



Seattle Community Design Process May 19, 2012 Public Session Public Comment Summary

Overview:

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted the fifth public session of the Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP) on May 19, 2012 at Seattle Preparatory School. Approximately 140 people attended the event, and approximately 265 individual written comments were received. There were also many interactive conversations between members of the public and SR 520 project staff, as well as many conversations among neighbors.

At the event, people were able to view a series of information boards with overviews and updates on the following topics:

- SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program
- SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project
- Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP), including a summary of public feedback received at the April 12, 2012 SCDP public session

Workshop focus

The public session was a continuation of the work conducted from August 2011 to April 2012 during the SCDP. The focus was specific to design refinement opportunities for the Portage Bay Bridge, West Approach Bridge, and local and regional connections in and around the SR 520 corridor.

The event featured conceptual design drawings of the baseline design approved by the Federal Highway Administration in the I-5 to Medina Project Record of Decision, and potential design opportunities for the Portage Bay Bridge. There was also a physical model of the Portage Bay Bridge type options that are currently being explored. In addition, there was information on the function, design goals, benefits, and considerations for the Portage Bay and West Approach Bridges.

Members of the public were able to view design materials and the model, and share their feedback by having conversations with project staff and providing written comments.

Workshop accomplishments

The workshop included a short presentation from bridge architecture consultant, Donald MacDonald. Donald briefly spoke to the considerations and inspirations he uses when designing bridges. Donald explained that the conceptual designs he developed for the Portage Bay Bridge were inspired by the local context, including the geographically unique landscape, and surrounding nautical basin and historical neighborhoods.

Members of the public indicated that they greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak directly with the bridge architecture consultant, and the perspective he shared regarding his considerations for the Portage Bay Bridge design. People also appreciate of the model, which helped them better understand how the bridge would fit into the larger context of Portage Bay.

Overall, the public is interested in and excited about additional design opportunities for the Portage Bay Bridge beyond what is included in the baseline design. There were requests for more information about the design opportunities including the height, width, and cost of each of the proposed options. People are also interested in what other opportunities may exist, including potential variations of the proposed options. There were requests to continue the public conversation regarding potential opportunities and variations as the design of the Portage Bay Bridge evolves.

People also recognize the multi-jurisdictional complexity of the project area, and ask for continued and increased presence of representatives from the City of Seattle, Sound Transit, and King County Metro at SCDP public sessions. People appreciate and request the presence of these representatives to help answer questions and take public comments.

General themes of public comments

Similar to previous public sessions, public comments are very diverse. Feedback is split on some topics, while clearer themes emerged on other topics. Overall, comments are constructive and will help inform designs for the areas.

Below is a summary of the general themes of public feedback organized by key topics and geographic area. This summary is meant to capture the larger themes of the public's written comments and conversations with project staff, and is *not inclusive of all the individual comments received*. All verbatim comments have been recorded separately and are being used by WSDOT and the SR 520 design team to help inform design decisions as WSDOT continues to explore design refinements through the Seattle Community Design Process.

Local and regional non-motorized connections:

Areas of opportunity include:

1. Partnering with other agencies, stakeholders, and projects to connect existing gaps between Seattle's neighborhoods, parks, and activity centers.
2. Possible treatments and/or uses of the underbridge area from west Montlake to the shoreline, including options for pedestrian connections between Montlake Boulevard and the Bill Dawson Trail to the Montlake Playfield.
3. Possible treatments and/or uses of the underbridge area on the west side of the bridge, including options for making safe, comfortable pedestrian connections from Delmar Drive East to areas along Boyer Avenue East and the west shoreline of Portage Bay.

Main topics discussed:

- **General**

- Bicycle and pedestrian safety is a key topic of concern. People provided suggestions for improving safety on the path surface, including rougher pavement to slow down bicyclists and ice-proof pavement.
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility on Montlake Boulevard continue to be a primary concern.
 - To the north of SR 520, people believe the area could be improved with a separate bicycle path and/or widened shared use sidewalks.
 - To the south of SR 520, people see a need for crosswalks and the Montlake lid to be configured in a way that will improve safety and access to 22nd Avenue East.

- **Portage Bay Bridge**

- There is significant support to continue the SR 520 shared use path across Portage Bay Bridge as a direct and safe connection from Montlake to downtown, and as part of an overall network.
 - People would like to include a bicycle/pedestrian path now in order to avoid additional costs to retrofit the structure in the future.
- People believe that in order for the structure to be lasting, it needs to be multi-modal.
- There is an interest in the non-motorized connections from Portage Bay Bridge to and from the 10th and Delmar lid and Montlake lid.

- **Underbridge areas**

- Safety is a key concern for the underbridge areas.
- The underbridge area should be programmed to be an active place, which can help improve perceptions of safety. People suggested including bicycle and pedestrian paths under the bridge to help activate the area.

- **Desired connections**

- People are supportive of concepts that use Seattle Preparatory School property to maintain and enhance pedestrian connections from Delmar Drive to Boyer Avenue.
 - People would like the existing stairs to be maintained or enhanced, along with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible option.
- Federal Avenue East is perceived as an important greenway connection.
- There is a desire for bicycle and pedestrian connections from the West Approach Bridge that connect to Foster Island.
- People are in support of pedestrian connections from Everett Avenue East to the Montlake Playfield, including the boardwalk and trail identified in the Montlake Community Park Waterfront Master Plan Report.

- **Transit**

- People indicated a need for good transit connections from SR 520 to the new University of Washington Link light rail station.
- There is a concern regarding the potential loss of a good transit connection to the Eastside currently provided by Sound Transit bus route 545.

Portage Bay Bridge:

The [baseline design](#) and the following design opportunities are being explored:

1. Box girder bridge type
2. Extradosed bridge type
3. Cable stay bridge type
4. Slight north alignment shift (west end only). This opportunity can occur with each of the other bridge type design opportunities currently being explored.

Main topics discussed:

- **General**

- There is desire to minimize the effects of the bridge in terms of the elements above and below the bridge deck.
- There is still concern about the width of the bridge, and potential visual, noise, and pollution impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods.
 - The nearby community also expressed a desire for a four lane bridge, quieter pavement, noise walls, and a bicycle/pedestrian path.
- People are concerned about the obstruction of views while on the bridge.
- People want to improve navigation under the bridge and views across Portage Bay from under the bridge.
- There is general support for the following:
 - Removal of the planted median.
 - Reduced construction duration.
 - Fulfillment of the commitments included in the City of Seattle shoreline permit conditions.

- **Bridge type**

- There is not a consensus regarding a preferred bridge type.
- There is mixed feedback among the different bridge types.
- In general, people indicated they want the bridge to have specific traits, including:
 - Minimal concrete.
 - Minimal in-water structures.
 - Minimal visual impact.
 - Visually attractive, distinctive, and reflective of the surrounding area.

- Long-lasting and easy to maintain.
 - Appropriately scaled to the surrounding environment and historic neighborhood.
- **Bridge location**
 - There is support for a possible alignment shift north on the west end of the bridge that could reduce the construction duration from six years.
- **Box girder concept**
 - There was support for a box girder bridge. People believe this option is desirable for various reasons, including:
 - It places most of the structure below the bridge deck, allowing for better views above the deck.
 - The design seems “clean”, “simple”, and “cost-saving”.
 - Reasons that people do not prefer the box girder option include:
 - It appears “massive, “boring”, and “cheap”.
- **Extradosed concept**
 - Overall, project staff heard the least amount of feedback regarding the extradosed option. In general, peoples’ opinions and preferences were mostly directed towards the box girder and cable stay options.
 - People believe this option is desirable because:
 - It represents a compromise between options that provide an iconic structure without as much visual impact as the cable stay concept.
 - Reasons that people do not prefer the extradosed concept include:
 - The towers would obstruct views from the nearby neighborhoods.
 - People did perceive the gap between the eastbound and westbound lanes included in the extradosed option as a benefit because it allows more light and air to reach the water and fish habitats beneath the bridge structure.
- **Cable stay concept**
 - People are interested in the cable stay bridge concept, and want to explore more potential variations of the concept including the number of towers, and width and location of cable towers.
 - There was the most positive feedback for the cable stay option. People believe this option is desirable for various reasons, including:
 - It has a lighter structure with fewer in-water columns.
 - It is distinctive, yet fits into the context of the surrounding landscape.
 - It seems to have a smaller carbon footprint and requires less concrete.
 - Reasons that people do not prefer the cable stay option include:
 - The towers would obstruct views from the nearby neighborhoods.
 - It creates “too much bridge” for the size and context of Portage Bay.

- Similar to the extradosed option, people like the gap between the eastbound and westbound lanes included in the cable stay design as a benefit for bringing more air and light to the water and fish habitats below the bridge structure.

West Approach Bridge:

Information on the structural components for the West Approach Bridge was shared, along with areas of opportunity for architectural refinements of specific bridge components and the possibility for belvederes on the bicycle/pedestrian path.

There was also information to describe how the West Approach Bridge has been identified as an element of continuity on the larger SR 520 corridor.

Main topics discussed:

- **General**
 - There is concern regarding the height of the structure and the obstruction of views of the surrounding natural environment.
 - Noise and traffic are topics of concern for this area.
 - People want safe and easy bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular connections from the West Approach Bridge to the Montlake lid.
- **Architectural elements**
 - People do not want architectural elements similar to the sentinels to exist on the West Approach Bridge structure.
 - There is a desire for a simple, clean design with a minimized amount of concrete structure that allows for preserved views of the surrounding natural environment.