

- Action  
 Discussion  
 Information

**SUBJECT: SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROJECT UPDATE**

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**POLICY ISSUE:** Bellevue has been a long-time advocate for replacement of the SR 520 Bridge and participated in the early planning and design. The eastside of SR 520 is currently undergoing significant improvements related to bridge expansion and replacement. Interest statements adopted by the Bellevue City Council over many years have provided policy direction and guidance on the projects on SR 520 regarding design options, construction phasing, mitigation of impacts, funding/tolling, transit access and other issues. This update is provided in order to keep Council apprised of progress toward completion of the projects and to identify any significant issues on which Council may wish to address or provide direction.

**DIRECTION  
NEEDED FROM  
COUNCIL:**

Tonight's briefing is informational. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) State Route 520 project team will provide an update on the project. Their presentation will include the status of the west side of the project in Seattle, implications to traffic flow as the project is phased, and the uncertainty around how to fill an estimated \$1.4 billion funding gap. Council may wish to provide feedback to WSDOT staff, and/or direction to Bellevue staff.

**BACKGROUND:**

WSDOT staff has been asked to include the following information in its briefing for Council:

- Brief overview of the project.
- Status report on construction segments on the east side of the bridge.
- Overview and status of the project and challenges on the west side of the bridge.
- Any changes in the program budget and schedule on the west side; how WSDOT anticipates the way changes could impact overall funding; and the consequences if the project does not receive any new money.

- Details of its plan to keep people moving during the next phases of construction, especially as it relates to phasing for the new floating bridge that's being constructed adjacent to the existing floating bridge.
- Details on WSDOT's phasing plan as it relates to other regional corridors and the projected impacts to traffic and mobility for the community.

By way of additional background and history for these projects, Attachment A includes a summary of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project and related funding and policy background.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

NA

**RECOMMENDATION:**

NA

**ATTACHMENTS:**

(A) SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project and Policy Background

## SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROJECT & POLICY BACKGROUND:

### **Project Overview and Key Implementation Elements**

The State Route (SR) 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Project (SR 520, I-5 to Medina Project) spans 5.2 miles of the SR 520 corridor and involves:

- Replacing the Evergreen Point, Portage Bay, and west approach bridges;
- The addition of a continuous inside HOV lane, extending the existing HOV lanes on SR 520 in Medina to I-5 in Seattle with a direct connection to the I-5 express lanes;
- The addition of a regional bicycle/pedestrian path; improvements to the Montlake and I-5/SR 520 interchanges;
- Improvements to connectivity across the Montlake Cut in the Montlake interchange area;
- Construction of a new bridge maintenance facility on the Eastside;
- Highway lids at two locations, 10th Avenue East and Delmar Drive East, and Montlake Boulevard that will reconnect neighborhoods, enhance the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, restore and create views, and provide access to existing and new transit stops.

This project is one of four projects in the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program. Each project has a separate purpose and need; each provides independent benefit to the region. The other three projects in the program are described briefly below. These projects have each undergone separate environmental review. Section 1.7 of the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) and 6(f) Evaluations (Final EIS) provides additional description of these projects and how they meet the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) criteria for logical termini under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

#### **(1) SR 520, Medina to SR 202: Eastside Transit and HOV Project**

This project will improve transit travel time and reliability in response to strong growth in jobs, housing, and transit demand east of Lake Washington. The termini of the SR 520, Medina to SR 202 project are Evergreen Point Road on the west and SR 202 on the east. The FHWA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on this project in May 2010.

#### **(2) SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project**

This project's purpose is to construct and store new pontoons, which would be used to restore the existing traffic capacity of the Evergreen Point Bridge in the event of a catastrophic failure. The project will build only enough pontoons to replace the existing 4-lane capacity of the bridge in a design that meets current standards. If the pontoons are not needed for catastrophic failure before construction begins on the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project, they will be used for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina project. FHWA issued a Record of Decision for the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project in January 2011.

### **(3) SR 520 Variable Tolling Project**

This project is a component of the Lake Washington Congestion Management Program, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. It includes automated electronic tolling on SR 520 to relieve existing congestion. FHWA issued a FONSI for this project in June 2009. Tolling for this project began in late 2011.

### **(4) I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) released the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) in August 2006 for public comment (WSDOT 2006). A supplemental draft EIS for the project (the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation [SDEIS]) was released in January 2010 for public comment (WSDOT 2010). The Notice of Availability for the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) and 6(f) Evaluations (WSDOT 2011) appeared in the Federal Register on June 17, 2011. In the Draft EIS, FHWA and WSDOT analyzed the No Build Alternative, the 4-Lane Alternative, and the 6-Lane Alternative, along with several design options for the 6-Lane Alternative.

The SDEIS evaluated the No Build Alternative and three design options (A, K, and L) for the 6-Lane Alternative. The Final EIS includes the No Build Alternative, Options A, K, and L, and the Preferred Alternative, which is a modified version of Option A. FHWA and WSDOT determined that the Preferred Alternative would meet the project needs as well as or better than the other design options for the 6-Lane Alternative, and that it is the environmentally preferable alternative. The Determinations and Findings section provides more detail on this finding. The Preferred Alternative is the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Selected Alternative.

### **Project Funding Challenges**

In 2009, the Washington State Legislature set a program budget of \$4.65 billion. In October 2012, WSDOT released updated cost estimates that show all project elements – from I-5 in Seattle to SR 202 in Redmond – are \$4.128 billion, or \$522 million less than the program budget. WSDOT's latest project plans, including the west side preferred alternative, are within this program budget.

The state has secured a variety of state and federal funding sources over the years, including tolling the existing floating bridge, to help pay for the SR 520 program to advance the Eastside improvements and floating portion of the bridge. Bellevue was instrumental in ensuring toll revenue would be allocated to early east side improvements.

WSDOT is currently funded to move forward with:

- Constructing a new, safer floating bridge.
- Building a new pontoon construction facility in Grays Harbor.
- Building pontoons at the construction facility.
- Construction on the Eastside Transit and HOV Project.

- Building the north half of the new west approach bridge, connecting six lanes of traffic from the Montlake interchange to the new floating bridge.
- Continuing to design the remaining elements of the west side of the corridor.

**WSDOT Project Cost Estimate (October 2012) \$4.13 billion**

**Funding received to date from the following sources: \$2.72 billion**

State funding (Nickel and TPA)	\$0.55 billion
Federal funding	\$0.12 billion
SR 520 Account (tolling and future federal funding)	\$1.61 billion
Federal Loan (TIFIA)	\$0.30 billion
Deferred sales tax	\$0.14 billion

**Unfunded Need \$1.4 billion**

**Regional 520 Tolling Legislation and Related Council Direction**

Tolling is and will continue to play a significant role in helping pay for SR 520 improvements over time. In recent years, the legislature, in addition to authorizing tolls on SR 520 and other regional corridors in order to address capital funding needs and better manage highway traffic, created a legal and policy relationship between SR 520 and its parallel I-90 floating bridge. In 2009, the state legislature authorized collection of tolls on the existing SR 520 Bridge (ESHB 2211) in order to generate revenue to rebuild the frail bridge. Then in 2010, the legislature, informed in part by Bellevue’s advocacy efforts, passed ESSB 6392, which allows work on the SR 520 Eastside Transit and HOV project to advance to construction. This work is well underway today. Legislation passed in 2009 and 2010 also compels WSDOT to closely monitor the travel effects associated with SR 520 tolling. City staff continue to monitor the effects of SR 520 tolling on Bellevue’s local street network, especially north-south arterials and those streets serving downtown where traffic congestion is most acute.

In 2012, the legislature passed EHB 2814 concerning the replacement of certain elements of the SR 520 corridor. The bill, among its provisions, prevents WSDOT from constructing any element west of the floating bridge until “the legislature has authorized the imposition of tolls on the I-90 floating bridge and/or other funding sufficient to complete construction of the SR 520 bridge replacement and HOV program.” These restrictions expire on June 30, 2014. In December 2012, in an effort to capture Bellevue’s policy direction regarding tolling of major regional corridors, Council adopted language as part of the 2013 State Legislative Statement of Policy. Highlighted SR 520 policy language is included below:

***“Tolling. Bellevue supports the following principles concerning tolling of State highways (these principles are excerpted from previously-adopted Council policies and interest statements):***

- a. *The State should develop a region-wide phasing plan that responds to the need to provide geographic balance and regional equity in the use of tolling to improve overall highway system performance and manage regional travel demand;*
- b. *Tolling should be used as both a tool for managing and improving highway operations for all users and as a revenue tool to augment project funding;*

- c. Revenue raised in the corridor should be spent in the corridor (this has been State law for the last several years, with the exception of 2012, when the Legislature passed a bill allowing future I-90 toll revenue to be used to help fund SR 520);
- d. Traffic diversion and its associated effects on local roads should be minimized and the State should mitigate negative impacts; and,
- e. The State should continually monitor and evaluate the impacts and performance of all tolled lanes and assess the impact on general purpose, transit and HOV travel lanes, including occupancy parameters for 2+ and 3+ HOV users and ensure that 2-person carpools either improves or holds harmless general purpose lane performance as compared with any No Build scenario.
- f. Toll revenue should be used to optimally leverage State gas tax revenues, bonding availability and Federal partnership funding.

**Corridor-Specific Guiding Principles:** The City shall engage with WSDOT and refine tolling guidance over time as the region's tolling plan is implemented. The following principles should guide this engagement with regard to Bellevue's key highways—I-405, SR 520 and I-90:

- **I-405:** In addition to Bellevue's tolling principles, WSDOT should ensure that the Express Toll Lanes being planned and constructed on I-405 be consistent with the I-405 Master Plan and implemented where new capacity has been, or will be added, to accommodate the toll lanes.
- **Cross Lake Corridors - SR 520 & I-90:** In addition to Bellevue's tolling principles, WSDOT should engage with affected communities, stakeholders and cross-lake users of both bridges to ensure that the Legislature's direction to toll I-90 to help fund remaining costs associated with the SR 520 bridge replacement project be done in an open and transparent manner. A meaningful portion of the tolling revenue generated by I-90 tolls should be used to improve overall operation, maintenance and improvements (e.g., capital improvements such as targeted capacity improvements, park-and-ride lot expansion, transit service, enhancements, etc.) to I-90 through a future formal agreement with WSDOT."