

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Governor Gregoire and the Legislature signed off this month on a six-lane concept for the SR-520 Replacement and HOV Project (two general-purpose and one HOV/transit lane in each direction).

Design Selection Delayed

Based on a vote of our members (7/31/06), NCHNA is on record with the City Council, the Mayor and the Governor supporting the Pacific Interchange design, one of the three six-lane alternatives in the 2006 Draft Environmental Impact Study.

It is unlikely, however, that the Governor will select a specific design (a preferred alternative) before December 2008, when the report of a soon-to-be appointed State mediator addressing the impacts of various six-lane designs is due to be filed. The mediator is also authorized to contract an engineering firm for an independent feasibility analysis of three additional design proposals not included in the [DEIS](#).

NCHNA continues to work with the State, the City and our sister neighborhoods to ensure the best possible outcome when construction begins—likely now to be 2010 at the earliest.

Tax Vote Ahead

Meanwhile, voters will be asked in November 2007 to approve a \$17 billion in taxes for a bundle of Sound Transit and Washington State Department of Transportation ([WSDOT](#)) projects, including \$1.1 billion toward SR-520 replacement.

Estimated Timetable

- June 2007 State mediator appointed.
- Nov. 2007 Roads and Transit package on the ballot in three counties.
- Dec. 2007 Independent review of the non-DEIS alternatives complete.
- Dec. 2008 State mediator's final report due.
- Dec. 2008? Governor's selection of the preferred alternative.
- 2008? Final EIS published. (There may also be a Supplemental EIS.)
- 2018 Earliest possible start date for construction.

Hot Topic for Discussion: Early Tolling

The State's funding plan for SR-520 includes tolling, with tolls likely to be at least \$3 to \$4 per trip across the lake. Currently some are pushing to begin tolling prior to construction, possibly in 2008, with the proceeds going to a trust fund to be used exclusively for capital, operating and maintenance costs for SR-520.

NCHNA has not yet taken a position on this issue.

[Tolling Study](#)

CURRENT CONSENSUS

Based on a vote of our members (7/31/06), NCHNA is on record with the City Council, the Mayor and the Governor supporting the [Pacific Interchange design](#). To read our letter of support [click here](#).

Why We Back the Pacific Interchange

[The Pacific Interchange](#) design eliminates on and off ramps in Montlake and replaces them with a bridge from just east of Foster Island across Union Bay to on and off ramps at Pacific Street adjacent to Husky Stadium. While this design will benefit from further refinement, we support it as the best starting point, because it will allow us to:

- *reconnect neighborhoods* with green spaces and lids between [North Capitol Hill/Roanoke Park](#) and in Montlake and create continuous green space from the [Montlake Playfield](#) to the Arboretum;
- *eliminate the Montlake-Bridge traffic bottleneck*, cutting traffic volumes on the drawbridge by nearly half and peak-hour drive-times from U Village to SR-520 from 28 minutes to 7 minutes;
- *facilitate transit connections* at the Light Rail Station planned at Husky Stadium and
- *Reduce the number of lanes* required on the new Portage Bay Viaduct from nine to six.

City Resolutions

While the Montlake neighborhood joins us in strongly supporting the Pacific Interchange, as yet there is no consensus among politicians, interest groups or our other sister neighborhoods on this or any other design. Nevertheless, we have made progress in agreeing on many things.

NCHNA has been represented on both the Local Impact Committee and the Stakeholders Advisory Committee appointed to work with the City, WSDOT and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). In 2006, the City Council passed [resolution 30777](#) outlining what we think is a sound set of guiding principles for choosing a preferred alternative. And just this April, the Council passed and the Mayor signed [resolution 30974](#) listing design elements and mitigation measures that should be included in any design. NCHNA supported both of these measures. Highlights include:

- implementing [the lid designed by our Local Impact Committee](#) and preferred by NCHNA to cover SR-520 between Delmar and 10th Ave.,
- narrowing and minimizing the number of lanes on the Portage Bay Viaduct,
- pursuing the use of quiet pavement and
- reducing cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods.

Community Agreement

In preparation for working with the State-appointed mediator, NCHNA began meeting in April with an ad hoc Community Agreement Group. These meetings have included residents of Broadmoor, Eastlake, Laurelhurst, North Capitol Hill, Madison Park, Montlake, Ravenna/Bryant, Ravenna Springs, University Park and Wallingford, as well as representatives of the Arboretum Foundation, the League of Women Voters, the Parks Department, the Sierra Club, the University of Washington and proponents of several alternative designs for SR-520 not included in the DEIS.

We are happy to report that this group has reached agreement on many of the things we believe are important to a successful replacement of SR-520. For example, the need to:

- create workable plans to manage local traffic,
- provide adequate bike and pedestrian access and paths,
- reduce impacts and traffic volume in the Arboretum and
- Minimize the impact of the construction phase on our neighborhoods.

The group plans to submit full reports on the [issues discussed](#) and [member votes](#) to all concerned politicians.

WHAT'S NEXT

[Substitute Senate Bill \(SSB\) 6099](#), signed by the Governor this month (with modifications to sections 4 and 5 described in her [memo, May 15](#)) mandates the appointment of a mediator whose final report will be due in December 2008.

State Mediator

Appointed this June, the mediator will work with urban and transportation planners, local governments, interest groups and neighborhoods on a plan to address the impacts of various six-lane designs on Seattle neighborhoods, parks and “institutions of higher education.”

Analysis of Additional Designs

Designs under consideration will include the three six-lane designs (the Base-6, Second Montlake Drawbridge and Pacific Interchange) described in the 2006 DEIS.

In addition, the State-appointed mediator is authorized to contract an engineering firm to conduct an independent feasibility analysis of additional design proposals including: 1.) a combination of tunnels and submerged tubes under Lake Washington; 2.) a partial tunnel from I-5 to the west end of the SR-520 bridge and 3.) a proposal to move SR-520 from its current alignment through the Arboretum. Some are pushing to add the analysis of a fourth proposal: a four-lane bridge that widens to more lanes at Seattle landfall.

Funding and Costs

Meanwhile, the [Regional Transportation Investment District \(RTID\)](#) plans to ask voters this November to approve new taxes within the district to pay for \$17 billion in Sound Transit and WSDOT projects. The draft package, expected to be final by the end of May, currently includes \$1.1 billion toward SR-520 replacement.

It is estimated that the cost of SR-520 replacement, depending in part on the design selected, will run between \$3.9 and 4.4 billion. Sources of funding anticipated by SSB 6099 include at least \$1 billion in regional contributions, as well as State and Federal funding and toll revenue.