

# Seattle design Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Mayor McGinn and Members of City Council

From: Seattle Design Commission

Date: September 20, 2012

Subject: Urgent Process and Design Recommendations for SR 520

The Seattle Design Commission is writing to enthusiastically support WSDOT's vision for the SR 520 corridor in Seattle, which was developed through an inclusive and transparent community design process, and to recommend critical interagency project support. The vision that has emerged is rooted in Seattle's natural and cultural history, and it establishes a tangible set of goals and values that should guide future decision-making. It supports an appropriately ambitious urban design that is far more than a highway replacement and it deserves broad City support. The vision is a framework of interrelated projects that will improve multiple communities, create new public space experiences and further Seattle's transit objectives at the regional and neighborhood scales.

In order to execute this vision, the City will need to ensure inter-departmental collaboration and leadership, as this project is well beyond the mission and purview of any one department. This is a critical time for the project, as WSDOT will migrate shortly from community outreach and early schematics to design development where other agencies have the opportunity to participate. In recognition of this rare opportunity and the complexity inherent in a project of this scope, the SDC proposes a series of urgent procedural and design recommendations to ensure success for the City.

### Process Recommendations:

- Assign a City Champion as a single coordinating voice across all City departments. This person should have broad understanding of the City's planning goals and all agency workings.
- Assign a dedicated Urban Designer to ensure that the design across all sub-areas are of uniform quality and are considered in detail as this will be essential to properly delivering on the SR 520 vision.
- Ensure ongoing SDC involvement: The SDC is proud of our positive influence on the SR 520 project thus far and is encouraged by the prospect of continued participation.

### Design Recommendations:

- Improve the quality and safety of the experience for all modes of travel. In each sub-area, we recommend WSDOT re-examine design choices to improve multimodal connectivity.



- Enhance the sequential gateway experience along the corridor. The WSDOT team should enhance the arrival sequence by furthering designs for the places where land meets water.
- Reconsider the Montlake Sub-Area Lid: The City and WSDOT should explore alternative lid designs, including diverse options of scales that maintain benefits for users and neighbors.
- Give greater attention to project edges to further develop the relationships between the public and private realms and better integrate the project with the existing urban fabric.
- We strongly support the proposed waterside trail along East Montlake Shoreline that will connect the Arboretum area to the University, with concerns on specific design elements.
- We recommend that SDOT and the City consider opportunistic changes to the curb-to-curb dimensions of Montlake as this would be a rare window of opportunity to implement them.
- We support WSDOT's decision to continue studying the box girder and cable stay options for the Portage Bay Bridge design.
- The addition of the Shared-Use Path on Portage Bay Bridge is an essential element as it would provide a useable, low-slope connection from the Montlake area to the Roanoke Lid, I-5 and beyond.
- Roanoke Lid Connections are invaluable commitments to bicyclists and pedestrians, providing critical linkages from the SR 520 Corridor to the rest of the City.
- Designs for Delmar Ave. should consider stronger offerings and safety elements for pedestrians and bicyclists moving between the Portage Bay Bridge and Bagley Viewpoint.
- The intersection of 10th Ave. E and E Roanoke St. deserve more considered design treatment as it is a key juncture connecting the new park and the existing Roanoke Park.
- Designs for Roanoke Park's southern edge should celebrate its connection to the context as it is the only side of the park not bounded by streets and is a portal to the project overall.

The SDC's support for the SR 520 vision has been established through over two years of review of and participation in the WSDOT team's work. As the project moves ahead, we look forward to continued support from the Mayor and City Council on this important work that will complete necessary urban connections and provide greater mobility for the people of Seattle.

Please see our attached "Process and Design Recommendations for State Route 520" document for additional details and information.