

**Madison Park Community Council
Minutes of the Meeting of April 4, 2011**

Present: Linda Cody, Alice Lanczos, Connie Chaplin, Marie Bolster, Douglas Bery, Elinor Kriegsmann, Paul Fredrickson, Ann A. Moldren, Solvers Thomson, Judy Phillips, Colleen McAleor, Jean Amick, Maurice Cooper, Sandra Ewaskow, David Gardiner, Shannon Harney, Denise, Frisino, Christy Jones, Jay O'Connor, Rene Claringbould, Patsy Salazar, James Yager, Ken Myrabo, Bruce Brown, A. E. White, Daniel Clancy, Mark K. Plunkett, Alice Gautech Foreman, Kathleen O'Connor, Gene Brandzel, Bill Mundy, Kathleen Stearns. Special Guest: Tom Rasmussen.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Council Vice President, Kathleen O'Connor. She announced that the business of the meeting would be to discuss the status and implications of the WSDOT 520 Bridge Project. She introduced the special guest at the meeting: Seattle City Council Member, Tom Rasmussen, who has been the chair of the Council's Transportation Committee since 2003.

Maurice Cooper, member of the MPCC and of the Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520 spoke to the coalition's opposition to the currently proposed "Preferred Alternative" for SR 520 and the reconstruction of the 520 floating bridge. (See **INSERT** at end of these Minutes for statement from Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520 website.)

The Coalition (representing communities of Madison Park, North Capitol Hill, Montlake, Laurelhurst, Roanoke Park/Portage Bay, and the Boating Community) agrees that a bridge amelioration or replacement is needed. Their disagreement, on behalf of the communities they represent, is to the "Preferred Alternative."

- Plans indicate the bridge will end at the western high rise; one additional lane going west will open during afternoon commuter hours. (Deemed insufficient for the increased traffic that will be able to access the bridge going west.)
- One additional lane going east will open during morning commuter hours. (Deemed insufficient for commuter traffic.)
- "Good to Go" monies will be allotted to the development of the improvements on the east side. (Fees will be paid by all citizens using the bridge and should be allotted to all aspects of the bridge construction.)
- Replacement will be a floating bridge with no draw span. (Object to the loss of the draw span.)
- The state has spent ~\$400 million on planning without being able to put a complete design in place. (Object to the project moving ahead without a complete design.)
- There is no incorporation of what neighborhoods and the Coalition have submitted as formal suggestions. (Object to the idea that communities have devoted considerable serious attention, study, and meeting time to developing thoughtful ideas about the project, and these seem to have been ignored, even when submitted according to written requirements for submission.)

Maurice invited community members to address questions and concerns regarding his report to Maurice Cooper at mozcooper@hotmail.com.

Bill Mundy, also a member of the Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520, updated the community on recent meetings about the SR 520 Project. On Friday, April 1, 2011, the Coalition met with WSDOT representatives, who reported that the pontoon bridge extends to Foster Island. The bridge does not stop at the high rise; in fact, community members will be able to see construction beyond the western high rise quite soon.

There is a process for appeal of highway construction through an historic district. This process (106 Process), based on Federal rules states that a highway going through a district of historic properties requires a study of any adverse effects on the historic properties. "Historic property" may be defined as a

property that is 40 years old or older and in its original location. It includes, but is not limited to, properties that can qualify for the Historic Register.

A subcommittee of the Coalition, with representatives from Roanoke, Montlake, and Madison Park, submitted a request to WSDOT that they be considered a consulting party on adverse effects of the project on historic properties. (Lake Washington, the Seattle Tennis Club, Washington Park, Broadmoor, and the end of Madison Street are some of the historic sites within the area affected by the SR 520 Project.) In addition, this consulting party has completed and submitted a report of permanent effects and construction effects of this project. They are asking for further study before major construction work begins. Some of the effects about which the consulting party is concerned include:

Direct Effects

Vibration-installing ~300 pilings and removing the temporary pilings will cause buildings to shake, possible cracks in buildings, and noise pollution

Air quality-increased emissions from the construction equipment, and particulate matter from the demolition of the existing bridge

Dust-the cement dust from the demolition of the existing bridge is damaging to buildings in the area and can cause damage to exterior materials and facades

Indirect Effects

Noise

Visual effects—change of water views

Waste matter in the water

Negative effect on plant and wildlife (beaver lodge, nesting birds, and fish in area)

Boating hiatus in the area

Marketability of housing/value of housing

The consulting party would like to suggest the following:

- Change in the phases for the project: 2 phases, instead of the proposed 3.
- Reduced height of the high rise, since it was designed to accommodate a fire boat. (The nearest fire boat is on Alki and would not reach any fire in the area of the 520 bridge in a timely way.)
- Possibility of building a fire station on the lake (perhaps at the City of Seattle-owned park land at the end of Madison Street), rather than building a higher western rise on the bridge.

Kathleen O'Connor, also a member of the Coalition and the consulting party, presented to Tom Rasmussen that the communities in the Coalition believe they have been diligent in their study of alternatives for the 520 Bridge improvements, have presented their findings and suggestions appropriately, but have not been heard. She summarizes, they would like a bridge that is less tall, less wide, and less unsightly.

Is there a way for communities to participate in a process now to mitigate design flaws?
How can communities be heard?

Tom Rasmussen assumed the central position of the meeting at this point. He advised the assembled audience that it is important for him to hear concerns. He takes the concerns to the City Council, and the Council refers the concerns to the state agents and agencies, as the project is a state project, not a city project.

He advised that the project does have a design process, and the initial design phase is not only complete; it is in implementation. The pontoon portion (33 pontoons to support replacement of the current bridge platform) is in process. The Medina 202 environmental process is complete. Permitting is complete for this phase. Construction is starting.

The environmental study for the area from the west side to Medina is in final stages. A record of the decisions based on this study will be available in July 2011. It still is possible for community input to have some influence.

When the design was viewed last year, it was found to be something other than what community wanted. City Council at that time hired a design consultant to address community concerns. The design changes implemented as a result of the Council work with the consultant include a lowering of the floating bridge, the addition of light-rail ready features, restoration of park lands, and an urban interchange at Montlake. Mr. Rasmussen understands that the communities still want to influence design features of the project and to protect their neighborhoods. This might require entering into an agreement that binds the state to actions that minimize impact on the community. City Council can advocate for community concerns, but some suggestions for redesign may not be feasible, due to major redesign requirements.

Tom Rasmussen took questions from any persons present.

Community concerns expressed included:

- Bridge is too wide.
- Noise on the Portage Bay Bridge.
- What is “done deal”? (Two levels of the bridge, height of the high rise, etc.)
- Is the view easement to be lost?
- What is the priority and focus for growth in this area? Does the bridge design support the state policy to focus on growth in urban areas and stop sprawl?
- The lower level of the bridge was described as 20 feet high, but it seems it will be higher: 7’ pontoon + 10’ work area + 3” roadway + 57” railing = close to 25’ Are bridge dimensions, as described accurate representations?
- Access problems: loss of ramp to 520 from the Arboretum means that Montlake will be the access route for traffic to east side. This entry already is beyond capacity. Will the interchange address this?
- Madison Park, Madrona, and Leschi are among the communities that will have more limited access to the east side with the removal of the ramp from the Arboretum. This may result in a reduction of property values in these areas. (Rasmussen: Montlake Interchanges must be redesigned to allow access to 520 to operate as smoothly as possible.)
- Urban interchange concern: it seems it will cause more idling, especially for cars going west or north from SR 520, headed west. (Rasmussen: The final Environmental Impact Study should address some of these concerns.)
- Approximately 18,000 cars now go through the Arboretum each day. What was found in the origin and destination studies? Is there a way to reduce cars going through the Arboretum? (Rasmussen: What do people think about tolling Lake Washington Boulevard through the Arboretum?)
- If tolling in or around the Arboretum, community would want funds to go toward issues in the immediate area.
- What are the arguments against the issues that have been raised by the Coalition communities?

Alternatives to automobile traffic:

- (Rasmussen: The goals of the SR 520 Bridge project are to replace an aging structure and to accommodate more traffic as the region grows. Goal is to build a 100-year bridge to address predicted growth over the next 100 years. Rasmussen: Would like to see some solutions through transit, not bigger roads.)
- Community issues related to mass transit: bus system is inadequate to handle west-to-east commute. (It takes 2-3 buses to get to the east side from Madison Park.)

- Community organizations and individuals have submitted reports/comments to the state as required and on time. It appears the state did not read the reports, as the “Preferred Alternative” was announced almost immediately after the reports were due for submission. Does not seem as if all options were vetted according to the same required processes. Neighborhoods are isolated because they are not well-served by existing public transportation. Although issues have been raised, they do not get response. (For example, there is no response to the concern that increased traffic to the west side will end in our neighborhoods, and no additional capacity for movement out of the neighborhoods appears in the plans.) Nelson Nigard was asked to submit a design to address the effects of increased traffic on city streets. Does SDOT have a report on the effects of this project on city streets? (Rasmussen: the city still is looking at alternatives for accepting the traffic coming off of the 520 Bridge. The state also is looking at a variety of alternatives.)
- Is the city looking at the effect of traffic coming onto 23rd? (Rasmussen: There is not a plan for it now. King County Metro, WSDOT, and other entities will be working with the city for the design of 43rd. That is a later phase for the SR 520 Project.)
- (Rasmussen: The height in the middle of the new bridge is to avoid road closures while allowing workers access to the underside of the bridge at all times.)
- (Rasmussen: Light rail/transit system will require additional pontoons for the additional weight and height introduced by the transit vehicles traversing the bridge.)

Mr. Rasmussen stated his appreciation to the community for inviting him to this discussion. He applauded the community for submitting issues appropriately and stated the city will try to limit the impact of the SR 520 Project on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Community members asked Mr. Rasmussen to read documents that have been submitted by community organizations and members. They reiterated that height, access, and noise reduction are major issues for these neighborhoods.

A community member asked if it would be possible for a knowledgeable community member to be at the table for one or more meetings between City Council members and WSDOT? (Rasmussen: Would that be a good idea?)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Stearns

INSERT-Supplemental Information

Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520

Madison Park.. North Capitol Hill. Montlake, Laurelhurst, Roanoke Park/Portage Bay, Boating community

For more than four years, the Coalition for a Sustainable SR 520 has represented all of the communities who see, hear, and smell SR 520. We started inquiring how the proposed expansions would affect us, and moved into recommending solutions. After years of working with the local impact group, the state-sponsored mediation, meetings with WSDOT, the legislative workgroup, and various state and city groups, we have developed knowledge and understanding of issues far beyond the immediate physical impacts on our communities.

We support improvements to the 520 corridor. We are in favor of changing the corridor so that it is able to move more people and goods for the next sixty to one hundred years, without damaging the dense neighborhoods and irreplaceable natural open space which exist today.

Given the severe shortages of funds at the state, national, and city levels, we believe that the best solution is to use available funds now to fix safety problems on the existing 4-lane 520. We are in favor of tolls on 520, and believe that once tolls are established it may not be necessary to increase capacity for some years.. When funds are available in the future, we believe that adding two lanes for transit only will be the most successful solution for the next fifty years or more.

We believe that the current "preferred alternative" for SR 520 will fail to move people more efficiently. It will create so much local traffic that Seattle streets from Madison Park to the University District to downtown will be choked. It will remove an express lane on I-5, which will slow I-5 and further congest local streets. Although it may be quicker to get across Lake Washington on six lanes, the gain will be more than offset by the increased congestion in Seattle. The solution for 520 must not destroy the area. The proposed "preferred alternative" would ruin much more of Union Bay, Portage Bay, the wetlands, and the nature paths of the area. It would reduce parkland. It would add noise and pollution. This is not an acceptable solution when better alternatives are available: fix the four lanes now, add two lanes for transit later.

Madison Park Community Council representative: Maurice Cooper (206) 322-0234, mozcooper@hotmail.com
