

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

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, September 8, 2010

Voting Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

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

City of Seattle

- Donald Harris, Seattle Parks Property Manager
- Kjris Lund, Mayoral Appointee

University of Washington

- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Sandra Lier, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) Director

Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Absent:

- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture

Other Staff Present:

- Nancy Belcher, Arboretum Foundation
- Stephanie Brown, Seattle Department of Transportation
- David Graves, Seattle Parks, Senior Planner
- Fred Hoyt, UWBG, Associate Director
- 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 Karrie Ruth, Engineering Manager West Side; and Andrew Barash and Michael Minor, WSDOT Transportation Consultants

Members of the Public Present:

- John Barber
- Larry Sinnott, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks

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.

SR 520 and Pedestrian Safety/Traffic Calming for Lake Washington Boulevard Process: Barbara stated the ABGC will begin making decisions today on the mitigation issues. This special meeting process with WSDOT is scheduled to end in mid-November and there are only a few remaining meetings to complete the work. By the end of today's meeting, she wants the ABGC to say what information it needs from WSDOT. Sandra commented the ABGC is giving information to WSDOT; however, it is not yet receiving the information it needs in return. As an example, WSDOT made assumptions based on incorrect property appraisal and has not corrected the data. Fred reported that the UW arranged for its own property appraisals and WSDOT will pay the costs.

Paige wants to keep pushing to reduce on the speed of traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard to 45 mph. She has heard that the Federal Highway Administration informed WSDOT it will not agree to the request, but WSDOT has not shared that information with the ABGC. She discussed this with Ethan Raup, the Mayor's Director of Policy and External Affairs, as well as with the City Attorney. She understands from those conversations that the City will request the speed limit reduction in its white paper. To further this effort, Paige will contact City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, and Barbara will contact City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw. Both are members of the Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee, with Sally serving as committee chair.

It was agreed that the summaries provided by WSDOT staff of these meetings will be considered summaries and not minutes. The official minutes will continue to be generated by the ABGC coordinator, with a copy of the WSDOT/SDOT handouts and the WSDOT notes attached to the minutes.

Budget Updates

UW: Sandra reported that the UW will have an additional and unexpected 4-7% cut from the State in October.

City: Donald reported that the City Finance Office recently released new revenue projections for 2011. In the Department's proposed budget, the City's support of the Arboretum will be cut, possibly by reducing staffing by one gardener. Parks is expected to take a large budget reduction, with 75-100 positions cut.

Donald distributed the City Council budget hearing schedule and the ABGC discussed testifying to City Council against cuts to the Arboretum. Private donors have provided a great deal of funds to enhance the Arboretum and the Arboretum must be maintained and not become shabby. Sandra and Paige agreed to draft a letter to the Council and Mayor, with final discussion of the letter at the September 27 meeting. In addition, Dave, Barbara, Jack, and Kjrjris, who are not employed by either the City or UW, will be asked to testify at the budget hearings on behalf of the Arboretum.

Arboretum Foundation: Paige reported the Foundation has scheduled its first cultivation event later today. This is a good opportunity to increase operating funds for the Arboretum.

Old/New Business

Gateway to Chile Groundbreaking: This event is scheduled on Sunday, October 17, to coincide with the Maple Leaf Viewing Festival. Paige noted the closure of Arboretum Drive to vehicles has resulted in a lack of adequate parking when special events are held in the Arboretum.

Letter to Mayor McGinn re: MOHAI: Paige has had some discussion with the Mayor's staff on the controversy over the \$40 million the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) received for the sale of its building to WSDOT, as part of the SR 520 project. MOHAI is slated to receive an additional \$7 million from the sale of the land. Paige reported that land to which the Arboretum Foundation had a claim extends under the corner of the MOHAI building and WSDOT has insisted the Foundation sign a quit claim. The City is currently preparing a letter to WSDOT re: the transaction. Once the letter, to be signed by Councilmember Bagshaw and Parks Acting Superintendent Christopher Williams, has been signed, the Arboretum Foundation will sign the quit claim and return it to WSDOT.

10/21 Regent Briefing: The ABGC briefing to the UW Regents is scheduled for Thursday, October 21. Della Balick is the Arboretum Foundation president and will attend. The College of the Environment Dean has asked Sandra to develop a Powerpoint presentation as well as a briefing handbook, due on October 11.

Lake Washington Boulevard Street Lighting Improvements: Michael reported this City Light project is moving forward slowly. There was a glitch with how the footings were poured, which resulted in the project getting behind schedule.

Maintenance Funding: Nothing new to report.

Building Committee: Nothing new to report this month. This will be added to the October agenda.

Letter to UW Provost re: 520 Mitigation Funds: Sandra previously distributed via e-mail a draft of the ABGC letter to UW Provost Phyllis Wise and she received comments from Iain and Barbara, which were incorporated into the draft. ABGC members reviewed the new draft and made additional recommendations. The ABGC is very concerned that mitigation funds to be paid by WSDOT to the UW as a result of damage in the Arboretum be spent in the Arboretum — and not for other UW needs. Michael recommended that the final statement be more forceful and Dave agreed that the stronger the language, the better. Paige noted the ABGC is not trying to tell the Provost how to spend the money, only that it must be spent at the Arboretum. The Arboretum Foundation will send a separate letter to the Provost with the same message. Fred recommended attaching the Senate Bill to the letter to reflect the authority of the bill to mitigate the Arboretum fully for any damage it sustains as a result of the SR520 project. Responding to a question from Dave on the UW's mitigation representative, Sandra responded that it is Theresa Doherty and several other UW staff.

Public Comments

Larry Sinnott, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks: Mr. Sinnott distributed a handout showing the existing SR520 ramps, which includes information about the morning peak-hour traffic (identified as Filing Code 080502 Figure 4 & 5, 9/4/2002, Subject LW Ramp Closure, E File ID Final Lake Washington Boulevard Ramp Closures.) This information is posted on the WSDOT web page; however, he sees discrepancies in the graphics. He distributed a second handout based on the 2000 census and believes WSDOT filtered out some of the northbound traffic counts, specially commuter figures.

Nancy asked Larry to state his primary concern and whether he believes there are negative repercussions. Larry believes that the discrepancy and filtered information does not give the full picture of traffic impacts. He believes WSDOT filtered the traffic counts to paint a better picture. Paige noted that the tolling will occur on SR520 and not I-90 and that may change the dynamics. Paige commented that development of a strong traffic management plan will help protect the Arboretum.

WSDOT Team and SR 520

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 is a planning manager for traffic and environmental analysis. His role is to ensure the ABGC gets the technical and other information it needs. Jenifer is the lead on environmental issues, and Karrie is the lead on engineering issues.

WSDOT Presentation: Handout #1: Draft Proposed Mitigation for Effects to the Washington Park Arboretum Preliminary – For discussion at Sept 8, 2010, ABGC meeting and Handout #2

This document listed the park impacts, amount/nature of impact/governing regulation(s), mitigation requirements, avoidance and minimization measures, proposed mitigation measures, and implementation steps. The group then compared this document to *Handout #2: WSDOT Evaluation of Potential Mitigation Projects in Washington Park Boulevard (map)*. This handout highlighted seven projects: 1. contribution to Foster Island improvements (pending tribal coordination); 2. aesthetic enhancements at Foster Island crossing; 3. restoration following ramp removal; 4. north entry; 5. Arboretum Creek wetland improvements; 6. Azalea Way pond; and 7. contributions to new multi-use trail along Lake Washington Boulevard. The group discussed the various impacts of the projects. Karrie will bring a timeline to the September 27 meeting, showing the construction impacts and an overview of each year of the construction. Rob asked to be clear that WSDOT is tying the transportation mitigation dollars to the projects shown on handout #2. Responding to Paige's statement that the ABGC wants traffic speed on SR 520 reduced to 45 mph, Rob noted that this will be discussed later in this meeting.

More on Handout #2:

Jennifer clarified that WSDOT looked at the Arboretum wetland area and whether the flow could be augmented. Rob noted there is little physical habitat to support fish and the initial evaluation is that the stream water is not re-charged by ground water. Reconfiguring the stream could increase the flow; however, it would require an enormous storage tank to store the water, as well as pumping water to the stream to ensure an adequate flow. Based on the initial findings, WSDOT eliminated the augmentation from the mitigation list.

Paige asked if a drilled well could be used to enhance the water flow. Jennifer responded that it would take a great deal of work to restore Arboretum Creek for salmon habitat and the Department of Ecology would not look at that as mitigation. Paige responded that a successful salmon habitat would be used as a teaching facility for kids who live in the heart of the city. Fred asked whether improving habitat for salamanders and insects would be considered for mitigation and Jennifer will check on this and report back.

Jenifer stated these projects spend public funds and WSDOT and the other agencies must look at what is required by regulations and which rise to the top for the public's benefit. Paige asked Jenifer to clarify whether she is saying that there are certain things that can and cannot be funded. If the Arboretum Foundation partners on a project and brings funding to the table, it would want WSDOT to at least consider the project. The partner funding could then help frame the project as a private project. Rob responded this option would depend on how the funding is structured. Paige noted that the public has been very interested, during tours of the Arboretum, in the capacity to return fish to Arboretum Creek. She believes WSDOT should flag any potential jointly-funded projects and Jenifer asked Paige to let WSDOT know of any other such projects. Following some additional discussion on how much water would be required, the WSDOT team agreed to flag this as "having merit, but WSDOT cannot fund." Paige thanked the WSDOT team and commented this is helpful.

Rob referred to item #7 and noted it fits well with the SR 520 transportation elements. Some other ABGC priorities are not on the map, including Wayfinding improvements, traffic calming; and noise reduction.

Rob referred to Handout #2, specifically #1 Contribution to Foster Island improvements (pending tribal coordination); and #2 Aesthetic Enhancements at Foster Island Crossing, and stated that a process has been identified so WSDOT designers meet with the groups interested in Foster Island to discuss opportunities and implementation. The Muckleshoot Tribe has asked WSDOT to facilitate a meeting with ABGC to be sure ABGC doesn't request projects on Foster Island that are not approved by the tribe. They want a minimalist approach. Rob will work with Barbara to arrange this meeting.

Donald asked if the description of #4, North Entry, should be expanded. Responding to a question from Fred on the 4f conversion rate, WSDOT members answered that it depends on the classification. WSDOT staff are meeting the following day to better determine this and expect to have this information clearly determined by the end of the year.

Rob asked if the ABGC is agreeable that WSDOT take these two documents forward in the mitigation discussion. Paige is agreeable, but asked that a determination on the very important issue of reducing the SR 520 speed limit to 45 mph be delayed. Nancy asked that the 23rd Avenue traffic management also be delayed. Paige noted that S.B. 6392 directed WSDOT to handle the SR520 mitigation differently than its usual standards. She believes that reducing traffic is the biggest impact and that may not be part of WSDOT's usual standards.

Responding to Michael on the traffic impacts noted on Page 2 of Handout #1, Rob answered that S.B. 6392 requires WSDOT to look at the traffic improvements. Kjrj commented that she would like more time to really digest this information. Rob responded that the WSDOT team just needs to know if these two documents are close enough to the ABGC's proposed mitigation that WSDOT can work with other agencies and know that it is reflecting most of the ABGC's projects to those agencies.

Barbara suggested that WSDOT add "Working Draft" to the documents and add "Reduce SR 520 Traffic Speeds to 45 mph." Rob agreed with these suggestions, but stressed that WSDOT must present a final report in December.

Barbara stated the list and corresponding map are excellent documents and provide a clear matrix to the ABGC. Members agreed.

SDOT Presentation – Handout #3

Stephanie Brown of Seattle Department of Transportation and Andrew Barash, WSDOT Transportation Consultant, next reviewed handout #3, "Arboretum Traffic Management Measures for Evaluation – September 8, 2010 – Draft". These are possibilities and the ABGC was asked to review and delete items or add language. Andrew gave a brief overview of the types of possibilities to manage Lake Washington Boulevard traffic and increase pedestrian safety and ABGC members made some brief comments. Andrew asked that any additional comments be forwarded to he and Stephanie. He will add a new column to this draft document to include the costs of each proposal type and bring back to the ABGC.

Stephanie stated WSDOT does not want to fund any of these projects and SDOT cannot fund those outside of its current budget. The remaining projects could be packaged and taken before the Mayor and City Council to request funding. The tolling and road widening, which would be very costly, must be elevated in importance. Paige noted that the tolling could be packaged in various ways and asked what it would cost to implement tolling for using Lake Washington Boulevard to access SR520. What revenue would be generated and would the tolling pay for itself? Stephanie responded that SDOT doesn't perform tolling analysis and would need a consultant to generate this information. The City usually asks the State Revenue Department to make such calculations. She will check on this and report back to the ABGC at the October 13 meeting. Karrie will ask the WSDOT tolling staff to assist Stephanie.

Theresa referred to #4 on page 1 "Turn Restrictions: Prevent SB left turn from 24th onto Lake Washington Boulevard." Stephanie noted the City's plan is not to expand the capacity of 24th Avenue and this is not a popular option. Paige asked that SDOT still explore the possibility, while knowing it is a controversial proposal and that the neighborhood will push back. Theresa added that this option must really be considered as the discussions move forward. She asked that SDOT separate peak hour/non-peak hour traffic counts for this.

Barbara asked if public meetings would be required to implement the turn restrictions. Stephanie responded that if it benefits the Arboretum and negatively impacts the neighborhoods, SDOT must make the decision makers (Mayor, City Council) aware. Barbara asked that SDOT reflect whether WSDOT is supportive of the idea. Kjris noted that many bicyclists use Lake Washington Boulevard and Arboretum Drive. Paige agreed and stated they include commuters and recreational riders, with part using the new trail. Stephanie will determine whether this use would qualify for different, and additional, funding dollars.

The ABGC will continue working with SDOT on these traffic calming measures for Lake Washington Boulevard to develop a package. Barbara complimented the matrix and presentation as a nice piece of work.

NOISE Handout #4 and #5

Michael Minor, President of Michael Minor & Associates Inc, next reviewed handout #4 "Traffic Noise: Introduction to Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement, SR520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, Arboretum Area Preliminary Noise Results."

- EPA regulates vehicle traffic
- As traffic slows, noise decreases
- 12 am-3 pm is loudest time and 7 pm next loudest time in Arboretum
- Reviewed the "general rules of acoustics"
- All his modeling done on worst case scenario so can mitigate

His presentation included: an introduction to acoustics, typical sound levels, traffic noise impact criteria, traffic noise abatement, Arboretum noise study, noise modeling results, noise abatement measures, how do barriers work, and examples of typical wall heights based on receiver elevation. He reviewed the information in each section.

ABGC comments/questions:

- Paige commented that information on the number of visitors to the Arboretum should be updated, as this affects the number of required sound walls.
- Paige asked if a 45 mph speed limit for SR520 as it passes through the Arboretum can be considered a noise mitigation. Michael responded that noise mitigation consists of sound walls and earth berms and does not include speed reduction. Paige asked that Michael report back on Design A, as Design B shows a 45 mph speed limit and a shrunken footprint.
- While reviewing the Arboretum Noise Study, Michael commented that the draft report, for internal review only, will be ready in October and will include his recommendations.
- Michael illustrated how sound barriers work and noted the worst noise that carries across them is that which is above grade.
- The new bridge will have new concrete and fewer expansion joints, which helps reduce noise.
- He believes SR520 noise heard in the Arboretum will decrease after the new highway is completed.
- The only noise absorbed by a barrier is what hits the barrier.
- WSDOT is looking at the most absorbent barrier materials to help reduce noise.
- He cannot include the quiet pavement in any of his tests.
- The main source of noise in the area is SR520. A noise wall does not reduce the amount of noise heard once a person moves 300-400' away from the highway. The noise level from 500' away from the highway is at a pretty good level.

Rob stated WSDOT expects to receive the local traffic figures by the middle of September and will bring the results of the traffic study to the ABGC in either October or November. Paige asked that they also bring information on the noise barrier aesthetics during the same presentation and Barbara agreed. Barbara thanked Michael for a great presentation. The ABGC will continue this discussion when he presents his final report.

Speed

Karrie stated that WSDOT looked at the ABGC’s suggestion to reduce the SR 520 west approach to Foster Island’s speed to 45 mph and narrow the width. She noted that drivers automatically reduce their speed when they recognize a “terminus” or that something is changing ahead. The approach to Foster Island is not a logical terminus to signal drivers to slow down – so a speed reduction would become an enforcement issue. WSDOT does not approve deviating the speed to 45 mph, but has reduced the width at Foster Element as much as possible.

Responding to a question from Paige about the west approach and Portage Bay crossing, their shoulder widths, and associated speed limits, Karrie responded that the Portage Bay area can have 1, 2, and 8 foot shoulders, while the west approach must 4 and 8 foot shoulders for constructability. The speed limit deviation at Portage Bay has been approved. Paige wants to better understand why the 4f classification isn’t feasible to avoid a lawsuit.

Karrie stated that WSDOT staff will review the construction sequencing for west approach at the September 27 meeting. Jenifer agreed and added that WSDOT is required to do this.

Other Handouts: #5 Preferred Alternative-West Approach Plan View and Profile and #6 ABGC Requests and Action Items Tracker – through August 23 2010

What’s Next? Rob reviewed the next steps. WSDOT will send a series of actions to Barbara and the ABGC coordinator.

September 27 meeting: discussion will focus on tolling, the west approach, and construction staging.

October 13 meeting: discussion will focus on Lake Washington Boulevard traffic.

Responding to a question from Sandra whether WSDOT thinks the Technical Working Group is dovetailing well with the ABGC, Karrie answered that it is. WSDOT staff are reviewing the comments from the September 13 white papers. A draft will be distributed to the public for comments; she will notify the ABGC when this happens.

Comments: A number of ABGC members stated today’s presentation was clear and educational and thanked the WSDOT and SDOT teams.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Barbara Wright, ABGC Chair