

SR 520 - Montlake Lid & Pedestrian Land Bridge

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor

Samuel Assefa
Director, OPCD

Ben de Rubertis, Chair

Brianna Holan, Vice Chair

Justin Clark

Rikerrious Geter

Laura Haddad

Mark Johnson

Rick Krochalis

Amalia Leighton

Vinita Sidhu

Elaine Wine

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Strategic Advisor

Aaron Hursey
Planner

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

**Office of Planning and
Community Development
Seattle City Hall**
600 4th Avenue, 5th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

TEL 206-684-0435
FAX 206-233-2784
seattle.gov/designcommission

Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Justin Clark (excused at 2:30)
Rikerrious Geter
Laura Haddad
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Amalia Leighton
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis, Chair

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 second out 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. At this meeting, the SDC took two actions. The first action addressed the Pedestrian Land Bridge and the second action addressed the Montlake Lid. The SDC voted, 9-0, to support design updates to the pedestrian land bridge with several recommendations. The SDC then voted, 8-0, to support design updates to the Montlake Lid with several recommendations. The SDC will be briefed on the project again at a future date.

Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan disclosed that she had previously worked on the project while working for LMN Architects

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.

July 18, 2019

1:00 - 4:00 pm

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**Mario Bianchi
Neighborhood residentLyle Bicknell
OPCDHannah Britt
WSDOTDiane Carlson
KC MetroMatt DeGooyer
Graham ConstructionBob Derry
Stepherson AssociatesDavid Graves
SPRMatt Gurrard
HDRCatherine Hovell
Graham ConstructionJose Prieto
SDOTSidney Orr
Stepherson AssociatesJohanna Schorr
MIG/SvRKaila Shankowsky
Graham ConstructionAmanda Tse
SDOTJon Vannoy
WSDOTMadeline Wayham
MIG/SvR**Summary of Presentation**

Todd Harrison, of WSDOT, and Peg Staelheli, Charles Mayes, and Bill Estes, of MIG/SvR, presented the update designs for the pedestrian land bridge and Montlake lid. The presentation began with a brief explanation of the project background, project updates, and ongoing engagement. The project team explained how the Montlake Lid and pedestrian land bridge were a part of the larger SR 520 'Rest of the West' project as well as how the overarching vision of "Nature meets City" was integrated within the designs being presented. The team then reminded everyone of previous and ongoing engagements with communities as well as the SDC and other City departments. The project team also provided information about the design build process as well as an updated schedule for the project, which is scheduled for completion in 2023.

The project team then presented separately on design updates to the pedestrian land bridge and the Montlake Lid. The team showed how the design for the pedestrian land bridge had evolved throughout the initial design and bid processes (*see figure 1*). The current design for the land bridge was refined to be similar to the design concept WSDOT had specified in their request for proposal (RFP). The design included updates to the appearance of the underside of the bridge to emphasize slenderness of the upper structure while deemphasizing the column and girder support below. Other updates included the location and size of the overlook, which is located closer to the edge, as well as changes to proposed railing and paving patterns (*see figure 2*).

The project team then discussed design updates to the Montlake Lid. The proposed design is separated into several areas including the neighborhood open space, South Montlake Plaza, Portage Bay Overlook, and surrounding intersections. The neighborhood open space serves as a community gathering area that includes a series of landforms with open lawn area, mature vegetation, and seating and pathways on the perimeter, while the South Montlake Plaza will provide space for gathering and movement and will include a large open plaza with seating and landscaped areas as well as a series of transit shelters to be served by King County Metro. The Portage Bay Overlook has reduced in size. The overlook will include seating, railing, and mature vegetation located just off of the main sidewalk along the western edge of Montlake Blvd. The design proposal also includes a raised intersection at 24th Ave E and E Lake Washington Blvd. (*see figure 3 & 4*)

Agency Comments

The following are agency comments for the pedestrian land bridge:

Lyle Bicknell, OPCD, complemented the project team updating the design of the pedestrian land bridge to reflect the original design intent. Lyle Bicknell also mentioned the positive improvements in how the design address the connections between the land bridge and adjacent landforms as well as the updated location of the viewpoint. Lyle Bicknell then expressed a desire for the project team to continue to include city staff, as appropriate, to review small design details that still need to be refined.

David Graves, SPR, stated that the shift in the overlook is positive move and will allow for more eyes on the adjacent park space. David Graves also mentioned that the new location shifts the view from aligning with the highway to looking out to the lake and mountains.

Jose Prieto, SDOT, commented that they believe the project team has done a good job with addressing site distance issues and safety issues along pathway alignment

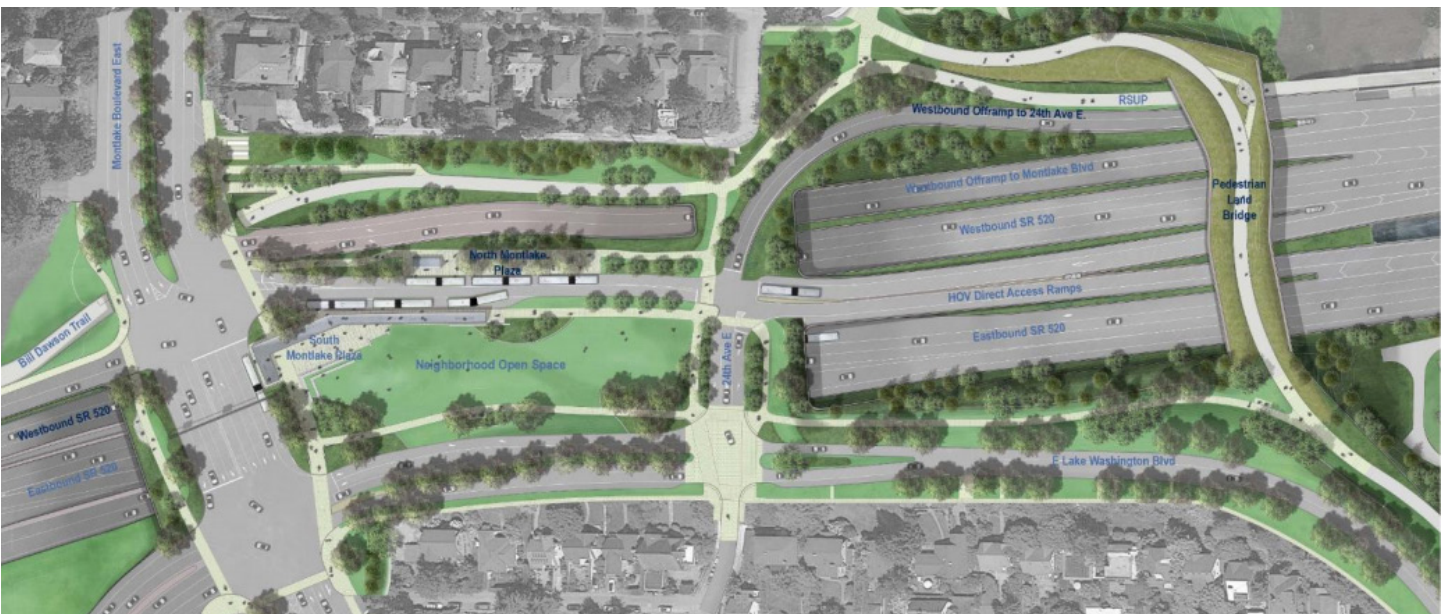
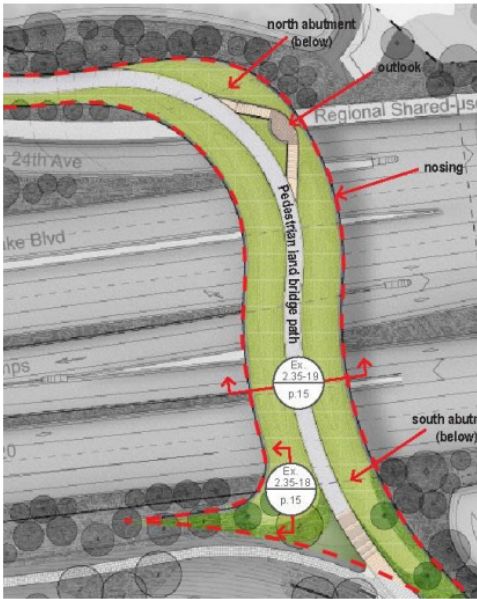


Figure 1: 2018 WSDOT RFP proposal (top), 2018 design response to RFP (middle), and Refined plan (bottom)

2018 WSDOT RFP Plan



Response to RFP Plan (11/2018)

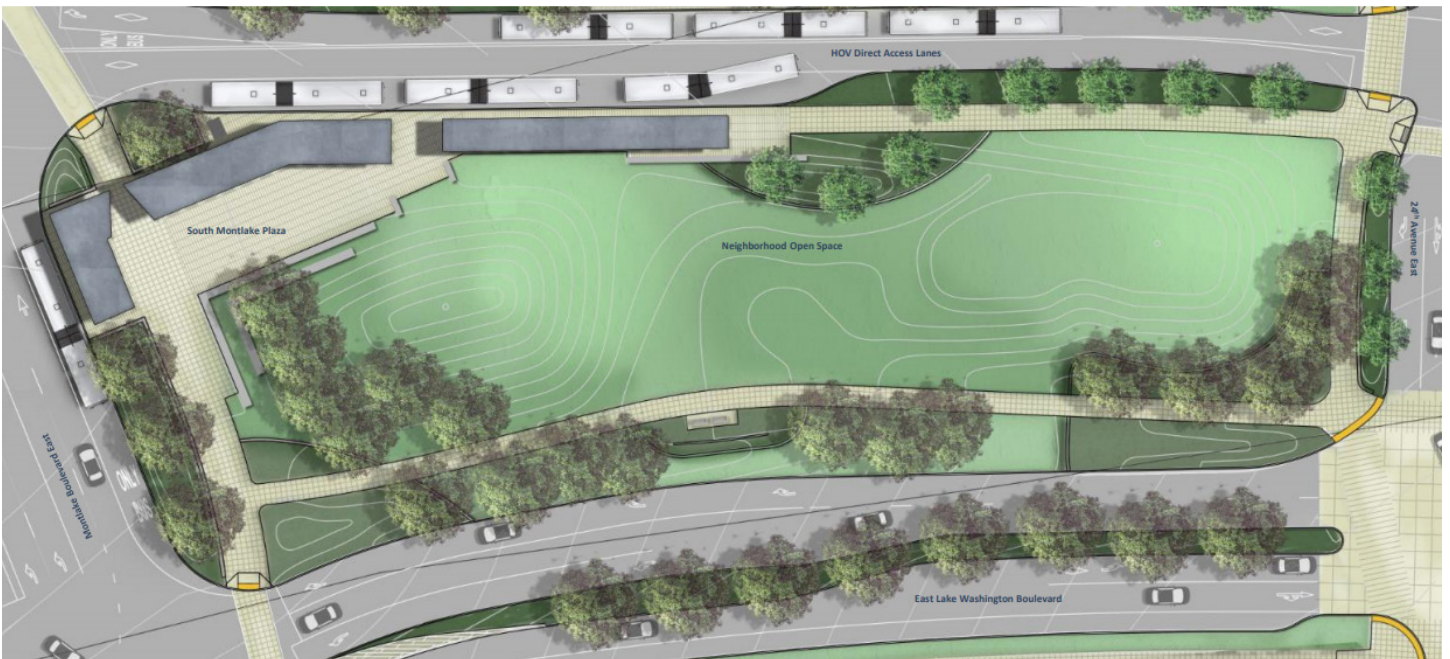
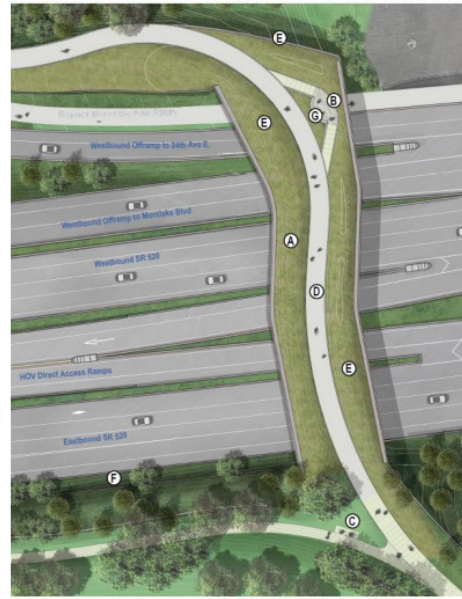


Figure 2 (top): Evolution of Pedestrian Land Bridge: 2018 WSDOT RFP proposal (left), 2018 design response to RFP (middle), and Refined plan (right)

Figure 3 (middle): Updated design proposal for Montlake Lid

Figure 4: (right): rendering of Montlake Lid proposal



The following are agency comments for the Montlake Lid:

Diane Carlson, KC Metro, stated that KC Metro looks forward to continued meetings and collaborations with the project team and City departments to better meet the needs of the community while still meeting goals for long term maintenance

Lyle Bicknell, OPCD, complemented the project team for its current design direction and refinement of the Montlake Lid design. Lyle Bicknell then mentioned that the challenge will be to pay attention to the details as the project continues to move forward with design and construction.

David Graves, SPR, stated that the Parks Department will be in charge of long term maintenance of the Lid and that they are supportive of the current design. David Graves then mentioned that the Parks Department will want to look closely at the berms to ensure they are not too high and too steep for maintenance and access purposes.

Public Comments

The following are public comments for the pedestrian land bridge:

Mario Bianchi, Montlake Resident, is concerned that since the 520 multi-use trail bridge opened, the mixing zone north of the proposed pedestrian land bridge has become a default gathering point for people either coming into the neighborhood or passing through on bikes. Mario Bianchi stated that current homeowners are concerned that the mixing zone is located too close homes and requested that it be moved east, which would move gathering point further away from the adjacent homes.

The following are public comments for the Montlake Lid:

Mario Bianchi, Montlake Resident, was originally concerned with how WSDOT would reestablish the vegetated buffer between SR 520 and the adjacent neighborhoods, but is pleased to see the updated design proposal that includes trees and other plantings to help create a visual buffer between the roadway and neighborhood.

Summary of Discussion

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

- Bridge Form
- Outlook location
- Gathering Space & intersection
- Sustainability

Bridge form

The SDC appreciated how the design of the pedestrian land bridge has evolved since the previous review. Commissioners then discussed the color of the girders beneath the land bridge. Several commissioners are concerned with the potential negative visual effect resulting from only painting the exterior (outside) girder. The project team then explained that painting the interior girders a dark color would cause safety and maintenance concerns. The commission then recommended the project team consider specifying a dark color for all girders located beneath the bridge. If not feasible, then carry the dark color through on the full exterior girder and the underside of all interior girders.

The SDC then encouraged the design team to have a more irregular landscape line along the outside section of the land bridge, which will be viewed from the roadway below. Commissioners agreed this would further reinforce the nature meets city concept. The commission also suggested adding up lighting in front of the vegetated area.

Commissioners agreed with the nosing of land bridge as a solution to visually break up the mass of the structure and to emphasize the elements located on top of the land bridge. Commissioners also agreed with the different sections of the land bridge aligning with the roadway below.

The SDC then recommended the project team return for a subcommittee meeting to review detailed refinements to the bridge including the landscape line, columns, location and size of batter joints, as well as the interface between different materials.

Outlook location

The SDC commended the project team for positive improvements made to the updated design of the outlook, but reminded the project team of the original design proposal which included a vegetated zone between the overlook and bridge edge, creating a layer between the pedestrian and roadway below. The commission then expressed their concern with the proposed lean rails. Commissioners thought it was odd to provide two separate lean rails and encouraged the project team to continue to explore more resolute and intentional design solutions for the railing, possibly through the addition of interpretive elements. The Commission then recommended providing a step on the pedestrian bridge view point to provide view over railing.

Gathering space & intersection

The SDC recognized the challenges with grading/elevation differences, but encouraged the project team to better understand the appropriate location for the gathering area/ mixing zone north of the pedestrian land bridge adjacent to Hamlin St. Commissioners recommended the area be located further east to provide a buffer between the gathering space and neighborhood.

Sustainability

The SDC recommended the project team return for a subcommittee meeting to discuss the approach to sustainability and opportunity to incorporate sustainable measures.

The Commission then organized its discussion of the Montlake Lid around the following issues:

- Seating
- Shelters, stations, plaza, & open space
- Montlake Blvd
- Portage Bay overlook
- Canal reserve buffer

Seating

The SDC encouraged the project team to provide more seating opportunities in and/or oriented towards the open space area instead of facing the plaza. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to consider seating along pathways surrounding the Montlake Lid. Although the Commission then mentioned that the proposed art patterns for the seating elements could be used at different scales, depending on the size of the surface, several commissioners encouraged the project team to use patterns that are pedestrian scaled.

Shelters, stations, plaza, & open space

The SDC is concerned with the current design proposal for the bus shelter at the northwest edge of the Montlake Lid. Commissioners commented that the original proposal included one continuous shelter that expressed a transit center design vernacular but that the updated design included a series of stand along shelters, which resulted in the shelters appearing to be unaligned and cluttered. The SDC strongly recommended the project team consider reintroducing the original design intent by including one continuous bus shelter. Commissioners then commented that the proposed plaza and adjacent shelters will serve transit users and are not likely to serve as a community gathering space.

The SDC also encouraged the project team to use pavement treatments that will correspond with different modes of transportation and will serve to slow users as they approach mixing zones. The Commission then cautioned the project team against having wide pathways near the plaza, which will facilitate quick movement. The SDC also recommended the project team tighten the radius of the multi-use pathway connecting the North Montlake Plaza to the Bill Dawson Trail to reduce cyclist speed.

The SDC also strongly encouraged the project team to further evaluate the proposed design of the 24th Ave E and E Lake Washington Blvd. intersection. Specifically, commissioners requested more information addressing types of movements based on transportation mode (vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, etc) as well as more information as to how movement is influenced by pavement and signage.

Montlake Blvd

The SDC had an issue with the size of the gantry holding directional signage above Montlake Blvd. The Commission recommended the project team reduce the sign gantry to match the scale of the street. Commissioners then expressed their concern with the elimination of the landscape median along Montlake Blvd.

Portage Bay overlook

The SDC recognized that the proposed Portage Bay Overlook will provide a unique view of the new bridge and water but recommended the project team consider reducing the size. Commissioners then recommended the project team use the additional area gained from reducing the size of the overlook to incorporate other elements, such as the median along Montlake Blvd.

Canal reserve buffer

The SDC recommended the project team return for a subcommittee meeting to discuss the canal reserve buffer design

Action

The SDC took two actions during today's meeting. The first action addressed the Pedestrian Land Bridge and the second action addressed the Montlake Lid.

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the pedestrian land bridge. Overall, the commission appreciated the simple and elegant solutions provided in the updated design while maintaining the overarching principle of city meets nature. The SDC voted, 9-0, to support the updated design for the SR 520 'Rest of the West' - Pedestrian Land Bridge with the following recommendations:

1. Return for a subcommittee meeting to review detailed refinements to the bridge including the landscape line, how column meets, batter joints, etc.
2. Return for a subcommittee meeting to discuss the approach to sustainability and opportunity to incorporate sustainable measures.
3. Consider specifying a dark color for all beams located beneath the bridge. If not feasible, then carry the dark color through on the full front beam and the underside of all interior beams.
4. Consider the integration of interpretative elements within the design of the pedestrian land bridge overlook
5. Refine the location of the gathering area/mixing zone with the adjacent neighborhood north of the pedestrian land bridge
6. Consider providing a step on the pedestrian bridge view point to provide view over railing

The SDC voted, 8-0, to support the updated design for the SR 520 'Rest of the West' - Montlake Lid with the following recommendations:

1. Return for a subcommittee meeting to discuss the canal reserve addition buffer design
2. Consider reintroducing the original design intent by including one continuous bus shelter. If this is not pursued, reexamine the slope directions and shape of the ends
3. Consider tightening the radius of the multi-use pathway connecting the North Montlake Plaza to the Bill Dawson Trail to reduce cyclist speed
4. Reduce the sign gantry on Montlake Blvd. to match the scale to street
5. Consider reducing the size of the Portage Bay Overlook
6. Consider reincorporating the median on Montlake Blvd.
7. Consider adding seating throughout the Montlake Lid