

SR 520 Report Presented to NCHNA 2/17/10 (Nancy Brainard, Secretary)

Pegeen and I have been representing NCHNA on 520 issues for several years: serving on the state's local impact committee, the city's stakeholders' advisory committee and the state's mediation team.

What you've told us you want is a 520 that improves mobility (regionally and locally) that eliminates the notorious Montlake Bridge traffic bottleneck, facilitates bus and light rail connections, reduces noise and visual pollution and reconnects our neighborhoods.

In January, WSDOT published its **Supplementary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS)**, which includes three 520 designs.

So **what's up and what's next?**

I HAVE GOOD NEWS . . . AND BAD NEWS.

Good news: a lid over 520 between the Delmar and the 10th Ave bridges is in all of the three 520 designs. This will be a lid with a park on top that reduces noise and visual pollution and reconnects neighborhoods. And NCHNA has formed a joint committee with Roanoke Park that is working with WSDOT on the details of that lid design.

Bad news: The Governor, WSDOT and many of our politicians seemed determined to choose the worst of all the designs currently on the table for the 520 as a whole. And to make that decision final by April 15.

The state's favored design is called **Option A or A+**—and it looks a lot like the very first plan WSDOT came up with years ago (Base 6). When last NCHNA members voted on 520 designs, the designs similar to this A design were favored by less than 1% of you.

Despite all the community work and creativity that's gone into this project since then, the governor's favorite plan is just a bigger, badder version of what we have today.

Good news: We are doing something about it: NCHNA is fighting Option A and proposing something better. And we have allies. Together with the community councils of Roanoke Park/Portage Bay, Montlake, Laurelhurst, Madison Park and the boating community we have formed the Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520. Jonathan Dubman from the coalition is here tonight to help me answer your questions. But before that.

What is the state's A plan? And what is the better plan we were working on with WSDOT until the state legislature told us to stop?

STARTING AT I-5:

- All the alternatives on the table have six lanes, but **A** adds a seventh lane from Montlake to I-5.
- **A** requires this seventh lane because it leaves the Montlake interchange where it is today. This means cars entering at Montlake need the extra seventh lane in order to have time to merge before they get to I-5.
- **Our plan (plan M) requires only six lanes across Portage Bay, because it moves the interchange east to the land that will soon be vacated by MOHAI.**
- **A** puts the most pavement of all the alternatives in Montlake, enlarging today's interchange and bisecting the small lid that Montlake will get with ramps.
- **A** also requires widening Montlake Blvd. and taking homes to accommodate the increased traffic exiting from six lanes of 520. And to get all that new traffic across the cut, it requires building a second drawbridge next to the Montlake Bridge. WSDOT's own traffic studies show that even with this second drawbridge, north/south traffic jams in Montlake will be just as bad as they are today.
- **Our plan addresses this traffic problem by taking vehicles from 520 across the cut via a short tunnel under the water. This frees today's Montlake Blvd. for local traffic.**
- **And just this month we have joined forces with the Sierra Club, the Cascade Bicycle Club, the Arboretum Foundation and Mayor McGinn to advocate that the fifth and sixth lanes of 520 be dedicated solely to bus and or light rail.** (**A** designates the fifth and sixth lanes of the new 520 for busses and carpools.) We are optimistic that transit-only lanes will not only reduce the number of cars exiting but also the ramps that are needed, and may even reduce the number of lanes required between Montlake and I-5 to four.
- **A** eliminates the Montlake flyer stop for busses and requires riders transferring between busses and the new light rail station at Husky Stadium to walk 1,200 feet (think four football fields).
- Through the Arboretum, **A** gets very wide (worst case, up to 25 lanes wide!) and rises very high going past Madison Park, spreading visual and noise pollution.
- And as it crosses Lake Washington, **A**'s span is three stories above the water all the way across—think viaduct!
- **Our plan is lower and includes a pedestrian bridge from the Arboretum to Foster Island as well as quiet rubberized pavement throughout.**

MISINFORMATION

You may hear that **plan A is the cheapest** route. The truth is that the costs of mitigation have not been included in the state's design or estimates—for example the costs of mitigating noise, pollution and damage to our neighborhoods.

You may hear that **plan A has already been funded**. The truth is that even with early tolling on both 520 and I-90, there isn't enough money. Potential sources of funding have only been identified, but not secured.

You may hear that **anything but A is too expensive**. The truth is that the state's estimates for our plan were padded with pork for the UW: a parking garage, for example, not included in any of the other plans. And costs for our tunnel were estimated at the highest possible end with the most expensive kind of tunnel in mind.

You may hear that a **tunnel can't be permitted and will harm fish**. The truth is no government permitting agency has as yet even studied the tunnel idea. And our fish experts tell us that danger to fish occurs only during the construction phase, and that fish can be protected by timing construction for those periods during the year when fish are elsewhere.

SO WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT ALL THIS?

Gaining allies

- Roanoke Park/Portage Bay, Montlake, Laurelhurst, Madison Park and the boating community
- Sierra Club, the Cascade Bicycle Club, the Arboretum Foundation and Mayor McGinn
- Also on our side are Speaker Frank Chopp, Sen. Ed Murray and Rep. Jamie Peterson.

The **City Council** is another matter. Nick Licata and Mike O'Brien are with us. But so far the rest of the Council is not.

- They think they can negotiate enough tweaks to A in the next 120 days to make it acceptable. We don't agree.
- They think they can allow construction to start on the eastside before the Westside plan is final. We don't agree. Starting on the eastside before we have a real solution on both sides of the Lake will only limit the funds available and the options for the Westside.

The Coalition has also hired a lawyer, David Bricklin. And we've gotten an extension on the SDEIS comment period to April 15. Comments on the SDEIS are essential because they will be the basis for a suit if we have to file one.

And we are lobbying, politicking and communicating.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Offer your time and financial support to the Coalition. (Read the Coalition's booklet, as well as the Consensus Position supported by the Mayor.)
- Comment on SDEIS—e-mail nancy@nchna.com if you'd like to help with this.
- Contact the politicians, particularly City Council members. Their e-mails are listed below.

Now is an important time to act: The governor thinks she is going to close the book on the 520 decision by April 15 and do it by giving us design A!

Key Contacts

Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520: nancy@nchna.com

To contribute financial support to the coalition's efforts, make your check, payable to "Friends of the SR 520 Corridor" and mail to: Friends of the SR520 Corridor, c/o MaryAnn Mundy, 117 East Louisa St., #205, Seattle, WA 98102-3203. (Contributions are not tax deductible.)

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