

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

APPROVED

Web site: <http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/abgc/>

The Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee is a Joint effort of the Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks Department, and the University of Washington, and designated by Seattle City Council Ordinance 65130, approved December 27, 1934, and Ordinance 116337, approved September 8, 1992.

The ABGC is closely monitoring the WSDOT SR520 project for impacts to the Washington Park Arboretum. Please see <http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/520.htm>

Meeting Location: Graham Visitors Center, October 13, 2010 (Regular Meeting)

Voting Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

- Barbara Wright, Arboretum Foundation Board
- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director

City of Seattle

- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Donald Harris, Seattle Parks Property Manager

University of Washington

- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Sandra Lier, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) Director
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture

Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Absent:

- Kjris Lund, Mayoral Appointee

Other Staff Present:

- Nancy Belcher, Arboretum Foundation
- Stephanie Brown, Seattle Department of Transportation
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Planning & Development Deputy Director

WSDOT SR 520 Team Present:

Rob Berman, Planning Manager; Jenifer De Young, Environmental Manager, Katie DeLeuw, Communications Manager for SR520 Project, and Kerry Ruth, Engineering Manager West Side; and Andrew Barash, WSDOT Consultant on Traffic Calming

Members of the Public Present:

- *None*

ABGC Staff: Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Standing Committees

Building Committee:

Paige (AF); Donald (City); & Sandra (UW)

Joint Fundraising Committee:

AF: Paige Miller & Della Balick

City: Donald Harris & Christopher Williams

UW: Tom Hinckley & Sandra Lier

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG):

Michael (lead), Rick Nishi, Fred, Paige, Sandra & Tom

SR520 Technical Committee:

David Graves (City); Theresa Doherty & Fred Hoyt (UW)

Barbara Wright, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. The WSDOT and SDOT representatives joined the meeting at 9:30 am.

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG) Report

Michael reported that MPIG met on September 23 and gave updates on the following:

- *Gateway to Chile:* The ribbon cutting is scheduled from 1:00-4:00 pm on Sunday, October 17. It will be a busy day at the Arboretum, with the Holmdahl Rockery being re-dedicated, and that weekend is also the Maple Leaf Festival, which draws crowds to the Japanese Garden and Arboretum. To help accommodate parking needs, Arboretum Drive will be open one way, southbound, at Graham Visitors Center.
- *Composting Toilet:* Staff will visit the Picardo Farms composting toilet before a decision is made to install one at Pacific Gardens. With staff being cut from the budget, it may be difficult to take on the added maintenance this type of toilet would require.
- *Lake Washington Boulevard Lighting:* City Light has secured funding to pay for all three phases of the lighting project and hopes to complete the work in early 2011. The Arboretum will be more brightly lit than it is at present, as many of the current lights do not now function. The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks suggested the fixture style being installed.
- *Lake Washington Boulevard and Boren Intersection:* A new stop sign has been installed at this intersection.
- *Volunteer Update:* Qwest employees are donating at least 400 hours of volunteer time to the Arboretum. Their first work party is scheduled on Oct 23 and the second one on Oct 30. The volunteers signed up for one year. Qwest will also donate \$26,000 and pay for a new bench. Qwest's sponsorship is of huge benefit to the Arboretum.
- *Azalea Way:* As part of a nationwide Centennial Celebration of the cherry trees in Washington, DC, new cherry trees are being planted at Azalea Way. The Centennial Celebration in DC is scheduled from March 20-April 27, 2012. [For more information, see <http://www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/about/2012-centennial/>]. Staff are also working on drainage issues at the site.

Old/New Business

Budget Updates:

City: Seattle City Council is now reviewing Mayor McGinn's proposed budget. Seattle Parks Department is hard hit, with one of the Arboretum's gardener positions cut.

ABGC members agreed it is very important to talk to City Councilmembers. Paige doesn't think they will restore the funds to the Arboretum. However, some people may consider additional cuts to the Arboretum as a way of funding the proposed reductions at several community centers. Barbara forwarded the ABGC's letter to the Mayor and City Council and suggested several ABGC members testify at budget hearings. Those who testify will speak in support of the Arboretum's funding (which is modest) and stress that the number of volunteers is being increased, yet they can only do so much of the work and need staff supervision to both train and oversee them. If the gardens aren't maintained, valuable plantings and collections will be lost. And stress that the Arboretum is the UW's classroom. Attendance to the Arboretum has increased and it isn't the time to pull its funding.

ABGC members will also talk individually with Councilmembers over the next week. Paige volunteered to speak with Councilmember Burgess and Iain to Councilmember O'Brien. Sandra stated that the same message will be stressed to the UW.

UW Regents Briefing: Sandra reported this briefing has been postponed until January, date to be determined.

Building Committee Update: Paige and Sandra recently met with Lynn Nohn of the UW real estate office.

UW Provost Letter: Sandra prepared the draft and asked the ABGC for comments. Several were suggested and Sandra will incorporate into the letter. She will then send the letter to the Provost and the Mayor, and cc: ABGC members.

WSDOT Mitigation Plan & SDOT Traffic Management for Lake Washington Boulevard

The two teams joined the meeting at 9:30 am and introductions were made around the room. The WSDOT team distributed six handouts and Rob reviewed today's meeting objectives. Rob is the team leader and part of his role is to ensure ABGC gets the technical and other information it needs. Jenifer is the lead on environmental issues, and Kerry is lead on engineering issues. Today's topics are (1) Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) traffic management techniques for Lake Washington Boulevard and (2) WSDOT Draft Mitigation Plan.

SDOT Transportation Traffic Management

Stephanie and Andrew distributed an updated 11x17 spreadsheet for the Traffic Management Plan. Thirteen measures were listed with the following headings: ID, Type, Description, Benefits to Arboretum, Challenges, Comment, Application, Investment, and Action. A copy is attached to the signed version of these minutes.

They recently added the "Investment" column, with measures designated as low, moderate, or high investment. Low does not require a capital improvement plan (CIP); moderate and high do. Two other columns were added: the "Action" and "ID" columns. Andrew reviewed each of the measures, which include: Signing improvements; traffic signal modifications; traffic-calming treatments; turn restrictions; traffic restrictions; and tolling. Some of the measures require additional information. If any turn restrictions are implemented, SDOT must meet with the affected neighbors.

Andrew stated there is a great deal of research to do and questions to answer to determine tolling feasibility. Rob agreed; the decisions must be layered. Andrew and Stephanie will continue working to address concerns and to develop a flexible plan which strikes the right balance.

Of the thirteen measures, they are recommending nine, and each has a variety of challenges and actions:

- Install signing that directs SR 520-related traffic to the Montlake interchange on routes other than Lake Washington Blvd (LWB). Locations could include the intersections of Madison & 23rd Ave, LWB, and Madison and 24th Ave & LWB.
- Set intersection signal timing to discourage traffic from routing through the Arboretum. Options include reducing time for eastbound left turns at the intersection of Madison & LWB, increasing time for eastbound left turn at intersection of Madison & 23rd Ave. Optimize the signal timing of the 24th and LWB intersection to minimize southbound left turns into the Arboretum.
- Installation of traffic-calming measures along LWB through the Arboretum, including raised, marked crosswalks, speed cushions, and potential radar-speed signs.
- Prevent southbound left turn from 24th onto LWB during off-peak hours.
- Prevent southbound left turns from 23rd onto Boyer and/or Interlaken.
- Prevent westbound through traffic from LWB from accessing the eastbound 520 on-ramp at Montlake.
- Restrict Interlaken and Boyer access to LWB.
- Toll trips that access SR 520 by passing through the Arboretum. Scanners would be installed to read a vehicles' toll transponder or license plate. Vehicles that drive between the Arboretum and SR 520 would be charged a fee.
- Cordon toll around the Arboretum. Scanners would be installed to read a vehicles' toll transponder or license plate. All vehicles that passed through the Arboretum would be charged a fee. Those that stopped to visit the park would not be charged if they returned the same way they entered.

They do not recommend the following four measures:

- Full-time restriction of southbound left turn from 24th onto Lake Washington Boulevard.
- Cul-de-sac LWB east of 24th or north of Boyer.
- Prevent traffic from accessing LWB from the SR 520 eastbound off ramp.
- Create single reversible lane through Arboretum and two-way bike bath within existing roadway prism. The reversible lane would accommodate peak-hour traffic.

The ABGC was in agreement with the four measures not being recommended.

Turn Restriction Comments

Paige

- Installing the left turn restriction impacts park users coming from the East Side to access the Arboretum. Stephanie suggested Boyer could become the main entrance to the Arboretum, which would alleviate this problem.

Tolling Comments

Paige

- The tolling plan allows people to come to the Arboretum and not be penalized.

Michael & Sandra

- Be sure the tolling is feasible before dropping the turn restriction.

Dave

- He has heard that the Highway 167 tolling is not breaking even, financially.

Stephanie responded to Dave that tolling can still be a benefit in other ways. The tolls would be used to reduce traffic in the Arboretum and not as a revenue source. SDOT and WSDOT can determine what it will cost to install and operate a tolling system, but will be cautious in predicting the financial outcome. They will work with the City's Law Department to determine whether the City would do the tolling or go through the State for this. Responding to a question from Barbara whether tolling for any vehicles using Lake Washington Boulevard, which is a park, will be returned to the Arboretum, Stephanie will look into the legal aspects of that.

Kerry added that the new SR 520 project will take a good while to complete. The tolling proposal needs a great deal of analysis as tolling LWB may affect the SR 520 tolling. The City would do the tolling, but it must work within State policy decision. She wants to be sure the ABGC understands a determination will take some time to reach.

Paige requested that WSDOT and SDOT continue giving the ABGC information and describing any benefits of the tolling. The ABGC will lobby for the tolling and SDOT's help is requested. The ABGC will study measures L and M, but may prefer L, as it doesn't want to impact local users' trips.

Next Steps:

SDOT and WSDOT are discussing the timing of the traffic-calming measures. SDOT will study the recommended measures in 2011, with implementation in 2012. Responding to a question from Jack whether some of the easier measures could be implemented in 2011, Stephanie agreed they can. Donald added that implementation also hinges on City Light's completion of the LWB lighting project. That project is currently under way.

Barbara stated the matrix is outstanding. ABGC members agreed to notify Andrew and Stephanie if they want to change any of the measures. They will continue refining the report and send the ABGC definitions of what low, moderate, and high mean in terms of the "Investment" column.

WSDOT Mitigation Plan Presentation

WSDOT distributed a seven-page handout, including “Exhibit X. Environmental Resource Areas, Preferred Alternative Preliminary – Sept. 22, 2010”, a map “Proposed Mitigation for I-5 to Medina Project Impacts Draft – Oct 13, 2010”, “Potential Mitigation and Enhancement Projects for the Washington Park Arboretum – Project Scopes and Estimated Costs for discussion at ABGC meeting – October 13, 2010” and “WSDOT Evaluation of Potential Mitigation Projects in Washington Park Arboretum.”

Donald stated it's important WSDOT ensures the Mitigation Plan isn't agreed on by WSDOT and ABGC — and then the SR 520 project runs out of funds. Rob responded that the Plan will be “memorialized” to the State Legislature. As well, the Environmental Impact Statement language requires adequate Mitigation Plan funds.

Kerry noted that funding is secured for the new floating bridge and the East Side portion of the project. Now WSDOT is working with the State Legislature to determine where the remaining funding will come from for the West Side. The unfunded portion of the project may be phased; however, some of that portion's key milestones must be funded. She recommended that ABGC advocate for funding the rest of the project.

ABGC strongly supports removing the “ramps to nowhere” from the Arboretum, as well as pedestrian and bicycle access to the Arboretum and will lobby the State Legislature to include these three elements in the SR 520 project.

Jenifer responded to a question from Barbara whether the lids must be included in the project. They are integral to the project and scheduled for the 4th phase.

Jenifer next reviewed pages 1-3 of the WSDOT handout which included maps of:

- #1 Temporary and Permanent Effects to Aquatic Resources
- #2 Temporary and Permanent Effects in Wetlands
- #3 Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) effects

#4 Map Showing Proposed Mitigation for I-5 to Medina Project Impacts. Jenifer stated this map gives the context for the Arboretum mitigation and shows locations of wetland, aquatic resources, Section 4(f), and Section 6(f) mitigation. The aquatic mitigation is spread far and wide, with 18 sites designated on the map.

The discussion focused on the UW property, where its campus police are currently housed, that may be part of the mitigation. Donald stated the property appraisal is moving slowly. Theresa added that the first appraisal was not performed under 6(f) requirements and UW has since hired a new appraisal, with the help of WSDOT. The appraisal will not be completed as early as WSDOT wants the information.

#5 & 6 Matrix and Map Showing Potential Mitigation and Enhancement Projects for the Washington Park Arboretum. These included a matrix and map of the following elements:

1. Contribution to Foster Island improvements pending tribal coordination
2. Aesthetic enhancements at Foster Island crossing
3. WSDOT Peninsula Restoration – restoration following ramp removal
4. Contribute to North Entry
5. Arboretum Creek wetland improvements
6. Azalea Way Pond
7. Contributions to new multi-use trail along Lake Washington Boulevard

Other Potential Projects

- Implementation of Interpretive and Wayfinding Plan in areas being improved by WSDOT
- Noise reduction
- Support for traffic calming implementation

These elements have been revised by WSDOT after discussion with ABGC at the September 27 meeting. Rob is working with the Muckleshoot Tribe to set up a meeting with ABGC. There was some discussion that WSDOT needs a list of any project components on this list that are already completed. WSDOT would fund the work, and ABGC would scope, design, and complete the project. There is still a lot to be determined and this is just the beginning of the discussion to do so. Paige agreed with this approach and stated the ABGC prefers to do the projects, and not WSDOT. Kerry will investigate whether WSDOT can pay a third party consultant to do the scoping, with the cost estimates to be developed in the future.

#2. Aesthetic Enhancements at Foster Island Crossing: Jen stated WSDOT wants the Foster Island Crossing as compatible with the Arboretum as possible. WSDOT must develop a process for the Muckleshoot and five other Tribes, ABGC, and WSDOT to focus on this. Kerry will also work closely with Seattle Design Commission, UW Architectural Commission, and others. This is an integral part of the SR 520 project's design; however, it is not being done as mitigation. It was identified after working with the stakeholders.

Jack commented the noise walls will impacts views as people are coming into the city.

#3. WSDOT Peninsula Area Specifically for Restoration: Barbara noted this wasn't on the ABGC list and asked that it be identified thusly.

WSDOT staff responded that WSDOT is looking at how to surplus the property where the ramps will be removed, valued at \$2 million. If the property is transferred to the Arboretum, WSDOT must justify as mitigation and how it will avoid long-term maintenance.

Iain likes the idea of leaving part of the ramp as a viewing platform, as suggested by Susan Black of the Arboretum Foundation. Susan has prepared some drawings of what the ramp might look like. He asked if WSDOT would give consideration to this proposal. Rob answered that it would, if a majority of the ABGC members support the proposal. WSDOT must know the ABGC's decision soon, to notify other agencies for the permitting process. If the proposal moves forth, ABGC would become responsible for the viewing ramp.

Donald, Iain, Paige, Sandra, Michael & Jack will review the drawings with Susan, do a site tour of the area, and report back to the rest of the ABGC and WSDOT at the November 10 meeting.

#4 Contribute to North entry. Jennifer reviewed the description. Paige stated this is defined in the Master Plan. Rob responded that it is scheduled as a later project and the ABGC has time to discuss the design and adjust the funding. Theresa believes this fits with the earlier suggestion to hire a consultant to scope the projects. Jenifer agreed that the funding could be determined later on when the Mitigation Plan is taken to the State Legislature. The list of projects is developed; now they need scoping and cost information added.

#5 Arboretum Creek Wetland Improvements. Shane Cherry, WSDOT consultant, has almost finished the cost estimate. Paige asked if Shane worked with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) on whether the new Madison Valley storm drain can be utilized for restoring Arboretum Creek. Shane did discuss this with SPU and they have reservations about using the tanks for this purpose. Paige asked that more discussion be held during the cost estimating about utilizing the tanks, a bioswale, and a well. Paige and Nancy will meet with Rob and Shane to discuss this further.

#6 Azalea Way Pond. Jack asked that the map show the stream corridor leading into the pond and Arboretum Creek to give credit for wetland work. Jenifer agreed to do so.

#7 Contribution to Multi-Use Trail. The costs must be updated so WSDOT has a realistic amount; however, it will pay \$1.7 million. The trail is located on the east side of Lake Washington Boulevard. WSDOT will better

define the trail on the next version of the map. A non-motorized trail will make the case that it is 4(f) mitigation.

Other Elements:

General Wayfinding Elements Consistent with the Arboretum Character: WSDOT will work with ABGC to do this as the projects are implemented. It is difficult to classify this as mitigation.

Barbara requested WSDOT also look for alternate ways for pedestrians and bicyclists to move through the Arboretum as part of the traffic calming plans.

Noise Reduction (4-foot barrier with sound absorption as part of preferred alternative): Responding to a question from Jack whether people in vehicles can see over a 4' barrier, Kerry answered that some will be able to. She added that the barrier will be only 2'-6" on the floating bridge. WSDOT is committed to using quiet pavement.

Support for Traffic Calming Measures: SDOT presented the most recent plan earlier in today's meeting.

Barbara asked that Traffic Movement be added as #8 and a maintenance fund as #9. Rob has talked with the Attorney General and others and the Federal Highway Administration does not want to participate in funding maintenance. So far, he believes the others are all possible and will result in mitigation credit for WSDOT.

WSDOT asked if the ABGC agrees this is the list of projects WSDOT should focus on for mitigation, subject to timeline, scoping, and costs. ABGC members agreed.

Michael stated that some projects can be scoped independently by Seattle Parks Planning and Development Division staff. Paige asked that the south end trail be completed early in the process.

Next Steps

Oct 25: hold a special meeting only if representatives of the Muckleshoot Tribe are available to meet with ABGC (they were not available and Oct 25 meeting was not held)

Nov 10: Next regularly-scheduled meeting, 8:00 am-noon. WSDOT will be scheduled first on agenda and will send a draft mitigation report to ABGC a week or more ahead of the meeting.

Nov 29: Tentative date for special meeting.

ABGC members thanked WSDOT and SDOT. The information presented today was very helpful.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Chair