

SR 520 Montlake Lid & Pedestrian Land

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Commissioners Present

Ben de Rubertis, Chair
Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Justin Clark
Laura Haddad
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Amalia Leighton

Project Description

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is redeveloping the Seattle segment of the State Route (SR) 520 corridor between I-5 and Lake Washington. The redevelopment will include new bridges that meet current seismic standards, HOV capacity, updated roadways, new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improved transit connections, open spaces, and enhanced non-motorized connections. In 2016, the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) consulted with WSDOT on urban design concepts for the Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Land Bridge. In 2018 WSDOT awarded a design build contract to a consortium headed by Graham Construction. In 2019, the SDC provided input on the awarded design to align the current design to the design the SDC approved in 2016.

Meeting Summary

This was the third of three reviews by the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC). The purpose of this meeting was to review the updated design for the Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Land Bridge. The SDC voted, 9-0, to support design updates with one condition and several recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan disclosed that she had previously worked on the project while working for LMN Architects

Justin Clark disclosed that his employer, WSP, is a sub consultant for WSDOT's Owner's representative team, but that he has not worked on the project in any capacity.

October 3, 2019

9:00 am - Noon

Type

Major Project

Phase

Briefing

Previous Reviews[7/18/19](#)**Presenters**Todd Harrison
WSDOTPeg Staeheli
MIG**Attendees**Hannah Britt
WSDOTMatt Degooyer
GrahamBill Estes
MIGDavid Graves
SPRCatherine Hovell
GrahamJustin Martin
MIGCharles Mayes
GrahamAmanda Tse
SDOT**Summary of Presentation**

Peg Staeheli, of MIG, and Todd Harrison, of WSDOT, presented the updated design for the SR 520 Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Land Bridge project. The presentation included a brief review of the overall design vision as well as community outreach and previous engagement efforts with the SDC. The remaining portion of the presentation included design updates to the Pedestrian Land Bridge, East Montlake Park, and connectivity to the regional shared use pathway (RSUP). The project team described updates to the pedestrian land bridge, which addressed changes to the overlook, architectural elements, bridge structure, and connectivity to areas north and south of the land bridge as well as updates to the planting palette and landscape design. The overlook will include interpretive signage on the railing overlooking. The updated design also includes more detail about the special paving material approaching the mixing zone near the overlook. *See figure 1 for more detail.*

Updates to the East Montlake Park include relocating the mixing zone and gathering space further east to provide a buffer between the area and the adjacent neighborhood. The design also includes two gathering spaces along the west and south edge overlooking a large open space. *See figure 2 for more detail.*

The project team also provided a concept design for a pedestrian connection between Montlake Blvd. and the RSUP below on the northeastern edge of the project site.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

A member of the public had several questions that were answered by the project team.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Pedestrian land Bridge
- East Montlake Park
- RSUP to Montlake Blvd pedestrian connection
- Overall comments

During the discussion of each issue, the Commission addressed the following:

- How design achieved overall vision and concept
- Response to previous recommendations
- Shifts and refinements to previous design
- Final design details, site furnishing, and lighting
- Sustainability measures

Pedestrian Land Bridge

The SDC commended the project team for their response to previous concerns about the design for the pedestrian land bridge. Specifically, commissioners appreciated the project team's solution to provide an organic design form, reworking bridge angles and materials to better achieve the original vision of nature meets city. Commissioners agreed the continuity between different design elements enhanced the elegance of the proposed design and then noted that the structural support for the bridge appeared secondary to the overall form. The Commission then strongly recommended the project team continue to pay attention to the design and materiality of the north and south



Figure 1: Updated design proposal for the Pedestrian Land Bridge



Figure 2: Updated design proposal for the East Montlake Park

abutments, thinking through faceting and treatment of the façade so it reads true to the original vision. Commissioners specifically commented on providing more elegance to the way the bridge facets to the abutment as well as ensuring that materials include a similar quality and finish to increase the cohesiveness of the overall design. The SDC then acknowledged that the plant specification and long term maintenance of the meadow will help in determining long term success of the land bridge. Commissioners recommended the project team work with SPR to think through the long term maintenance for the meadow. Commissioner also encouraged the project team to consider a sustainable strategy for optimal growth when specifying a plant palette for the meadow

The Commission also appreciated refinements made to the pedestrian overlook. Commissioners agreed the expanded space on the overlook would positively impact the pedestrian experience. The Commission

appreciated the opening between the top and bottom rails of the overlook and recommended the project team provide an elegantly designed interpretive sign between the railings. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to provide more seating opportunities at the overlook.

East Montlake Park

The SDC was encouraged by the updated design for East Montlake Park and stated that it was an improvement over the previous design proposal. Commissioners thought the design complemented the adjacent neighborhood and then commended the project team for including additional usable space in the design. The Commission appreciated the proposed blend of lawn and native vegetation. Commissioners agreed the lawn would serve as a good park amenity. Commissioners then encouraged the team to continue to think about the placement of appropriate wayfinding signage throughout the space.

The SDC then discussed connectivity and access within the space. The Commission requested more information related to pedestrian connectivity within the park space as well as connectivity to other pathways and trails. Commissioners also questioned the location of the vehicular access drive as it relates to the pedestrian area. The Commission expressed concern with having the vehicle access drive cross the pedestrian area. Commissioners recommended the project team refine pedestrian and vehicular movements in this area. The Commission then encouraged the project team to reevaluate the pavement treatments and continuity of the access path. Commissioners agreed the area appeared to be visually complicated and recommended the project team provide a simpler, more refined solution.

The Commission also discussed the area around the mixing zone. Commissioners questioned the proposed radius of the sidewalk south of the mixing zone and strongly encouraged the project team to consider reducing the radius, which will appear like an urban street form while reducing cyclist speed through the area. The Commission also requested more information on proposed pedestrian lighting near the mixing zone

RSUP to Montlake Blvd pedestrian connection

The SDC recognized this as an important connection to the adjacent communities and then stated that acquiring additional land will help to improve the design. The Commission encouraged the project team to focus on how access to and through the area will work as well as to focus on a design that will serve as an asset to the community. Commissioners also stated that the connection should be cohesively designed with the Bill Dawson connection, which is a part of the SR 520 Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid project. The SDC conditioned the project team to return for a subcommittee to review the Montlake Blvd and west stair connection design.

Overall comments

The SDC commended the project team for responding to previous concerns and recommendations. The Commission agreed the project team has responded well and providing an updated design that better aligned with the original vision of nature meets city. The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation and reiterated their desire to see additional seating around open space throughout the project.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for its briefing on the SR 520 Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Landbridge. Overall, the Commission appreciated the attention to achieve the original design vision of nature meets city and working to refine design elements specifically at the pedestrian land bridge and East Montlake Park to achieve a sense that the infrastructure bleeds into the landscape. This is the third of three meetings required according to agreements between WSDOT and the City of Seattle. The SDC endorsed the updated design proposals for the SR 520 Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Landbridge with the following conditions:

1. The SDC will review the Montlake Blvd. west stairs and ramp connection either during a subcommittee or at a full meeting when reviewing the Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid project.

The SDC also provided the following recommendations to be considered as the design continues to be refined:

1. Continue to refine the north and south abutments, thinking through faceting and treatment of the façade so it reads true to the original vision of nature meets city.

2. Think through long term maintenance of the meadow on the pedestrian land bridge, work with SPR to plan for transition to their management.
3. Think through signage and wayfinding so it is intuitive and legible along East Montlake Park.
4. Refine pedestrian and vehicular movements into East Montlake Park, and continue to think about pedestrians movement to other areas.
5. Continue to explore how interpretive signage can be integrated within the lean rail of the overlook on the pedestrian land bridge.