



Seattle Design Commission

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

John Hoffman

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Senior Staff

Approved

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

May 18 2006

Convened: 10:30am
Adjourned: 5:00pm

Projects Reviewed

West Highland Drive – Partial Street Vacation
SR 520 Improvement Project – Design Update

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Pam Beyette
Adam Christiansen
John Hoffman
Karen Kiest
Anindita Mitra
Sheri Olson
Nic Rossouw
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Layne Cubell
Tom Iurino
Valerie Felts



Department of Planning and
Development

P. O. Box 34019
700 5th Avenue, 19th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124-4019
phone 206/233-7911
fax 206/288-7883

Action Items

A. Timesheets

B. Minutes from 05/04/06/Felts – tabled until 6/1/06

Discussion Items

C. Urban Design letter/Mitra

D. Recent Council meeting debriefs/All

E. Waterfront/Viaduct Outreach/Olson + All

F. Recruitment Update/Cubell

G. DC Handbook and 2005 Annual Report/Iurino and Martini

H. Sound Transit Central Link Tour Debrief/Iurino

Announcements

I. John Norquist Brown Bag, 5/24, 12-1:30pm, Council Chambers

J. Council UDP Committee Semi Annual Briefing, 5/24, 2pm

K. AK Viaduct/Seawall Public Meetings, 5/22-5/24, 5-7pm

L. COW SR 520 Improvements, 6/2, time TBD

M. COW Waterfront Plan, 6/5, 2:30pm

N. South Lake Union Open House, 6/12, 5:30-7pm

18 May 2006 Project: West Highland Drive

Previous Reviews: none

Phase: Partial Street Vacation

Presenters: Jennifer Dent

Michael Strathmann

Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #170)

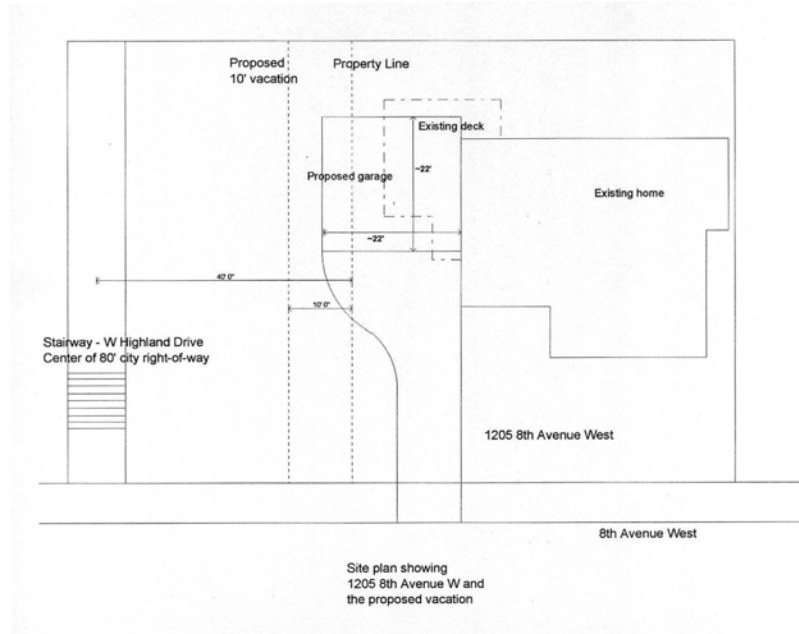
Action

The Design Commission thanks the proponents for the excellent presentation. The Commission did not approve recommendation of the partial street vacation and made the following comments.

- **The Commission noted that although part of the proposed public benefit package includes provisions for maintaining stairs, a retaining wall and landscaping at the site, all of these are typically maintenance responsibilities of the city.**
- **The Commission agrees a garage could be built on the property without the vacation, so the purpose of the vacation is not a compelling one.**
- **The existing ROW could be used in the future for off-street parking or other public purposes.**
- **There has been no street vacation in residential areas approved by the City in recent history and the Commission is concerned about the precedent this vacation might set.**

Proponents Presentation

Proponents seek to construct a garage by expansion of their property onto a 10' portion of city-owned property adjacent to their property on West Highland Drive. West Highland Drive is not a through street, but rather a dead end that empties onto a public stair.



Proponents provided detailed information on existing conditions of the site, including graphics defining the surrounding area and highlighting right-of-way issues. Currently, the property lacks off-street parking, so the owners park on the street instead. They stated that in the past a street vacation was granted to a neighbor, the precise date of which is unknown.

As part of their proposal, proponents offered a public benefits package focused on landscape and lighting improvements at the stair and a retaining wall. This would include adding landscape rocks to the wall and installing lighting for enhanced safety at the stair.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Proponents provided an excellent presentation.
- Was there off-street parking when you bought the property two years ago?
 - No.
- Have you been ticketed for parking in front of your house for more than three days?
 - No, but a number of people on the street have.
- Is there a 20 ft. setback at your property line so you could build a garage in front of the house?
 - We have talked to architects and it is possible, but it would not scale well with rest of the house.
- Is the proposed lighting for the stair intended to improve safety or merely landscape lighting?
 - It would be a combination of both.

- There are open space implications to consider. The Queen Anne neighborhood is deficient in per capita open space as it is, so giving up any additional public land is a concern.
- There are too many encroachments around the city and the Queen Anne neighborhood, so the Commission does not want to encourage another.
- Previous vacation and permits cited by proponents are too historical to seem relevant.
- Proponents' basic premise behind the vacation seems faulty. The vacation they propose is purely for private gain and the benefits are not public enough.
- The Commission appreciates the detailed pedestrian level analysis.
- A more appropriate scale for the neighborhood is a single, stacked garage which the proponents could do as of right on the property they currently own.
- The Design Commission is charged with evaluating a request and must consider whether it is advisable given the urban design considerations and physical impacts it might create. The Commission appreciates the sincerity and generosity of proponents' proposal, but feels it is possible to accommodate a garage otherwise, so the Commission is not inclined to support the vacation.

18 May 2006 Project: SR 520 Improvement Project

Phase: Design Update

Previous Reviews: August 2005, June 2005, July 2004, October 2003,
March 2002, October 2002

Presenters: David Allen, SDOT
Daniel Babuca, WSDOT
David Graves, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix
Julie Meredith, WSDOT
Suanne Pelley, EnviroIssues
Darby Watson, LMN
Susan Wessman, Parametrix

Attendees: Jonathan Dubman, Montlake community
Theresa Doherty, University of Washington
Chris Leman, Eastlake Community Council
Bob Mahon, Montlake Community Club
Robert Rosencrantz, Montlake Community Club
Lyle Bicknell, Montlake resident
Kate Battiello, Betterbridge.org
Geri Beardsley, Council staff
Peter Stoner, Montlake community

Time: 2 hours

(SDC Ref. #169/RS0605)

Action

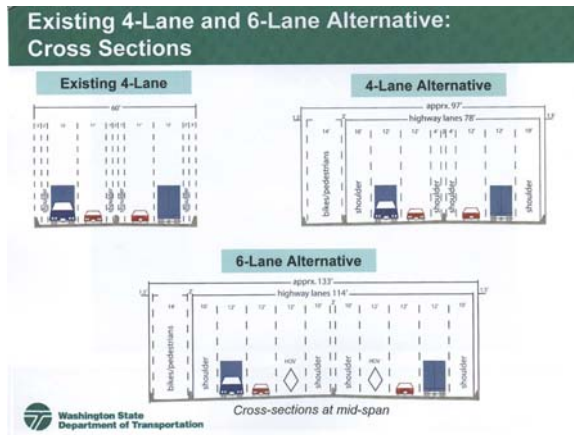
The Commission appreciates the project team’s continued briefings and updates as this important project proceeds. We realize the evaluation of the alternatives include multiple criteria that are of varying importance for each interest group. The Commission makes the following comments and recommendations. The Commission

- **commends the project, particularly the urban designers for their insightful process to align community opinions into the aesthetics of the bridge. We look forward to reviewing the Corridor Aesthetic Handbook once complete and encourage the team within the handbook to clarify how it will be applied. A baseline level of effort should be established for integration of the aesthetic into the engineering for the project. The engineering solution now dominates and the aesthetic “elegance” does not manifest its potential at this point. Right now, concrete is the predominant image.**
- **recognizes the inclusion of the Pacific Interchange alternative as a response to community concerns and input, but is concerned that the monumental impact of this interchange over Foster Island is still as overwhelming as the other options. We look forward to reviewing the environmental analysis of this and the other alternatives.**
- **requests that visual simulation of the users’ experience as well as movement simulation for the various alternatives be prepared as part of the environmental review.**

- requests that non-motorized connections to the adjacent neighborhoods be expanded and clarified for each alternative under study.
- asks that the traffic impacts to the neighboring communities be adequately detailed so influences to level of service (LOS) on local streets within the adjacent communities are fully understood.

Proponents Presentation

The design team provided general project updates on the SR 520 project including corridor and bridge aesthetic guidelines, and the Pacific Interchange. Seismic and windstorm vulnerability and traffic congestion were cited as reasons for the bridge replacement. Both the 4- or 6-lane alternative designs would



include expansion and improvement of on- and off-ramps to SR 520 on the Seattle and east side of Lake Washington. Both alternatives would also include a bike and pedestrian path through the entire project corridor. And both include pontoons large enough to support future high capacity transit (HCT). Also presented were alternative designs of the Pacific Street Interchange as part of the 6-

lane option.

An overview of funding sources, costs of construction and timelines for the project was presented:

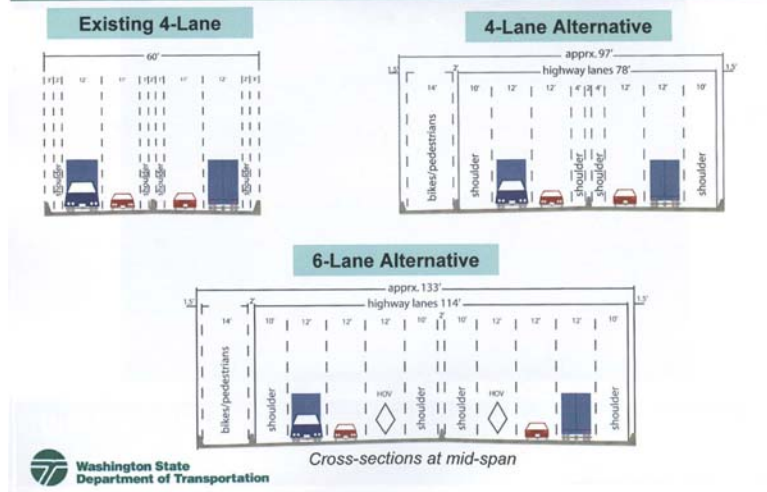
- 4-lane: proposed to start 2009 – 2010: \$1.7 to \$2.0 billion
- Base 6-lane: new bridge to open 2013 – 2015: \$2.3 to \$2.8 billion
- 6-lane with options: estimated construction end 2015 – 2017: \$2.3 – \$3.1 billion

Identified as funding sources of \$1.25 billion:

- 2003 State Nickel Package
- 2005 State Transportation Partnership Package
- 2005 Federal Funding
- future electronic tolls.

Funding needs, including cost of the 6-lane option, are identified as \$0.45 - \$1.85 billion.

Existing 4-Lane and 6-Lane Alternative: Cross Sections



The team outlined its work with the City of Seattle and stakeholder groups in determining the preferred alternative bridge design. Public involvement opportunities are scheduled for summer 2006. These include the final Design Advisory Group (DAG) meeting June 22, 2006, project open houses in summer 2006, and the DEIS comment period, ending 60 days after its release. The goal of the DAG is to develop a vision for corridor aesthetic guidelines. A component of the vision is the context-dependent design of thematic zones connected by the bridge. Treatment of color, materials, line, and form define the zones. The zones and themes are: Seattle – *Tapestry*, Eastside – *One Community Palette*, Corridor – *Natural*, and Corridor – *Contemporary*.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

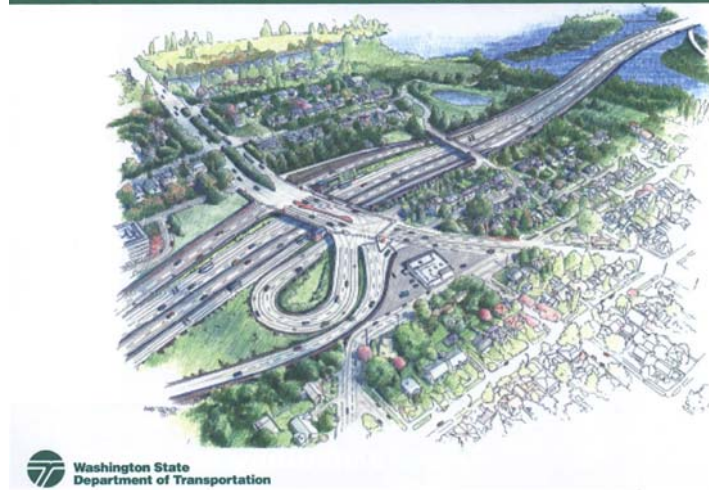
- We ask the team to define a project policy precluding restriping and conversion of the shoulders into travel lanes in the future.
- Is a lid possible with the 4-lane option?
 - There is nothing to preclude it, the executive committee chose to include a 4-lane option in the DEIS, but will treat its base as 6-lanes
- What do Pacific Interchange supporters see as benefits?
 - Reduction to 6 lanes across Portage Bay
 - Pedestrian flows improved
 - Olmsted vision realized for park connections
 - Impact on Arboretum is the same as 6-lane option base
- Are transit connections not included in the 6-lane option?
 - connections are relocated to over the Arboretum
- Bike and pedestrian paths are recommended

6-Lane Alternative Design Options: Seattle Pacific Street Interchange (draft rendering)



- Design Advisory Group’s handbook – not quite convinced, especially the Tapestry group, needs to be better integrated
- Pacific Interchange could be elegant, but it is not there yet. The manner in which it lands on Pacific Avenue is troubling as is how it integrates with transit
- The Commission is concerned with the design concept for Pacific/Montlake. It seems to be doing too much without clear resolution.
- Transit connections are not fully clear in all schemes.
- What is the height clearance under the bridge?
 - 70 feet versus 110 feet
- What are cost estimates?
 - Pacific Interchange is estimated at more than \$250 million
- Could the Pacific Interchange be done with the 4-lane option?
 - Yes, but transit in general is remedied best by 6 lanes
- How much of the area would be lidded?
 - Approximately 500 feet, where appropriate for the topography
- How many lids are planned?
 - 3 on the east side, 2 on the west side
- What is the status of drive-through simulations?
 - Once the preferred alternative is selected the team will move forward on the SIMs. For now there are static images.
- Why is there no lid with the 4-lane alternative?
 - When the 4-lane alternative was envisioned, it was seen as a replacement and preservation of the corridor as it exists today. The executive committee agreed that if we widened or expanded SR 520 we would further enhance the corridor. So they endorsed the lid as an enhancement. As part of that, lids are included in a 6-lane or expanded SR 520, generally as a preservation of what exists.
- Please explain the difference in the 6-lane base option and 6-lane with options alternative.
- What about habitat impacts?
- The Pacific interchange will have significant impacts for UW
- The Pacific Interchange option is a disconnect. It is so monumental and disruptive to so many neighborhoods. There is definite concern about its size.

4-Lane Alternative: Montlake Area (draft concept)



Public Comments

Jonathan Dubman, of Betterbridge.org expressed support of the Pacific Interchange option. He commends the team's emphasis on aesthetics, but feels more work is needed. He believes the Pacific Interchange would minimize impacts and restore the greenbelt to Montlake Playfield on Portage Bay while solving traffic bottlenecks from University Village and Montlake. He feels opportunities exist in the project for design of lighting, shading, and proportions that would preserve the Olmsted legacy.

Robert Rosencrantz, of the Montlake Community Club expressed neighborhood support of the Pacific Interchange option. He feels the economic future of NE Seattle residents depends on a seamless transportation connection to the Eastside. He noted the issue is one of regional importance, not merely a community's desire.

Theresa Doherty, representing University of Washington, stated UW does not support the Pacific Interchange option. Three reasons were cited: 1) impact on the marsh and Arboretum, 2) permanent loss of UW future development property, and 3) increased traffic. She stated that although traffic would decrease through Montlake, it would increase in surrounding neighborhoods. Traffic would increase 10% through the Arboretum and 49% at Arboretum on- and off-ramps. UW would prefer an option that includes HOV lanes.

6-Lane Alternative Design Options: Seattle Pacific Street Interchange (draft rendering)



Chris Leman, of the Eastlake Community Council, spoke in opposition to the Pacific Interchange option. He urged the Commission to take a favorable position on bike/pedestrian paths to the new bridge, emphasizing that reducing use of the automobile is a livability issue. He suggested the possibility of converting bridge shoulders into future travel lanes and flagged that as an item of concern.