



## Seattle Community Design Process Apr. 12, 2012 Public Session Public Comment Summary

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### Overview:

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted the fourth public session of the Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP) on April 12, 2012 at the Museum of History & Industry (MOHAI) in Seattle. Approximately 220 people attended the event, and approximately 365 individual written comments were received in addition to many interactive conversations between members of the public and SR 520 project staff.

At the event, members of the public 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
- SR 520 Floating Bridge and Landings Project
- Seattle Community Design Process

### **Workshop focus**

The public session built on work conducted in 2011 during the SCDP through continuing the design exploration for specific focus areas along the Seattle side of the SR 520 corridor. The April 12 event focused specifically on design refinement opportunities in the Shelby/Hamlin, Canal Reserve, and East Lake Washington Boulevard area.

WSDOT is moving forward with design explorations in this area through focusing on design refinement opportunities in the following subareas:

- Local and regional non-motorized connections to and through neighborhoods and destination centers near SR 520
- East Lake Washington Boulevard
- Montlake lid operations and maintenance facility
- East Montlake shoreline
- East Montlake Park
- Canal Reserve
- Montlake Boulevard East

The public session 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 each of the subareas. The materials that were shared indicated the function, design goals, and design options for each of the geographic subareas. Below is a brief description of how these elements were identified:

- **Function** is the result of balancing standards identified in the environmental documents, project commitments, and technical requirements in each area (such as geotechnical conditions and constraints, roadway standards, and regulatory requirements).
- **Design goals** are based on comments on environmental documents and other processes, feedback collected at previous SCDP public sessions, and recommendations of design professionals.
- **Design options** are the outcome of integrating the function and goals for each area and consideration of the community context.

Information on the benefits and considerations of the design refinement opportunities was also provided. Members of the public were able to view design materials and share their feedback by having conversations with project staff and providing written comments.

### **Workshop accomplishments**

Patrick Condon, SR 520 Urban Design and Sustainability Expert Review Panel (ERP) Facilitator, gave a brief overview of the opportunities during the event. Patrick indicated how the work, conclusions, and recommendations made in August 2011 by the ERP can be used to help evaluate and consider the tradeoffs of the design opportunities that are being explored.

The main points of the presentation are outlined below:

- An overall theme for the Seattle side of the SR 520 corridor is “where the blue meets green”.
- The following goals should help guide design exploration for the corridor:
  - Find ways for the new SR 520 to help improve the surrounding neighborhoods.
  - Elegantly achieve SR 520’s regional transportation objective while leveraging and integrating maximum community and ecological benefits.
- The following design principles should be applied to the design refinements that are developed for the corridor:
  - Leverage neighborhood resources to help improve the surrounding neighborhoods.
  - Secure ownership for every inch of the project.
  - Use the project to help knit the city together.
  - Celebrate all kinds of movement.
  - Capitalize and democratize the investments made by the SR 520 transportation project.
  - Maximize the reach of project funding.

### **General themes of public comments**

Public comments were very diverse. Feedback was split in some areas, while clearer themes were apparent in other areas. Overall, comments were constructive and will help inform designs for the area.

Below is a summary of the general themes of public feedback organized by key topics and geographic subareas. This summary is meant to capture the larger themes of the public's written comments and conversations with 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.

#### **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - Safe, direct, flat routes are important. This is particularly critical for bicyclists and children who walk to school.
  - Bicycles and pedestrians should be separated on shared use paths whenever possible.
  - There is desire for additional north/south connections in and on the Montlake lid.
- **Portage Bay Bridge**
  - Many people have a strong desire to continue the shared use regional path across the Portage Bay Bridge. This connection would provide a safe, direct, and efficient route from Montlake to the Roanoke area, Capitol Hill, and downtown.
- **Bill Dawson Trail connection**
  - There is general support for the tunnel connection to the Bill Dawson Trail, although there are safety concerns about the 90-degree turn in the tunnel near the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) facility.
- **Montlake Boulevard East**
  - There was extensive discussion for the need to make improvements on Montlake Boulevard, including aligning curb cuts, providing on-street bike lanes, and pedestrian refuges.
  - There is encouragement to provide a grade-separated pedestrian crossing over the on- and off-ramps at the west side of Montlake Boulevard East that connect to 22nd Avenue, as an important greenway connection.
- **24th Avenue East**

- There is general concern for bicycle and vehicle conflicts at various intersections on 24th Avenue East.
- People indicated a desire to prevent vehicular access on 24th Avenue north of the Montlake lid to East Montlake Park.
- 24th Avenue East is identified as an important greenway.
- **East Lake Washington Boulevard**
  - There are concerns about the quality of connections and safety for bicyclists traveling from Lake Washington Boulevard to the Arboretum Waterfront Trail, 26th Avenue, and the existing bicycle network in Seattle.

**East Lake Washington Boulevard area:**

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

1. Parkway option – Maintains the split two-way traffic roadway design, and introduces a wider planted median.
2. Local access road option – Reconfigures the roadway with eastbound and westbound lanes to the north of a planted median. Also maintains the existing historic roadway as a one-way eastbound local access road, allowing space for parallel parking.

**Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - There is mixed feedback for this area. For example, some people believe that the design should not compromise space on the Montlake lid, while other people believe it is more beneficial to use available space in this area to design a wider median and/or local access road on Lake Washington Boulevard.
  - People have requests for more information and consideration of additional design options for this area. For example, people want to know if the median and/or local access road could be brought further south past Roanoke Street, and what constraints might exist with those options.
  - There is general concern regarding ownership of areas along the roadways and future ownership of any new medians.
  - People would like on-street bicycle connections to be enhanced and/or maintained.
  - There are requests to blend the area with the Arboretum character.
- **Traffic**
  - Traffic flow is a key topic of interest.
  - There is mixed feedback for this area. For example, some people want to ensure that vehicle connections through Lake Washington Boulevard to East Madison

Street are maintained, while other people want to minimize vehicle traffic in this area.

- There are requests for vehicles on 24th Avenue to not be allowed, while other people want to maintain the current city grid.
- **Median concept**
  - People want WSDOT to consider continuing the median concept south on East Lake Washington Boulevard to help further buffer traffic and noise.
  - The proposed median in the parkway option may be used to help buffer noise, enhance aesthetics, and improve safety.
- **Local access road concept**
  - There is mixed feedback regarding the need and benefit for a local access road.
  - There is also mixed feedback on whether or not the local access road could help improve traffic effects.
  - People would like to see the local access road continue further south, past Roanoke Street.

### **Montlake lid operations and maintenance facility:**

#### **Design opportunities explored:**

1. Locate the facility on top of the Montlake lid.
2. Integrate the facility into the southeast corner of the lid.

#### **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - There is more support for integrating the facility in the side of the Montlake lid, as opposed to placing the facility on top of the lid.
- **Aesthetic and architectural treatments**
  - There is desire for aesthetic and architectural treatments on the ventilation shafts and operations and maintenance facility. These treatments should be context-sensitive.

### **East Montlake shoreline area:**

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

1. Stepped abutment option – Includes two adjacent stepped abutments, which increase the space available for a bicycle/pedestrian path along the shoreline.
2. Larger setback option – Shifts the entire abutment to the west and creates a large open space under the bridge.
3. Lower transit/HOV on- and off-ramps – The transit/HOV on- and off-ramps are lowered on the east end of the lid. This opportunity could work in conjunction with each of the other design options being explored for this area.

### **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - A bicycle/pedestrian connection along the shoreline is important.
  - There are safety and comfort concerns for the underbridge area. The space needs to be activated, but also pleasant to use.
  - People would like to avoid and/or balance losing greenspace on the lid in order to provide more space along the shoreline.
  - People believe that ramps and/or traffic lanes cutting through the lid would result in a loss of potential greenspace on the lid.
- **Lower transit/HOV ramps option**
  - There is general support for lowered on- and off-ramps, although people still want a full lid.

### **East Montlake Park area:**

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

1. Modified bioswale option – Uses a modified bioswale to treat stormwater. The bioswale treats stormwater to the same standard as the constructed wetland concept in the baseline design, but in a smaller area and does not require standing water.
2. Modified media filter drain concept – Uses a modified media filter drain concept to treat stormwater. The design treats stormwater to the same standard as the constructed wetland proposed in the baseline design, but with a different method of filtering the stormwater that does not require standing water.
3. Parking options – Reduced number of parking stalls from the baseline design. There are parking location opportunities for a neighborhood-scale park with approximately 12 spaces to provide trail and hand carry boat launch access. Location opportunities include:
  - a. North side of East Montlake Park
  - b. Southeast side of the lid of the Montlake lid

## **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - There is general concern for the safety and potential environmental and community health effects of the various stormwater and ventilation options.
  - People would like to see how other projects (such as the King County Combined Sewer Overflow Project) would integrate into this area.
  - There is also concern about potential noise and traffic effects to the adjacent neighborhoods.
  
- **East Montlake Park**
  - The park should be naturalistic but also an active area.
  - People would like to maximize available greenspace through reducing parking in the area.
  
- **Parking**
  - There is mixed feedback regarding the desired location of the reduced number of parking stalls. For example, some people would like parking to be located near the small boat launch, while some people would like parking to be completely removed from the East Montlake Park area.
  - There is also mixed feedback for access to parking in this area. Some people oppose parking access from Shelby/Hamlin, while other people oppose parking access from 24th Avenue as a new ramp.
  
- **Stormwater options**
  - People generally like the naturalistic elements of the constructed wetland concept, although there are safety and health concerns associated with open standing water.
  - People would like to have access (such as with boardwalks) through the facility.

## **Canal Reserve area:**

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

1. Path adjacent to off-ramps option – Lowers the westbound off-ramp under 24th Avenue East, and realigns the bicycle/pedestrian path closer to the westbound off-ramp.
2. Path on lid option – Lowers the westbound off-ramp under 24th Avenue East and realigns the bicycle/pedestrian path from the Canal Reserve area onto the Montlake lid.

## **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety are critical for this area.

- People have concerns about traffic and noise in the area.
- There is support for lowering the westbound general purpose off-ramp under 24th Avenue East.
- Expand the buffer between the neighborhood and the roadways by shifting the regional path further south.
- **Programming**
  - There are general questions regarding programming of the Montlake lid and how that programming would interface with the Canal Reserve area.
  - People also question how the Canal Reserve area would be programmed and/or activated if bicycles and pedestrians are diverted out of the area.
- **Bicycle/pedestrian connections**
  - Safety in the proposed tunnel is important. The tunnel should be lit well, separate bicycles and pedestrians, and discourage unintended uses.
  - North/south connections on the west side of the Montlake lid are needed.
  - Safe, direct, and efficient connections for bicycles and pedestrians in this area are critical.

**Montlake Boulevard East area:**

The [baseline design](#) and the following areas of opportunity are being explored in coordination with City of Seattle, King County Metro, Sound Transit, the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, and the University of Washington:

1. Area adjacent to the future second bascule bridge. Possible opportunities in this area include:
  - a. Shoreline access
  - b. Landscaped buffer
  - c. Open space
  - d. New landscaped median
2. Both sides of Montlake Boulevard at the new Montlake lid. Possible opportunities in this area include:
  - a. Transit stop
  - b. Entrance to the Arboretum
  - c. Landscaped areas
  - d. Portal design
  - e. Overlook access
3. Public property adjacent to the Montlake Market. Possible opportunities in this area include:
  - a. Transit stop
  - b. Open space

## **Main topics discussed:**

- **General**
  - Noise, traffic, and bicycle/pedestrian connections are primary concerns in this area.
  - People encouraged a buffer from the new Bascule Bridge.
  
- **Bicycle/pedestrian connections**
  - There is a general desire for a wider bicycle/pedestrian path from the Montlake lid to the University of Washington and Burke Gilman Trail.
  - Bicycle/pedestrian crossings are too long and unsafe at the Montlake interchange. An elevated crossing in this area could help address bicycle/pedestrian safety and efficiency.
  - Connections through the Shelby/Hamlin neighborhood via 24th Avenue could help bicycles and pedestrians avoid the problematic conditions in the Montlake Interchange.
  
- **Transit connections**
  - People indicated that more clarity on bus routes, stop locations, and frequency are all needed.
  - There is also general concern regarding the number of lanes of traffic and roadway shoulders that must be crossed in order to reach the bus stops.