

March 21, 2007

Paul Krueger WSDOT Environmental Manager  
SR 520 Project Office  
414 Olive Way, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: SR 520 Replacement Project Options Position statement from Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee: further comment

Dear Mr. Krueger:

Further to our letter of September 15, 2006, we wish to draw your attention to a Resolution recently passed by the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC).

We, the members of the committee, are appointed by Seattle Mayor Greg Nichols, University of Washington President Mark Emmert, Governor Christine Gregoire and the Arboretum Foundation Board of Directors with the task of acting as stewards of the Washington Park Arboretum. We interpret this responsibility to include supporting the Arboretum's larger mission as an educational facility dedicated to environmental stewardship and conservation of biodiversity. In this role we wish to respond to such additional alternatives as the Green Alternative and the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay alternative for SR 520.

As we wrote in September, none of the options under consideration by WSDOT in the draft Environmental Impact Statement are acceptable to us. They would take Arboretum land and destroy valuable plantings – one alternative even uses three times the space already taken up by SR 520 in the Arboretum and eliminates long-lived specimens planted during the fledgling years of the Arboretum in the 1930s. Options under consideration also require the building of a temporary bridge on Arboretum land and require a new traffic plan for the whole construction period.

In our view either the Green Alternative or the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay Alternative is superior to all alternatives studied in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and there may be other alternatives yet to be considered which comprehensively address and resolve the transportation, environmental and experiential problems left unresolved by EIS alternatives:

a) The Green or the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay Alternatives are the only alternatives we have seen thus far that could result in a net gain of valuable wetland habitat rather than the losses that other alternatives create. All current EIS alternatives result in impacts on shoreline environments that are unacceptable to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other regulatory agencies. Other alternatives, both those mentioned here and others which may come to light, may have the potential to reduce impacts below current levels, or eliminate shoreline/wetland impacts.

b) The Green or the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay alternatives may provide the potential for integrating cross-lake transit with public transit at the UW Husky Stadium station. As an organization that supports environmental stewardship the ABGC strongly supports alternatives that permit more efficient and effective public transit; it cannot support large transportation project alternatives that preclude efficient and effective connections to public transit.

c) The Green or the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay alternatives may resolve the problems of connecting SR 520 traffic with the city streets north and south of Montlake Bridge without increasing traffic on this bridge, one of the busiest streets in the city.

d) The Green or the Arboretum Bypass/Union Bay alternatives provide a bridge structure or structures which could be elegant and a source of civic pride and a pleasurable and safe driving experience for users. All other alternatives the ABGC has seen thus far aspire merely to avoid creating dangerous driving conditions.

Because other alternatives may possess the potential to be better integrated with city streets, public transit and I-5; because they may offer a balanced and fair solution that minimizes impacts for all communities; because they may reduce environmental impacts in critical federally and State-protected shoreline environments; and because they may possess the potential to be a source of civic pride for users, we believe WSDOT should examine the Green Alternative and the Union Bay Alternative as well as other alternatives for the replacement of the SR 520 bridge and approaches.

Donald Harris, Chair of the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee, on behalf of the ABGC

ABGC members:

Margaret Ceis, City of Seattle  
Jack Collins, City of Seattle  
Donald Harris, City of Seattle  
John Johnston, Arboretum Foundation  
Neal Lessenger, Arboretum Foundation  
Sandra Lier, University of Washington  
David Mabberley, University of Washington  
Iain Robertson, University of Washington  
Dave Towne, Washington State representative

Enclosure: Resolution

cc: Governor Christine Gregoire, State of Washington  
Mayor Gregory Nickels, City of Seattle  
Secretary Douglas MacDonald, Washington State Department of Transportation  
Seattle City Council: Nick Licata, President; Sally J. Clark; Richard Conlin; David Della; Jan Drago; Jean Godden; Richard J. McIver; Tom Rasmussen; Peter Steinbrueck  
Board of Regents of the University of Washington: Frederick C. Kiga, Chair; Craig W. Cole, Vice Chair; Stanley H. Barer; Kristianne Blake; Jeffrey H. Brotman; Jennifer K. Faubion; William H. Gates; Sally Jewell; Constance L. Proctor; Herb Simon