

Madison Park Community Council Meeting of July 11, 2011

Board Members Present: Betty Bottler, Gail Irving, Dave Hutchins, Maurice Cooper, Lindy Wishard, Alice Lanczos.

The meeting was devoted to Seattle City Council President, Richard Conlin, at his request to explain the City Council's support of the Preferred Alternative for SR 520.

Conlin began his remarks by saying he was not an engineer or a state highway expert, nor a decision-maker in the 520 discussion. While the proposed 520 is not the plan the City Council was advocating, they have worked with WSDOT on the plans for a long time and he is confident that this project will work for the city of Seattle, noting that with all large transportation projects, not everyone is going to be happy with them.

With the final EIS submitted (FEIS), there is a 30 day comment period then the project goes to the federal government for a Record of Decision. The environmental review and decisions are complete, but the final design is not complete.

Several decisions have now been made between the City and the Arboretum on botanical agreements and parks mitigation. There will be a major expansion of the Arboretum and local parks.

The state is required to mitigate all wetlands lost. The lids for Montlake are not required, but the city wants that funding in for that part of the project and that WSDOT has agreed to fund the lids in principle.

There were studies made in 1996/97 there were serious 520 studies that studied all the options—the trans lake study—which studied all the options including an underwater tunnel. In early 2000 there were intense negotiations with the Eastside that wanted eight lanes that were for autos only. The City Council negotiated it to a 6-lane bridge with a pedestrian and bike lane and HOV lanes.

There were a series of meetings with the City and State, about alternatives, but there was no consensus, so it was sent to the State Legislature and a Legislative Work Group selected the final design. In 2010, the preferred alternative was sent to the City as the design to go forward. This alternative was sent forward for the Record of Decision.

The City's objective, Conlin said, 50,000 people in Seattle who want the bridge to work for them, but the City also wants to protect the neighborhoods that are impacted by the bridge. There is a very difficult North-South connection in Montlake and the traffic flow needs to be mitigate the back-up and free flow of traffic. The City wanted to minimize use of automobiles and emphasize transit, protect the environment as much as possible and protect the Arboretum, Seattle Parks and properties.

Conlin said the City Council was able to include the pedestrian/bike lane, include light rail, reduce noise, improve the wetland habitat, improve transit connections across the lake and get across Montlake more efficiently. Traffic on Montlake from 520 would be reduced by 5-to10%. The City Council also reduced

the Portage Bay Bridge width—all which were accepted by WSDOT, including a Boulevard Design on Montlake.

A second Montlake Bridge may not be necessary. There will be more wetlands in the Arboretum; the bridge's height has been reduced and will be 20' about the water from the high rise to the East side vs. the 35' above the water that it is now.

I-5 will not be impacted by the new HOV lanes. The Coalition for Sustainable Seattle is wrong that I-5 will lose one lane. There is no full funding for the project now, but federal funding will be available in the future.

The West side has significant safety issues and is more complex. The East side got its act together more quickly and had the easiest approach. The West side parts of the project are not funded. But there are still travel time advantages even if the project is not fully funded and the Montlake mess could last for awhile as new funding is being sought.

The Seattle approaches are the 2nd highest and construction could start as early as 2013.

Questions and Answers:

- 1) Why a double decker bridge that is higher? Can this be stopped?
RC—there is still design work that can be done. But most of the arguments have already been heard. There is no best solution, and all the questions have pretty much been answered.
- 2) The City Council is reducing traffic in the Arboretum. Now the only way to go North is to go to 23rd. There is only one way out of Madison Park. We are not being listened to and are being patronized.
RC—This neighborhood group has been represented on the committees and has been listened to.
- 3) Maurice Cooper indicated that he had been on most the committees Conlin mentioned for 14 years and what Conlin is saying is not true. The City Council representatives on the PS Regional Council have endorsed the current plan and every single thing the neighborhoods wanted is being ignored. The height of the bridge will not be 20 feet—in places it will be at least 30 feet high and the high rise will be even higher. Without tolling I-90, there will not be enough money to go beyond the Western High Rise and without the funding, bonds will not be issued.
RC. I think we can agree to disagree.
- 4) Gail Irving indicated that half of the city is north of us—why vote for this bridge. We can't get out of Madison Park. How do we get north?
- 5) In the 106 Process, only one complex in Madison Park was included. Why didn't the City Council the City Council intervene in that process?
RC—the 106 Process was the Mayor's responsibility, not the City Council's.

- 6) Bill Mundy. What happens during construction for the next 5 to 7 years—with particulate matter, dust, noise, vibrations, etc? How will best management practices assure that adverse impacts of construction impacts be assured? The pile driving may exceed standards.
RC. The contractors will need permits from the City. The management agreement will try to reduce the negative impacts.
- 7) Bill Mundy. Would you consider having people from the community who live near the impact have representation on a project management oversight committee? We had the vibration tests here cause wallboard to split and caused considerable damage. There will be a lot of unintended consequences.
RC. Yes, we will have community representation.
- 8) Bill Mundy. Safety and pontoons and columns. If there is an earthquake of 6.5 we will lose the bridge. Can't we have a safety fix for the bridge included and get the columns fixed? The bridge budget is \$4.65 billion—for the total bridge—The state construction budget out to 2023 includes \$2.4 billion for downtown and funds for 520 are \$2.6 billion, therefore the state is \$2 billion short over the entire budget. There are strong signs from the federal highway department that the federal highway funds will be cut back. What is the alternative if 520 will not be built? What are our alternatives? What about an immersed tube tunnel? We have budget data that the immersed tube tunnel could be completely built for \$2 billion and it would also resolve some major environmental problems.
RC. As for fall back. I don't think a new idea would be supported by WSDOT or the State Legislature.
- 9) Why don't you support our concerns?
RC. We have supported you.
- 10) How do we get to U Hospital? Will the Arboretum be okay?
RC. Traffic in the Arboretum will be reduced; there will be speed bumps. Traffic will go to 24th.
- 11) What study has been done on the impact of the traffic on 23rd and 24th? What happens when you take all the traffic between Leschi and Madison Park on put it on 23rd and 24th?
RC. You can still drive through the Arboretum, it will just be slower. The traffic impact studies show that the added lanes and changing light signals will improve traffic flow.
- 12) Gail Irving. Fully two months ago Tom Rasmussen here at this meeting said that no traffic studies had been done and the City was waiting for the FEIS before it would do a study. He said no studies had been done.
RC. I don't know what Tom said. I was not at the meeting. Studies have been done over the past two years using WSDOT projections.
- 13) Gail Irving. A lot of people are going to think it is too difficult to get here and will move out. The quality of life in our neighborhood will drop.
RC. You will still have the option of using the Arboretum. Access to 23rd will flow more smoothly because of how 23rd will be configured. If it does not improve, we will add a second bridge over Montlake.
- 14) How much is still in play and how can we influence the outcome?
RC. Five years from now the worst-case scenario would be the west side is not completed or funded. We will still have the ramps at the Arboretum. You could take a bus because traffic will

be faster. We will have a better solution. While you will still have the ramps, Arboretum traffic will be slower.

15) Why let the Arboretum Foundation make the decisions? Is the loss of the Arboretum ramps a done deal?

RC. The ramps are a done deal. 24th is still under decision.

16) If we build the way this is proposed, your legacy will be putting a viaduct on the lake. You are also ruining navigable waters.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen O'Connor, community volunteer