

# SR 520 - Montlake Lid & Pedestrian Land Bridge

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Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**John Savo**, Chair

**Ben de Rubertis**, Vice Chair

**Justin Clark**

**Rikerrious Geter**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Laura Haddad**

**Brianna Holan**

**Mark Johnson**

**Rick Krochalis**

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## Commissioners Present

John Savo, Chair  
Ben de Rubertis, Vice Chair  
Justin Clark  
Rikerrious Geter  
Ross Tilghman

## Commissioners Excused

Rachel Gleeson  
Laura Haddad  
Brianna Holan  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis

## Project Description

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is redeveloping the Seattle segment of the State Route (SR) 520 corridor between I-5 and Lake Washington. The redevelopment will include new bridges that meet current seismic standards, HOV capacity, updated roadways, new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improved transit connections, open spaces, and enhanced non-motorized connections. In 2016, the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) consulted with WSDOT on urban design concepts for the Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Land Bridge. In 2018 WSDOT awarded a design build contract to a consortium headed by Graham Construction. In 2019, the SDC will continue to review and comment on updated design proposals.

## Meeting Summary

This was the first of three reviews by the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC). The purpose of this meeting was to review the updated design for the Montlake Lid and Pedestrian Land Bridge. Because this was a briefing, the commission did not take an action during today's meeting. Commissioners provided a series of recommendations and comments to be addressed by the project team. The SDC will be briefed on the project again at a future date.

## Recusals and Disclosures

**Justin Clark** Disclosed that his employer, WSP, is a sub consultant for WSDOT's Owner's representative team, but that he has not worked on the project in any capacity.

**February 21, 2019**

9:00 - 11:00 am

**Type**

Major Project

**Phase**

Briefing

**Previous Reviews**[6/2/16](#), [5/7/16](#), [2/4/16](#)**Presenters**Todd Harrison  
WSDOTCharles Mayes  
MIG/SvRPeg Staelheli  
MIG/SvRBill Estes  
MIG/SvR**Attendees**Matt DeGooyer  
GrahamMatt Gurrard  
HDRJustin Martin  
MIG/SvRVictoria Morris  
HDRJose Prieto  
SDOTMike Salmon  
GrahamNorman Smit  
TYLIAmanda Tse  
SDOTJon Vannoy  
HDRJohn Welch  
Graham**Summary of Presentation**

The presentation was led by Peg Staehli, of MIG/SvR. The focus of the presentation was an overview of the proposal awarded by WSDOT to construct Phase 1 of the 'Rest of the West'. Graham Construction was awarded the design/build contract for Phase 1, in partnership with T.Y. Lin, American Bridge, MIG/SvR and a number of other subcontractors. The presentation highlighted the scope of the proposal awarded to Graham and how the Graham proposal is both consistent with, and deviates from, the 2016 proposal recommended by the SDC. This included project features and how the Graham proposal impacts key urban design goals for:

- The Pedestrian Land Bridge, or PBL
- The Montlake Lid, or Lid
- Montlake Blvd
- The PBL and Lid connections with adjacent neighborhoods and public realm
- The transit-oriented plaza
- View opportunities
- Relationship to the local and regional trail system
- Connections to transit
- Street furniture like lighting, seating, railing etc.

**Agency Comments**

**David Graves**, SPR, stated that SPR continuing to work with other departments to address ongoing maintenance goals. Mr. Graves then mentioned that SPR will be maintaining the land bridge and Montlake lid similarly to the way the department maintains their other parks and facilities.

**Lyle Bicknell**, OPCD, complemented WSDOT and the project team for engaging in urban design issues related to the project as well as addressing issues related to the experience of the design. Mr. Bicknell then said that while much of the design influenced by the community, city departments, and other organizations has been carried through, he is frustrated with the current proposal for the land bridge. He then said that although he had envisioned a sinuous, sculptural form, the proposal showed a functional, yet generic, overpass, which is inconsistent with what him and other stakeholders worked on originally. Mr. Bicknell also stated that the project team should be attentive to how the bridge transitions to the landscape and how to minimize blank walls, as well as being mindful towards the overall concept of nature meets city. Mr. Bicknell also took issue with the proposed design for the large plaza along Montlake Boulevard, specifically in that the original design included the use of mason pavers while the updated proposal uses scored concrete, as well as the elimination of the median along Montlake Boulevard. He then cautioned the design team from reducing the quality of the overall experience and recommended they continue to think about the quality and experience for users as they move through the area.

**Todd Harrison**, WSDOT, thanked the SDC for previous work on developing Request for Proposals (RFP). Mr. Harrison then said that, due to the nature of the project being design build, there are a lot of ways to approach the design of the project. He said that approaches should include innovation, add value, and keep the project within budget. Mr. Harrison then stated that when the project team worked through maintenance agreements they updated several of proposed design elements. He then stated that when looking at the land bridge we had to not only look at the design but also look at impacts to the surrounding users.

## Public Comments

None

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion of the pedestrian land bridge around the following issues:

- Montlake Boulevard
- Pedestrian plaza and open space
- Pedestrian land bridge
- Site elements
- Design process

### *Montlake Boulevard*

The SDC is concerned with the proposed cross-section of Montlake Boulevard near the Montlake Bridge. Commissioners commented that the proposed design includes a wide stretch of pavement, which will reduce the visual and experienced continuity throughout the site. Commissioners also noted that the proposed design was inconsistent with what is being proposed elsewhere throughout the site, which is to soften hardscape and edges. The SDC then recommended the project team consider reevaluating the Montlake Boulevard cross-section to reduce the amount of pavement used. Commissioners then encouraged the project team to provide elevation drawings and perspective renderings of the two gateways along Montlake Boulevard during future meetings.

### *Pedestrian plaza and open space*

The SDC recommended the project team continue to seek opportunities to improve upon the RFP design and to use design innovations to take advantage of design constraints related to the pedestrian plaza and open space. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to think about how the plaza/open space will be used both for passive and active recreation

### *Pedestrian land bridge*

The SDC is concerned with the current proposal of the pedestrian land bridge. Commissioners compared the previous design of the bridge with the current proposal and agreed that the current proposal included several elements that appeared to be set in stone, such as the pathway and overlook, while the overall structural design continued to change. The SDC then recommended the project team achieve the gracefulness envisioned in the original concept design for the pedestrian land bridge and to consider realigning the pathway or relocating the view point if it can result in a better design. The Commission then recommended the project team continue to seek opportunities to improve upon the RFP design and to use design innovations to take advantage of design constraints related to the pedestrian land bridge. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to provide elevation drawings and perspective renderings that show the pedestrian land bridge as a gateway feature.

### *Site elements*

The SDC agreed there was a lack of clarity on how contemporary and traditional elements will fit together and suggested the project team provide more information on how this will occur, specifically in areas near or along Montlake Boulevard. Commissioners then suggested the project team provide more information on the location of seating throughout the site. The commission also commented that the project team should provide a consistent style for amenities such as lighting fixtures, railings, and seating.

### *Design process*

The SDC commented that it would be valuable to show previous ideas or design iterations to better understand how the project team is progressing through specific issues.

## Action

The SDC thanked the project team for its briefing on the SR 520 'Rest of the West' project. Because this was a briefing, the commission did not take an action during today's meeting. Commissioners provided the following recommendations for the project team to consider as the project continues to evolve:

February 21, 2019

1. Consider reevaluating the Montlake Boulevard cross-section near Montlake Bridge to reduce the amount of pavement used
2. Achieve the gracefulness envisioned in the original concept design for the pedestrian land bridge. Consider realigning the pathway or relocating the view point if it can result in a better design
3. Continue to seek opportunities to improve upon the RFP design. Use design innovation to take advantage of design constraints, specifically as they relate to the pedestrian land bridge and plaza/open space along Montlake Boulevard

Commissioners also provided insightful comments on the following issues:

1. Provide more information on the location of seating throughout the site
2. Provide consistent style for amenities such as lighting fixtures, railings, seating, etc
3. Continue to think about how the plaza/open space will be used both for passive and active recreation
4. Continue to think about how the pedestrian land bridge will be used, specifically near the view point