



SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Executive Committee Meeting Summary

June 20, 2006

1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Introduction

Aubrey Davis, SR 520 Executive Committee Chair, welcomed the committee and gave a special thanks to new members, including, King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, Rob Fellows from King County, Mayor David Cooper from the Town of Yarrow Point, Mayor Miles Adam from the City of Medina, Kimberly Allen from the City of Redmond, and Councilmember Jan Drago from the City of Seattle. Aubrey went on to explain the objectives for today's meeting. He stated that the first goal is to update the committee on 2006 legislation and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The second goal is to discuss the decision-making process for identifying a preferred alternative. Aubrey noted that if the committee chose to, they could meet again the following week.

Project Update

David Dye, Urban Corridors Office Administrator, WSDOT, provided an update on project activities since the committee last met in May 2005. Dave began the discussion by referencing Secretary MacDonald's legislative timeline handout, which describes recent legislation affecting the SR 520 project and the region. This timeline displays the key elements and how they relate. The Expert Review Panel arrived in Seattle the day before the Executive Committee meeting to begin their work to review the implementation and finance plans for the SR 520 and the Alaskan Way Viaduct projects. The Panel will report to the Governor and the Washington State Legislature on September 1, 2006.

Dave went on to explain that concurrently, the region is preparing for the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) ballot in 2007, and reminded the group that both the transit and roads packages must be approved in 2007 for either package to move forward. He noted that RTID has previously earmarked approximately \$800 million for SR 520, but in order to be ready for the RTID package, the SR 520 project needs to be defined by this fall. He mentioned that as we develop the RTID package, WSDOT would also be looking at the market conditions related to rising construction costs and the global outlook in the construction trades. Some of the increases in construction materials are related to gas, asphalt, diesel, petroleum, cement and steel. As a footnote, the cost estimates that the Expert Review Panel will review were done in 2005. As WSDOT finds out more on current constructions costs to share with the Panel, the team will also share these updates with the Executive Committee. WSDOT is hoping to have this information sometime in July.

John Milton, SR 520 Project Director, WSDOT, provided the committee with an update on the project schedule. He noted that the team is working very hard toward completing and releasing the Draft EIS, and is excited about beginning discussions with the Expert Review Panel because WSDOT sees that as an opportunity to continue moving forward. John commented that he and

Julie Meredith, SR 520 Deputy Project Director, have been meeting with the jurisdictions along the corridor to understand any remaining concerns and ensure SR 520 is planned to best meet the needs of the communities and citizens. Ongoing discussions are part of the effort to identify a preferred alternative by this fall for inclusion in the RTID package. John referenced the timeline and stated that the team plans to publish the Final EIS in 2007, reach the Record of Decision, go to bid in 2008, and start construction in 2009.

Design Activities

John began this discussion by describing the existing footprint and condition of the current bridge. He noted that SR 520 is approximately 60 feet wide with no shoulders and relatively narrow lanes. Overall this bridge is unreliable and the bottom line is that it must be replaced. The lack of shoulders means that disabled vehicles cannot move out of the way of traffic, which blocks traffic flow and poses definite safety concerns.

The SR 520 Bridge is also vulnerable to earthquakes and wind and wave action. The closures that occurred this winter were due to windstorms that ultimately caused damage to a number of the draw span components. WSDOT inspected those beams this past weekend. The findings will be released later this week.

There are two alternatives currently being evaluated – the 4-Lane Alternative and 6-Lane Alternative. Both alternatives include:

- Sizing pontoons to accommodate future HCT
- Rebuilding Portage Bay and Evergreen Point bridges, reducing seismic and storm damage risks
- Improving safety and reliability with full shoulders between I-5 and Bellevue Way N.E.
- Creating a new bicycle/pedestrian path across Lake Washington
- Removing “ramps to nowhere” near Arboretum
- Treating stormwater throughout the corridor
- Adding sound walls, reducing noise in communities throughout the corridor

Julie Meredith commented that the team also developed and analyzed six design options associated with the 6-Lane Alternative. She noted that WSDOT worked with a multi-agency strategy team to come up with the options, which are all designed to minimize the footprint through corridor neighborhoods and improve transit mobility. There are three main options on the Seattle side, which include building a new Pacific Street Interchange, removing the Montlake freeway transit stop, and adding a second Montlake Bridge. On the Eastside, there are also three options, which include placing the bicycle/pedestrian path to the north, removing the Evergreen Point Road freeway transit stop, improving the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride Transit Access (at Bellevue Way or 108th Ave NE).

Question / Comments:

Dave Dye, asked Julie Meredith to explain what exactly will be published in the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS analyzes both the 4-Lane and 6-Lane alternatives, plus fully evaluates all of the 6-Lane design options.

Grace Crunican, SDOT, asked whether or not comments received after the release of the Draft EIS would be included in the Final EIS and when the team expects to publish the Draft EIS.

Comments received during the 45-day comment period following the release of the DEIS will be responded to individually and documented in the FEIS. The team expects to publish the DEIS in mid-August.

Grace Crunican asked whether or not this [4-Lane Alternative] is the smallest the footprint can get, while still meeting the current standards.

Yes, the team is working closely with federal agencies to make the new bridge meet current standards.

Julie concluded the discussion on project updates by explaining that WSDOT recently launched a community design process this winter, which included representatives from 13 stakeholder groups. Their task was to develop broad guidelines for aesthetic treatments along the corridor. The final meeting will be held on June 22, 2006. The resulting product is the Corridor Aesthetic Handbook that captures their work and will help guide future design efforts.

Draft EIS Overview

Transportation

Julie Meredith listed the 17 discipline reports included in the Draft EIS. She mentioned that last year the team provided the Executive Committee with extensive information on the analysis of the 4-Lane and 6-Lane alternatives in the Draft EIS. Since that time, the team also conducted quantitative analysis of the 6-Lane design options. Julie noted that today, Michael Horntvedt, Traffic Engineer, and Jenifer Young, Environmental Lead, are going to review a few sections where the analysis for the 6-Lane options is different from the Base 6-Lane Alternative.

Michael Horntvedt reviewed a series of traffic slides, explaining that the 4-Lane Alternative has fewer vehicles crossing the bridge than the No-Build. This is largely due to the toll on the corridor. People tend to make different choices when there is a toll in place by choosing to use the bus or HOV lane. The 6-Lane Alternative also has fewer vehicle trips than the No-Build, and it serves 30,000 more person trips than the 4-Lane and No-Build. Because the HOV system would be complete, people have that reliable system. In 2030, estimates show that with a 4-Lane Alternative, the system could move 1% fewer people in 18% fewer vehicles. With the 6-Lane Alternative, the system could move 14% more people in 6% fewer vehicles.

Michael went on to explain how the options associated with the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride could produce a 10-minute travel time savings. He noted that regardless of the alternative chosen, Lake Washington Blvd. would be very congested by 2030. Both the 108th Ave. direct access and the Bellevue Way transit lane bypass this congestion.

Key travel time benefits associated with the Pacific Interchange:

- Eliminates queue at eastbound on-ramp but not Montlake Blvd. southbound queue
- Eliminates Montlake Blvd. and eastbound on-ramp queues
- Separates freeway and local traffic – good for local transit
- Benefits off-peak travel because Montlake Bridge openings do not affect freeway trips

Michael concluded his discussion on traffic and transit operations by explaining that there are currently two options being studied for transit operation, which include:

- Enhancing the existing service by increasing the fleet by up to 50% and providing new routes for local service, and

- Switching to a trunk and feeder concept. This would be a BRT-like service that would require modes fleet expansion and HOV lanes on SR 520.

Parks and Recreation

Jenifer Young provided the group with a list of affected parks, which include: Bagley Viewpoint, East Montlake Park, McCurdy Park, Washington Park Arboretum, and Wetherill Nature Preserve. Jenifer reviewed with the group the table below, which summarizes the parks and recreation area acquired in acres.

Alternative/Option	Seattle	Eastside
4-Lane Alternative	1.96	0
6-Lane Alternative with Montlake Interchange	3.67	0
6-Lane with Pacific Interchange	3.86	0
6-Lane with Second Montlake Bridge	2.74	0

Ecosystems

Jenifer went on to explain that the Ecosystems chapter in the Draft EIS focuses on wetlands, fish, wildlife and habitat, and water resources. She stated that all alternatives avoid wetlands and buffers to the greatest extent possible, and all effects will be mitigated through creation, restoration and/or enhancement of wetlands. Jenifer explained the following findings for the group.

Alternative/Option	Fill (in acres)	Shading (in acres)
Eastside Project Area		
4-Lane Alternative	3.2	-
6-Lane Alternative	6.4	-
S. Kirkland P&R Transit Access – 108 th Ave NE	7.8	-
S. Kirkland P&R Transit Access	4.9	-
Seattle Project Area		
4-Lane Alternative	0.2	4.5
6-Lane Alternative	0.2	6.7
6-Lane Alternative with Pacific Street Interchange	0.2	7.8

Jenifer continued the discussion on ecosystems by explaining the implications of the various options on fish. She stated that fish are very sensitive to shade over water because it disorients them. With the new structure, there would be fewer columns, and thus fewer passage barriers for fish. Ramps would be consolidated over the WSDOT peninsula, so there would be less shading. The Pacific Street Interchange option would add four large columns that could provide habitat for salmon predators. On the Eastside a number of culverts would be replaced, which would allow fish passage to habitat fish cannot currently reach.

In terms of water resources there is currently no stormwater treatment system in the corridor. As John mentioned, there would be high efficiency sweeping. On the new bridge, any runoff would be treated in catch basins, and lagoons will catch remaining runoff. One of the innovative things this project is looking at is how to treat stormwater on the actual bridge piers with pier treatment wetlands. This is above and beyond what is required by the Clean Water Act.

Land Use

Jenifer concluded her presentation on ecosystems by summarizing the land use findings in the Draft EIS.

Alternative/Option	Residential Structures Displaced	Non-residential Structures Displaced
Displacements in Eastside Project Area		
4-Lane Alternative	2	3
6-Lane Alternative and Options	1	3
Displacements in Seattle Project Area		
4-Lane Alternative	1	12
6-Lane Alternative	1	13
Pacific Street Interchange Option	1	10
Second Montlake Bridge Option	3	12

On the Seattle side, all alternatives and options would displace the south dock at Queen City Yacht Club. MOHAI would be replaced for both the 4-Lane and 6-Lane alternatives. The Pacific Interchange would require fewer buildings to be taken because of the smaller footprint through Montlake, however property acquisition from the University of Washington would be necessary. The second Montlake Bridge would require two homes on the southeast side of the bridge.

Draft EIS Release

Julie Meredith updated the Committee on the details of the Draft EIS release in mid August. She stated that the project has developed an extensive distribution list to ensure that the document is widely available to the public. The Draft EIS Executive Summary and a CD of the entire document and the discipline reports will be available for free, and will also be available on the project website. The team will distribute copies to libraries and many community centers within the project boundary. A 45-day comment period will follow the release of the Draft EIS with open houses and public hearings being planned for late September.

Question / Comments:

David Asher, City of Kirkland, asked if any of the profiles for the alternatives have the highway appropriately sized to accommodate HCT over land.

The team looked at a number of configurations going into the U-District and into Medina, and do not believe any of the alternatives or options will preclude HCT. The area east of Medina could be a likely choice. The project team also looked at each of the overcrossings. There are a number of different ways to get over, under, or through these crossings.

David Asher followed by asking if this analysis would be in the Draft EIS.
No, but we would be happy to provide additional information to you later.

Decision-Making Process

Dave Dye began the discussion by stating that the Executive Committee, along with many other stakeholders, has been hard at work on the SR 520 Project for years. The project is now reaching a critical milestone when it is time for us to collectively determine what is the right alternative to carry forward for funding and design. The Draft EIS will come out in August, and WSDOT will be able to receive public and agency comments on all the analysis conducted. WSDOT needs this Committee to provide a recommendation by this fall. The Secretary of Transportation and the Governor will look to this group for a recommendation. The Committee and WSDOT will not be voting, rather, together would provide a recommendation. The Governor and the Secretary will identify a preferred alternative this year in order to put a package together for the RTID ballot.

On the Seattle side there is a process in place to get to a recommendation on the preferred alternative by alternated meetings the Seattle Stakeholder Advisory Council (SAC). Dave noted that Grace Crunican, SDOT, could provide more information on this group.

Question / Comments:

Aubrey Davis stated that the project must meet this timeline of making a recommendation before the end of the year in order to meet RTID requirements. This is not a lot of time to get actions from all city councils and county and transit agencies.

David Asher asked when the 45-day comment period is expected to commence.

The comment period will begin directly after the Draft EIS is released, which will be August 18th, and will end October 2nd.

Dave Dye commented that both the Expert Review Panel Report and the comments from the public would be available to the Executive Committee at the end of the comment period.

David Asher asked what kind of assurance could be provided to ensure the pontoons will be built to accommodate HCT or rail without having to be completely redone.

Patrick Clarke, WSDOT, noted that the bridge office has been working closely with Sound Transit on I-90 about getting light rail through the existing corridor. The advantage with the SR 520 Project is that it will be designed to accommodate future HCT. Future transit modes are not known so the team is studying light rail since it is currently the governing mode, and using this as part of the design criteria for the pontoons. There is still the issue of how to bring tracks from the floating structure to and from land.

Aubrey Davis stated that the pontoons would be two feet deeper to accommodate future HCT. That depth is important in terms of locating a place to build the pontoons.

David Asher asked if the new bridge would be able to sustain a 100-year storm.

In the last few years the region only experienced 20-year storms, but WSDOT will be designing for a 100-year storm. Climatologists will be updating the data to help the team with the plans.

Phil Noble, City of Bellevue, asked Grace Crunican, SDOT, to tell the committee about the SAC.

Grace Crunican commented that the SAC has been meeting every other week. It is made up of representatives from local neighborhoods, WSDOT, the UW, and the Arboretum. The goal is to

reduce the footprint through the neighborhoods. WSDOT provided information when the group has asked questions about smaller shoulders, the location of noise walls, pavement materials, and how to quiet down the roadway. The City of Seattle has not moved away from the 4-Lane Alternative, but is mindful of the request for eight lanes on the Eastside. There are a lot of tradeoffs with the 6-Lane Alternative and the options. The SAC presents an interesting opportunity to have Seattle Stakeholders look at the alternatives and options to come up with a Seattle position.

Jan Drago, Seattle City Council, commented that the SAC was originally a six-week process but their timeframe was extended. The Council is happy to get a little more time. At the last meeting I felt optimistic we are making progress.

Bryan Cairns, City of Mercer Island, asked if WSDOT had factored in tolling and if this was a very sensitive issue.

WSDOT assumed a toll rate for each of the project Alternatives based on a similar methodology that would generate about 80% of the maximum revenue for the given alternative.

Aubrey Davis stated that incidentally, there is a public meeting for the statewide tolling study tomorrow on Mercer Island.

Bob Edwards, Puget Sound Regional Council, asked for clarification that each of the jurisdictions will be asked to declare their choice for a preferred alternative and that each city council will adopt and make a formal action.

That is correct.

Aubrey Davis posed the question to the committee of whether or not the group wanted to hold an additional meeting next week to continue discussions.

Connie Marshall, Sound Transit, stated she would rather not hold a meeting next week, but suggested that the committee set a due date now for each jurisdiction selecting a preferred alternative.

Aubrey Davis suggested the due date of October 20, 2006.

With no objections, the committee agreed to that date.

Claudia Balducci, City of Bellevue, asked how far in advance the committee would realistically get information from the Expert Review Panel's Report and a summary of the public comments. The Panel's deadline to provide a recommendation to the Governor is September 1, 2006. The project team will summarize comments as they are received and will produce a final summary as well.

Jane Hague, King County Council, asked if the Executive Committee would be meeting after comments come out so elected officials can answer questions from constituents.

The committee agreed that a meeting in late September or early October would likely be necessary.

Jim Leonard, FHWA, noted that technically since the comment period is 45 days, if the jurisdictions request an extension, it could be extended to 60 days.

David Asher asked if the committee could meet the day after the comment period ends.

The team will schedule the meeting right after the 45th day.

Miles Adam, City of Medina, suggested the committee leave the meeting date open and contingent on the comment period slipping.

John Milton concluded this part of the discussion by noting that the team would be available for any briefings necessary over the next few months.

Public Comment

Jonathan Dubman, Montlake Community Club and betterbridge.org

Thanks very much. I'm among the citizens who have taken an active role in the project. I sit on the SAC, representing Montlake. I'm also part of a group called betterbridge.org. We are big supporters of the Pacific Interchange. I'd like to take a 3,000-foot view on what I see from a citizen's perspective. I see a bridge clearly in jeopardy that is absolutely vital for our regional economy. I see an ugly scene in a beautiful landscape. I see a state agency who are exemplary public servants and have been very patient in listening to the community. I used to think we work hard at Microsoft until I've seen what this team does. In terms of providing mobility for people and goods, the Pacific Street Interchange is really the right way to go. Clearly, there is a lot of work to do in building consensus and educating the public. A few things stand out about the Pacific Interchange – it has a much smaller footprint than the base 6-Lane and it's the only plan that provides direct access to the future Sound Transit station. It offers a continuous greenbelt in Montlake and unifying parks. We have a lot of work to do, but I'm very optimistic. Through betterbridge.org, we talk to thousands of citizens, and there is really a great deal of support behind the Pacific Interchange. The more people understand it, the more people like it.

Rob Wilkinson, SR 520 Design Advisory Group member and betterbridge.org

I'm the president of an organization called betterbridge.org. We formed in response to a bad plan for SR 520 for residential neighborhoods. Somewhat accidentally Doug MacDonald came to our neighborhood and said you guys are basically stuck with this plan unless you can come up with something better. It has to work regionally and for the city of Seattle neighborhoods. We knew we couldn't make it work for four lanes and that from a transportation perspective eight lanes wouldn't work. We looked at how to maximize mobility for transit and how to move the most amount of people and vehicles on a little bit of pavement. The Pacific Interchange option does all of this. It actually makes whole a neighborhood divided in 1960. I give huge credit to John Milton and company for listening to a grassroots organization.

Robert Rosencrantz, Montlake Community Club President

I am the president of the Montlake Community Club, and I was at the birth of betterbridge.org. This came at the same time when I was running for city council, so I was able to talk to a lot of people. People get it. The connections people will be able to make will get us through. We have to have transit reliability. We have to get people out of their cars and into other modes. I've had significant conversations with University of Washington staff, and I'm pleased to hear that the Regents are moving towards a more transparent dialogue with the state. RTID will go on the ballot in 2007. Voters will make a decision as to whether or not it makes sense.

Representative Ed Murray, 43rd Legislative District

Having sat on this committee in one form or another for nine years, I thought the people you were hearing from would accept only a 4-Lane Alternative. You are hearing from your friends. This is not a place I would have thought we would be even two years ago. I commend WSDOT and the corridor's neighbors.

Mike Flemming, Redmond Resident

I am the former president of a group called People for Public Transit. I used to commute across the bridge every day, and now that I'm retired I drive my wife to work and I travel I-90. There is as much traffic in the reverse commute now. When I drop my wife, I come back on 520. Congestion starts at the Montlake on-ramp. I wonder if WSDOT did any study on how much traffic gets on/off at Montlake in the morning, and I wonder why there are not more lanes here. Another question I have is in regard to the pontoons taking light rail across the bridge. Have you allowed for right-of-way on land? For a double-track you need 30-50 feet. Will it have to be acquired at a later date? I've noticed in other states, they build for future expansion. I hope that would be taken into consideration.

Aubrey Davis replied that one agency does highways and another plans for light rail. He believes WSDOT did the best they could by accommodating pontoons for HCT in the future. There are currently no serious plans for how to handle right-of-way for future HCT.

Grace Crunican clarified that HCT accommodations across the lake are taken into account with this project, but how it transitions to land on either side of the lake is where we need more from Sound Transit.

Aubrey Davis concluded the meeting by reiterating there would not be an additional meeting next week.

Executive Committee Attendees:

Aubrey Davis, SR 520 Executive Committee Chair
Bob Edwards, Puget Sound Regional Council
Bryan Cairns, Mercer Island
Claudia Balducci, City of Bellevue
Connie Marshall, Sound Transit
Dave Asher, City of Kirkland
Ed Murray, Washington State House of Representatives
Jim Leonard, Federal Highways Administration
George Martin, City of Clyde Hill
Grace Crunican, Seattle Department of Transportation
Jan Drago, City of Seattle
Jane Hague, King County
Kimberly Allen, City of Redmond
Mary-Alyce Burleigh, Sound Transit
Miles Adam, City of Medina
Phil Noble, City of Bellevue
Rob Fellows, King County
Rosemarie Ives, City of Redmond

Public Attendees:

Amy Roe, Bellevue Reporter
Andrea Tull, Sound Transit
Arthur Thornburge, King County Council Staff
Bret Olson, Candidate for State Representative
Chris Simmons, WSDOT
Dave Godfrey, City of Kirkland
David Bowman, House Transportation Committee
David Hopkins, WSDOT
Fred Glick, Core Design, Inc
George Petrovich, Medina resident
James Barbee, Trust
Jim Hunt, Eastside resident
John Resha, WSDOT
John Wise
Jonathan Dubman, Better Bridge
Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue
Kimberly Nuber, King County Council Jane Hague
Laura Wise
Lisa Chiu, Seattle Times
Mike Fleming
Mitch Wasserman, City of Clyde Hill
Neil Strege, King County Councilmember Regan Dunn
Peter Dewey, University of Washington
Phyllis Shulman, Seattle City Councilmember Richard Conlin
R. Powers, City of Seattle
Rob Wilkinson, Better Bridge
Robert Rosencrantz, Better Bridge
Robert Rudolph, Medina City Council
Samir Chudgar
Vic Newhade, Kirkland Heritage Society

Project Team Attendees:

Dave Dye, WSDOT
John Milton, WSDOT
Julie Meredith, WSDOT
Patrick Clarke, WSDOT
Brad Phillips, Parametrix
Lindsay Yamane, Parametrix
Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix
Jenifer Young, CH2M Hill
Bryan Jarr, EnviroIssues
Chelsea Tennyson, EnviroIssues
Jeanne Clark, EnviroIssues
Suanne Pelley, EnviroIssues