

# Laurelhurst Community Club

## Madison Park Community Council

*Serving Seattle's Laurelhurst and Madison park Communities since 1920*

September 24, 2010

To: WSDOT ESSB 6392 Workgroup

Re: Comments from Laurelhurst Community Club and Madison Park Community Council

Representatives from our densely populated communities have been actively engaged in the plans and design process for the re-build of SR520 for over 15 years.

We also participated fully in the State Mediation process for over 18 months to develop viable solutions for new designs that will serve the transportation needs of the corridor and best respects the environment which will be impacted by its re-build.

This process will result in a new SDEIS which evaluates all options proposed.

In addition to Options A, K, and L, the seven stake holding communities adjacent to SR520 endorsed Plan M, which is a 700 foot underpass tunnel under the Montlake Cut as the best option to increase mobility and reduce environmental impacts. It was not officially included in WSDOT's top 3 SDEIS options. We still support that solution as the most optimal for the re-build of SR520 at a price tag of \$49.5 million, excluding bloated earmarks from the University of Washington to its plan.

In reviewing the Workgroup's recommended Option A+, our communities do not support this as our preferred option, but will comment on the technical aspects of the Workgroup's recommendations and requests for better outcomes for our residents.

Our comments include the following:

1. The entire corridor must be functioning with all lanes as it crosses from the portal at the Eastside through to I-5 or it **should not** be built across Lake Washington until a complete financing package is approved. Building any partial bridge would result in a dysfunctional transportation corridor for Seattle residents and eastside HOV users. A partially built bridge will create traffic bottlenecks at the western high rise on top of lake Washington at the merge point. (see page 29-funding program and other separate comment pages submitted on this issue)
2. Neighborhood traffic management for Seattle city streets must be planned with SDOT **before** the bridge plan is final. Analysis of travel times must be re-done with a new model, based on any changes recommended by the Technical Workgroup e.g. added volumes to streets adjacent to the Arboretum and Lake Washington Blvd, cut through traffic on Montlake streets, and the diversion and back ups into streets in the University District and through Ravenna as drivers find alternative ways to reduce travel times. Operations at NE 45th St, Montlake Blvd through to Sandpoint Way NE will be effected with any new configurations of access to SR520.

3. Transit travel times must be predictable and efficient to encourage ridership. Removing the second bascule bridge to build instead at a late stage will increase transit travel time, which is contrary to a top priority of the new bridge design. The north/south mobility of Montlake Blvd must be maintained with adequate capacity to accommodate planned expansion for the University of Washington, the University Village and Seattle Children's Hospital which will add over 3800 daily vehicular trips over the next 5 years. Reducing capacity will be detrimental to the businesses and institutions so important to support robust regional growth.

4. Removing an exit ramp westbound for transit and vehicles down to one lane (page10) will result in longer travel times for transit and vehicles. In existing conditions, westbound now has 2 exits, one north and one south. The A+ design combines this function into 1 exit ramp, and adds 2 stoplights, the result will be creating gridlock with back ups onto SR520. The original plan allowed for greater capacity of this dual function with 2 lanes, albeit it creates a larger footprint. **Tradeoffs for this option must not result in a plan where it creates worse mobility than existing** for western access. Game days for football, special events and basketball will be untenable for access to the University and neighborhoods in northeast Seattle and those south of the Monlake Cut, trying to exit using only 1 ramp as well as everyday peak time operations.

5. The left hand turn from 24th Ave East to Lake Washington Blvd must be maintained at all times. To eliminate or reduce it creates a larger carbon footprint by requiring vehicles to travel longer distances resulting in more emissions. It will also reduce wait times for transit and all vehicles on the westbound off ramp. Arboretum traffic can be mitigated using methods recommended by the Technical Workgroup.

6. Noise reduction strategies- there is a need to define exactly where the 4 foot traffic barriers will be located. The statement on page 22 of the report is vague. Our two neighborhoods **specifically request these barriers continue through to the top of the western high rise to reduce noise.** Noise reduction has been the number one priority for mitigation for 15 years. The new quieter concrete study is not yet complete. Data should be provided to affected communities before imbedding in the bridge design.

7. Speed limit reduction to 45mph should be implemented from Foster Island through Portage Bay to mitigate sound emitted from higher speeds and to facilitate the gradually inclined ramp on Portage Bay through to I-5.

8. An underpass tunnel or sunken interchange at the Montlake/Pacific streets triangle would be a more optimal solution for connectivity of buses and Sound Transit than the proposed overpass recommended by the Technical Workgroup. The users' exposure to weather, the steep incline and long travel distances make this unfriendly and create a penalty for transit riders and non-motorized travelers. In addition, the University of Washington should provide space for shuttle drop offs for their own bus shuttles with connections to Seattle Children's Hospital, outlying campus housing residents and offer space for potential University Village shuttles to keep more SOV off the roads. This could be made in an adjacent parking lot, away from traffic.

The triangle layout also needs to be coordinated with the new construction of Husky Stadium. Efficient connectivity to light rail and buses should continue to be improved.

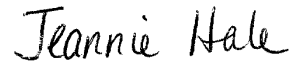
9. The height of the new bridge should be no greater than that of I-90. Our most affected neighborhoods object to the proposed 20 foot high "viaduct" structure which will leave a lasting scar of visual blight in neighborhoods on both sides of Lake Washington. WSDOT must work to get this profile back closer to the water without further excuses.

Thank you for considering the views of the Laurelhurst Community Club and the Madison Park Community Council. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the rebuild of SR520 for the future of the State of Washington.

Sincerely,



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