted with the state historic preservation officer and other concurring parties regarding potential effects on historic properties. The Federal Highway Administration signed and approved WSDOT's NEPA reevaluation on Sept. 4, 2018.