



## UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

*Mark A. Emmert, President*

October 30, 2006

Mr. Paul Krueger  
WSDOT Environmental Manager  
414 Olive Way, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98101

*Via email:* [SR520DEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:SR520DEIScomments@wsdot.wa.gov)

Dear Mr. Krueger:

Please find attached the University of Washington's response to the *SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project: Draft Environmental Impact Statement: August 18, 2006*. We request that the Washington State Department of Transportation respond to the comments and concerns raised in this letter and the attached reports.

The University of Washington was founded in 1861 with a mission to provide education, research, and service to the citizens of Washington. Since then, the University has developed into a world-class institution, becoming an essential asset to our community and our state. Granting over 12,000 degrees annually, we have numerous highly rated academic programs, including bioengineering, drama, microbiology, computer science and engineering, medicine, and much more. We win more research funding than any other public university in the nation, roughly \$1 billion annually. Our partnerships with business and industry have spawned more than 200 startups out of the intellectual property that has flowed from our laboratories and our research. Additionally, the University is home to one of the top ten hospitals in the nation, serving all patients regardless of where they come from or their socioeconomic background.

The University is also a national leader in environmental stewardship. Through our aggressive Transportation Management Plan, we have reduced Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) trips to campus by approximately 5,100 trips each day compared to the number of trips in 1989. Furthermore, we have committed to reducing greenhouse gases by signing the Seattle Climate Partnership Agreement. We are a strong partner in managing the internationally renowned Washington Park Arboretum, which has plantings constituting one of the premier woody plant collections in the United States.

Although the University is not taking a position on the options currently under consideration, we must note that the Pacific Interchange option appears to be the one that would have the greatest negative impacts on our mission. This option takes away land dedicated exclusively for educational purposes, constraining future growth of the University. Without careful design and aggressive mitigation, it will split significant areas of land away

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from the central campus. Moreover, it appears that this option would have the most serious environmental impacts to the Arboretum, wetlands, shorelands, and fish. To the extent that it would make SOV trips easier, we believe this option would be at odds with our goal of reducing these trips. Finally, its construction poses very serious challenges to students, faculty, staff, visitors, fans, and patients who need to come to the University. Easy access to our campus and hospital is vital for us to meet our mission and maintain our financial health.

While it is conceivable these concerns can be mitigated, it remains to be seen how this will be accomplished and at what cost. Indeed, the DEIS does not adequately address mitigations or costs. Any final plan must commit to fully funding mitigation of University concerns. Otherwise, a project meant to solve transportation problems in the region may permanently damage one of the state's greatest assets.

Our DEIS comments are organized into two parts: 1) general comments grouped by topic and 2) comments directed to specific sections of the DEIS. In addition, we are including two reports related to transportation and environmental issues: 1) Mirai Comments on SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project DEIS and 2) Otak SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project EIS Review.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,



Mark A. Emmert  
President

Attachments