

# 1.0 SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes public comments received by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping period for the proposed Seattle Center Arena Renovation project. The main components of the proposal are: a new entry atrium on the south side of the existing building, a below-grade expansion for additional seating and circulation areas inside the existing building, a below-grade loading dock accessible via a tunnel, and parking for up to 450 vehicles also below-grade.

A Notice of Application, Issuance of Determination of Significance, and Request for Comments on the Scope of the EIS for the Seattle Center Arena Renovation was initially issued by SDCI on September 8, 2017. The Notice was reissued on September 18, to reflect a change in the date of the public scoping meeting.

Comments were received through October 9, 2017. Information from public comments is being used to define and narrow the scope of alternatives, impacts, and mitigation to be evaluated in the EIS.

Scoping comments include oral testimonies and written comment forms received at the scoping public meeting, as well as emails and mailed comment letters sent to SDCI. Approximately 24 members of the public attended the public meeting held on September 28, 2017, at Seattle Center. The public meeting provided information about the proposed project and potential alternatives. An oral testimony period offered the public an opportunity to provide input about the alternatives being considered, areas of the environment to be included in the EIS, likely impacts, potential mitigation, and other concerns about the process.

A total of 41 comment letters (including oral testimonies) were received during the scoping period. Some of the comment letters were from different individuals within an organization, covering similar themes or concerns. Figure 1-1 lists the types of comment received. The 41 comment letters included a total of 182 individual comments. Figure 1-2 shows the number of comments received on each topic.

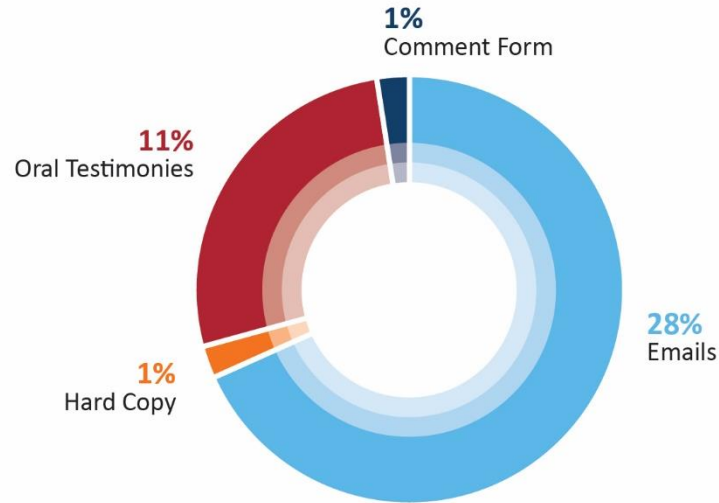


Figure 1-1. Scoping Comment Submittal Types (percentage)

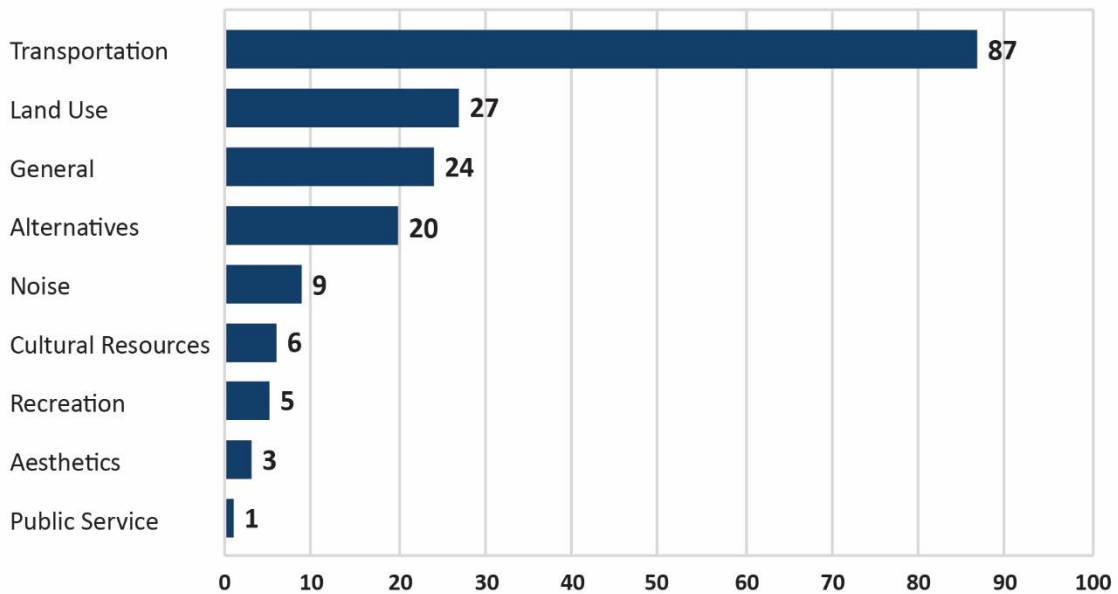


Figure 1-2. Number of Scoping Comments By Topic

## 1.2 TRANSPORTATION

Many of the comments received during the scoping period touched on transportation concerns related to the proposed project (approximately 48%). These comments focused on a variety of different transportation issues, including vehicle traffic and parking, pedestrian use, bicycling, access to public transportation, and transit system capacity. The following sections describe the types of comments received in more detail.

### 1.2.1 Study Area

Several comments suggested particular roadways or areas that should be included in the EIS study area. These included suggestions at the neighborhood level (e.g. Belltown Urban Village), radius from project site (e.g. one mile) as well as specific roadway facilities such as Mercer St, Denny Way, Elliott Ave, and I-5. Comment letters also recommended detailed review of project impacts to bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, and public transit capacity and reliability. The scope of this EIS will include many of the facilities mentioned in the scoping letters through either quantitative or qualitative analysis. The study area for the EIS has been selected in conjunction with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) staff to address those areas or facilities that are most likely to be impacted by the proposal.

### 1.2.2 Background Traffic Assumptions

Many comments related to the specific assumptions of the transportation network ranging from specific bicycle facilities to major projects such as the SR 99 Tunnel and Sound Transit 3 (ST3) light rail extension. The EIS scope includes development of a list of reasonably foreseeable projects that would be in place during each of the analysis years (i.e., 2020 and 2035). These assumptions were developed with input from City of Seattle (City) staff to reflect current plans, estimated dates of completion, and funding commitments.

Several comments were also received regarding land use growth assumptions, including the potential effect of recently adopted zoning revisions in the Uptown Neighborhood (Uptown). The EIS scope includes analysis using a regional travel demand model, which incorporates growth projections at a relatively fine grained level. Assumptions regarding potential redevelopment within the Seattle Center campus, particularly the Mercer Street Garage and Memorial Stadium, were determined in consultation with Seattle Center staff.

### 1.2.3 Project Travel Characteristics

Comments were received regarding the travel behavior of the proposed project's visitors. This included comments regarding mode split, transportation demand management strategies, and mitigation. Some comments referenced assumptions regarding project characteristics such as event timing and event schedules. The EIS scope includes consideration of these project characteristics based upon information provided by the applicant and relevant data collection.

### 1.2.4 Other Transportation Topics

Many comments requested evaluation of various topic areas by mode of travel or type of impact, for example parking, bicycle, transit, transportation network companies (TNCs), construction impacts (including parking impacts), truck routing, etc. Other comments expressed the need to consider interrelationships with other transportation planning efforts, as well as potential mitigation measure

strategies. To the extent relevant and applicable to the EIS, these topic areas are included in the EIS scope.

### **1.2.5 Site Access**

Several comments related to the site access issues, particularly semi-trailer truck access on John St. These types of site access issues will be addressed in the EIS.

### **1.2.6 Out of Scope Requests**

The scope of this EIS is limited to potential environmental impacts that may result from the proposed redevelopment of the Seattle Center Arena. Several comment letters requested evaluation of plans or projects outside of that scope. The Mobility Action Plan (MAP) for the North Downtown neighborhoods is a separate, but concurrent planning process that will address a broader area both in terms of geography and transportation issues (i.e. not just related to larger or increased events at the Seattle Center Arena). The MAP may make use of information contained in the EIS and the EIS may discuss potential mitigation measures that are also considered in the MAP, as the schedules allow, but the EIS will not evaluate the potential outcomes of the MAP.

A request was made to study a potential conversion to two-way operations of First Ave N and Queen Anne Ave N. This is outside the scope of this EIS because it is not part of the proposal nor is it included in any current City plans. Another request was to study different SR 99 tolling scenarios. This EIS will include the tolling scenario for the SR 99 tunnel that was determined by the Washington State Transportation Commission.

## **1.3 LAND USE**

Land Use comments generally requested that the EIS consider the impacts to the neighborhoods surrounding the Seattle Center Arena, and how growth in these neighborhoods could be impeded or encouraged by the proposed project. One commenter asked whether there would be long-term impacts on future land use due to traffic, parking constraints, noise, or glare, in light of the rezoning of the area. Commenters stated that the proposed project should be consistent with the Uptown Urban Design Framework (SOPCD, 2016). Commenters also requested analysis of how the construction and operation of the arena would affect use of the nearby parcels and whether there would be any adverse impact to housing (including affordable housing) in the area. The EIS will include an evaluation of potential direct and indirect land use impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed project. This evaluation will include how transportation and parking affect land use. The land use evaluation will consider the Uptown Urban Design Framework and the recently adopted zoning changes. The EIS will consider the extent to which the project is consistent with applicable housing policies such as those contained in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use comments accounted for 15 percent of the total comments received.

## 1.4 GENERAL

Comments that spoke to the project's purpose and need, SEPA process, or general EIS development were grouped together. This category includes comments that questioned the need for the renovation of the Seattle Center Arena and express opposition to the project generally because of impacts from traffic. Other commenters stated support for the project because they thought it would be a benefit to the neighborhood.

Commenters requested study of the direct, indirect, long-term, short-term, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project, and to adequately explore mitigation. These comments also included requests that the EIS identify who is responsible for enforcement of standards, agreements, and mitigation commitments made during the course of the proposed project.

The EIS will evaluate potential impacts from construction and operation of the alternatives as required under SEPA, including direct, indirect, long-term, short-term, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project. Changes to the surrounding area, including the Seattle Center will include reasonably foreseeable projects. The EIS will identify potential mitigation measures and may identify who will be responsible for implementing those measures.

These types of general comments made up 13 percent of the total comments received.

## 1.5 ALTERNATIVES

At the time of the public scoping meeting, SDCI had not yet finalized the possible components of Alternative 2 for the EIS. One purpose of scoping is to inform the development of alternatives to the proposed project. For the scoping meeting, Alternative 2 was presented at a conceptual level; Alternative 2 could include adjustments to the below-grade parking, a resizing of the atrium, or other design modifications.

Some commenters stated that Alternative 2, as presented at the scoping meeting, was a pared-down version of Alternative 1 and was developed as a "straw man" type of alternative to make the OVG proposal look superior.

Several commenters stated that the SODO arena plan (described in the Seattle Arena Final EIS [City of Seattle, 2015]) was preferable to any Seattle Center Arena redevelopment due to traffic and transportation concerns, as well as neighborhood interests. Several of these commenters stated that the SODO area was preferable for an arena because that area is already established as a destination for sporting events and does not have the same traffic congestion concerns as the Uptown and Queen Anne neighborhoods. Some commenters asked that the SODO arena or an off-site location be considered as an alternative.

However, because the City's objective is to renovate the Seattle Center Arena, consideration of constructing a new arena facility at other locations does not meet the City's objective and is not required, nor included, in the EIS.

Comments relating to project alternatives comprised 11 percent of the total comments received.

## 1.6 OTHER COMMENTS

The remaining 14 percent of the scoping comments related to Noise, Recreation, Cultural Resources, Aesthetics, and Public Services. These comments included requests to consider the long- and short-term impacts of the alternatives on these respective elements of the environment. Commenters requested using overlapping timetables for events when completing the analyses. Noise comments focused on potential construction related noise and noise created during NBA, NHL, and concert events. Commenters on recreation expressed concerns about the proposed removal of the skate park and how it would be mitigated, and requested that the skate park be replaced within the general vicinity of the Seattle Center Arena.

The EIS will evaluate potential impact of the proposed project activities (i.e. sports events and concerts) combined with average and above average levels of activity at Seattle Center. These evaluations will include potential noise impacts from construction and operation of the project. Potential removal and replacement of the skate park will be evaluated in the recreation section of the EIS.

## 1.7 REFERENCES

City of Seattle. 2015. Seattle Arena Final EIS. Prepared by URS Corp. for the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (now Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections). Available at: <http://buildingconnections.seattle.gov/2015/05/07/seattle-arena-final-environmental-impact-statement-available/> May 2015.

SOPCD 2016. (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development). Uptown Urban Design Framework. Available at: [http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cs/groups/pan/@pan/documents/web\\_informational/p2341231.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cs/groups/pan/@pan/documents/web_informational/p2341231.pdf). May 2016.