United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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PEP/NRM

APR 9 2010

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Ms. Jenifer Young
Environmental Manager
SR 520 Project Office
600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, Washington 98101

Dear Ms. Young:

F-004-001

The Department of the Interior (Department) reviewed the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) and Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation for **SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, King County, Washington.** The Department offers the following comments for your consideration.

Section 4(f) Comments

We would like to thank the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and those who prepared the SDEIS for doing an excellent job. The SDEIS contains numerous clear maps, good visualizations, and thoughtful overall analysis. The document is easy to read and well organized with helpful tabs for easy reference which helped the Department review.

The Department concurs that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of Section 4(f) resources.

The Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation is contained within the SDEIS as Attachment 6. The Department generally defers to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for identifying effects to and appropriate mitigation for historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Our Section 4(f) comments primarily concern recreational resources, though certain recreational resources are also protected under Section 4(f) as a historic property or Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). No wildlife or wildfowl refuges have been identified within the project area.

F-004-002

Least Overall Harm Option

We appreciate the thorough preliminary "least harm" analysis found in Exhibit 55, Preliminary Least Harm Analysis by 23 CFR 774.3(c)(1) Factors. This analysis contains an excellent summary and comparison of impacts resulting from the three build options.

The Department concurs that Option A uses the least Section 4(f) protected park property and will do the least overall harm to historic properties as a whole. However, at this point we cannot concur with WSDOT's statement that, in terms of resources not protected by Section 4(f), Option A has the fewest impacts of the design options on wetlands and in-water fill areas, as well as being an aquatic resource and endangered species. We regret that every alternative involves impact to important resources and recognize that the Montlake Historic District and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) building are special historic places and structures within the Seattle area. Although we recognize that Option A would have an adverse effect on the Montlake Historic District and historically significant and individually eligible NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

F-004-003

In general, the Department does not consider recreational development within WSDOT right-of-way to be appropriate mitigation because the area is not legally assured of permanent future protection as a park area. However, with the exception of the Foster Island lid, well-designed, -landscaped, -hardscaped, and -maintained lids with site furnishings may work as recreational mitigation for this project, if developed and maintained in such a way as to be of significant recreational use, with the expectation for public access well into the future. At a minimum, the Department would like to see a letter capturing the commitment to implement specific mitigation measures and incorporating specific design drawings when this information is available.

F-004-004

Bagley Viewpoint

The Department supports WSDOT's continuing commitment to work with Seattle Parks and Recreation, to whom we defer the determination of specific mitigation measures for Bagley Viewpoint under Section 4(f). If Seattle Parks and Recreation is willing to enter into an agreement with WSDOT formally memorializing WSDOT's mitigation obligations, the Department recommends that such an agreement contain a provision that approval by Seattle Parks and Recreation is required on specific design drawings and plans.

F-004-005

Interlaken Park

We could not find any indication in the SDEIS that trees or bushes would be removed as part of this work. However, if construction work will result in tree or vegetation removal, native trees and vegetation that are similar in maturity to those removed should be re-established to the extent feasible and appropriate. We support WSDOT's ongoing coordination with the City of Seattle, and defer to the City in determining proper re-vegetation plans. We recommend that any re-vegetation obligation be addressed in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between WSDOT and the City.

F-004-006

Montlake Playfield

The Department defers to the City for determining proper mitigation for this area in consultation with WSDOT. We recommend that any re-vegetation obligation be addressed in the letter of agreement between WSDOT and the City.

F-004-007

Bill Dawson Trail

The Department believes the additional roadway cover over the trail under all options that would occur within WSDOT right-of-way will not substantially impair the attributes of the remaining trail located outside WSDOT right-of-way.

The Department is supportive of the ongoing collaboration between WSDOT and Seattle Parks and Recreation and defers to Seattle Parks and Recreation to determine appropriate mitigation for Bill Dawson Trail.

F-004-008

East Montlake Park and McCurdy Park

Under all options, all of McCurdy Park, the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) building, and its 150-space parking lot would be removed. There are no plans to relocate or reinstate the lost parking area, because the facility requiring them would also be removed; therefore, replacement of the lost spaces would not be necessary. We disagree with this statement. Exhibit 5,1-15. Future Trail Connectivity shows that the canoe/kayak landing and launch point within McCurdy Park will remain. To our knowledge, this is the only non-motorized boat launch with parking in the project area. The other landings appear to be accessible only by water. Removal of all spaces within the MOHAI parking lot will have a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities or other persons with accessibility concerns. In addition, persons who may be physically capable of doing so are less likely to portage a kayak or canoe from a neighborhood on-street parking spot. Finally, relegating kayakers to neighborhood on-street parking could cause further disruption of nearby neighborhoods.

This parking area also serves East Montlake and McCurdy Parks, Ship Canal Waterside Trail, and the Arboretum Waterfront Trail. We note that the mitigation section in the Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation lists replace parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of the parks upon completion of construction for East Montlake and McCurdy Parks. We are not sure where the parking spaces will be relocated, if not at the MOHAI site.

F-004-009

Exhibit 5.1-15 also shows a gap in the pedestrian only path under Option L in the area that will be the former MOHAI site. It appears that this gap could easily be closed to provide a continuous loop along the Arboretum Waterfront Trail.

F-004-010

The Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation identifies fewer mitigation measures than those contained in the main SDEIS document. We recommend that the following mitigation measures, found in the main DSEIS document, also be listed in the Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation to reaffirm WSDOT's commitment to implement them:

- Re-vegetate areas where natural habitat, vegetation, or neighborhood tree screens would be removed. These areas are under Portage Bay Bridge in

F-004-010

Roanoke Park; through Montlake, in particular at the NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center and East Montlake Park and the Arboretum. Mature vegetation could generally be used to re-vegetate parks and re-establish tree screens in these areas in consultation with local jurisdictions and agencies. Re-vegetation plans should also provide for adequate irrigation and monitoring until trees and plants are well established.

- Establish landscaping that would be compatible with the character of the existing vegetation, especially along Lake Washington Boulevard, Montlake Boulevard, and through the Washington Park Arboretum, East Montlake Park, Ship Canal Waterside Trail, Arboretum Waterfront Trail, Montlake Playfield, and Interlaken Park/Delmar Drive East.
- Design lids to reconnect divided communities and provide a consistent and/or continuous visual connection across the SR 520 roadway. Landscape the lids to ensure a unified visual appearance appropriate to the surrounding landscape, including use of appropriate plant materials, hardscape, and site furnishings that contribute to visual coherence and aesthetics. For example, on the north side of the Evergreen Point Road lid, a transitional seating wall and stairs might be included that would share elements and characteristics of the lid with Fairweather Park Section 5.4 also states that "the remaining portions of McCurdy and East Montlake Parks would be redesigned in cooperation with the Seattle Parks Department. Grass and trees in the south Shelby-Hamlin area could be replaced with trees and screening vegetation to soften the appearance of the new noise wall. Mature and/or larger size trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers for replacement or enhancement would be selected as appropriate in consultation with Seattle Parks and Recreation. Plantings would be irrigated and monitored until established." The Department is fully supportive of all of these mitigation measures. Minimally, disturbed areas should be restored to a condition that is as-good or better than the pre-construction condition. In general, this means re-planting with mature native species to the extent feasible, and implementing or funding a solid re-vegetation plan that allows plantings to become well-established. The Department recognizes that tall plants may not be appropriate in some places because of safety or other legitimate concerns. However, every effort should be made to restore areas to their original condition and to provide screening for new project structures. The Department defers to the park owners for specific mitigation measures to redevelop the remaining post-Project portion of East Montlake Park.

F-004-011

If the park owners are willing, we recommend that they enter into an agreement with WSDOT to formalize a working relationship among the parties. We suggest that such an agreement contain a provision that approval by the City, University of Washington, and DNR be required on specific design drawings and plans for Section 6(f) mitigation sites, as well as any remaining park area at the McCurdy and East Montlake Parks. It may be advisable to also include a provision providing funding to the park owners to hire their own design engineering firm as a consultant, if they do not have available staff, to review design drawings and plans. We also recommend that adjacent

F-004-011 neighborhoods also have a chance to review and provide comments on design drawings and plans.

A maintenance plan should also be provided to stakeholders for their review and comment. While the Department recognizes that replacement property for McCurdy Park and part of East Montlake Park will be required under Section 6(f), we believe the loss of McCurdy Park and much of East Montlake Park, as well as the transformation of the remainder of East Montlake Park to a more manicured urban park setting located much closer to the 520 bridge make it appropriate for the Department to make these recommendations for Section 4(f) mitigation, in addition to any Section 6(f) mitigation requirements.

In the final version of the SDEIS, it would be helpful for the preferred alternative to have a visual simulation or graphic representing the conceptual design of the remaining portion of East Montlake Park after the project is constructed. This should include how the public would access the site, where parking resources would be located, and what park elements (e.g., canoe launch, picnic area, etc.) would remain or be added.

F-004-012 **Ship Canal Waterside Trail**

Under Option A, the Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation states that existing pedestrian access to the trail from Montlake Boulevard will be relocated approximately 70 feet to the east. It is not clear whether this relocation is temporary or permanent. Unlike Option A, Option L would require acquisition of right-of-way non-contiguous to the existing bridge for the new bascule bridge. The visualization on Exhibit 5.5-5. Looking West from Northeast Corner of East Montlake Park toward Montlake Bridge (Visualization Location 15) makes clear that the new bridge will significantly change the view along the trail. WSDOT acknowledges that "the user experience would change," and that the bridge over East Montlake Park would cast shadows, block views, and diminish the natural openness of the shoreline. Proposed mitigation found in the Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation is only described as "preparing a detour plan (if available) in coordination with Seattle Parks and Recreation to address the manner in which on-street bicycle traffic and the Ship Canal Waterside Trail would be rerouted during times of trail closure. More information is found in Section 5.4 on Recreation in the main SDEIS document. Here, the SDEIS states that the MOHAI site and the remaining portions of McCurdy and East Montlake Parks would be redesigned in cooperation with the Seattle Parks Department. Mature and/or larger size trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers for replacement or enhancement would be selected as appropriate in consultation with Seattle Parks and Recreation. Plantings would be irrigated and monitored until established. We presume that efforts to mitigate for the remaining portions of McCurdy and East Montlake Parks will carry over to the Ship Canal Waterside Trail, and that WSDOT will consult with the City and University of Washington to address mitigation for the trail. While we are aware that the trail will likely require Section 6(f) mitigation in the form of replacement property for Option A and possibly for Option L, on-site mitigation should occur to address Section 4(f) concerns.

F-004-013

UW Open Space

The narrative discussion for Option A and the corresponding map are somewhat unclear. The map shows one blue color for the underground easement and another similar shade of blue for the stormwater facility. It is hard to tell what the blue corridor running east-west through UW Open Space represents—i.e., whether it represents only an underground easement, an above-ground stormwater facility, or whether the colors overlap so that the blue line running east-west is an underground stormwater facility. Based on discussion for Option L found on page 103 of Attachment 6 for the same stormwater facility, it appears that at least part of the stormwater facility is underground. We are still not clear about the portion of the stormwater facility that is shown as red and listed in the legend on the exhibits for Options A and L as converted to right-of-way. Assuming this stormwater facility represented by the blue line is underground, it would be helpful to have more information about any surface use limitations above the underground easement area.

F-004-014

In addition, assuming that the underground easement of 0.66 acre under Option A is permanent, the narrative discussion should be clarified to state that the area of permanent incorporation is both on the western end and in the middle of UW Open Space. (An actual use under Section 4(f) occurs when an area is permanently incorporated into a project, whether due to acquisition of a fee or to easement interest. Also, Table 5.4-1. Permanent Park Acquisition (acres) should be updated to reflect that 0.86 acres will be used, rather than 0.2 acres. Similarly, for Option L, 0.75 acre should be listed on Table 5.4-1, rather than 0.5 acre.

F-004-015

The SDEIS states that visitors and workers at the University of Washington would benefit from improvements to non-motorized facilities and from enhanced access for recreational activities at all campus facilities. The full or partial lid at the NE Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard NE Interchange under Options K and L are considered a benefit to the UW, providing grade-separated crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists at this busy intersection and improving access to the Burke-Gilman Trail. While this will be a significant general benefit to the area, we believe that site-specific mitigation measures, especially under Option L, should be implemented to help offset the site-specific impacts. The Department defers to the University of Washington in determining site-specific mitigation measures for UW Open Space.

F-004-016

Washington Park Arboretum, Foster Island, and Arboretum Waterfront Trail

Under Option K, 1.4 acres of Foster Island would be acquired. WSDOT acknowledges that while the land bridge may create "a more park-like recreational experience, it requires a much more invasive construction approach than Options A and L. This degree of construction disturbance and extreme change to the setting of the historic island could be determined to be an adverse effect on the presumed TCP.

We disagree that a lower bridge would necessarily be better from a pedestrian trail user standpoint. As the SDEIS acknowledges, the recreational experience of the trail user would change from a wetland viewing opportunity to that of a more landscaped upland setting. Despite the landscaping, portions of the concrete structure supporting the land

F-004-016 bridge would be visible as tall vertical walls, particularly from the north. We also note that while a lower bridge could improve the visual experience of viewing the shoreline, a higher bridge improves the water trail user's experience. Regardless of height, a well-designed, aesthetically pleasing bridge could be a visual asset. Option K appears to close off any water access to underneath the bridge by kayakers or canoeists. We appreciate the visual simulation for Foster Island. Indeed, Foster Island would have a more manicured feel than the more natural feel the island currently exudes, and the bridge would be visible from the northern portion of the island, which would be a change from the current condition. It is not clear whether the bridge is visible in this simulation because it is a forecast of the near-term future after construction or because it represents the future condition in the long-term. If the latter, we wonder whether more could be done for visual screening (e.g., planting a taller species of tree), if appropriate and in consultation with the SHPO, tribes, University of Washington, and the City.

The Department does not support Option K, and the Foster Island lid from a recreational perspective because the lid significantly changes the recreational character of the Arboretum and Foster Island and an important segment of Arboretum Waterfront Trail.

F-004-017 The SDEIS mentions that lighting would be designed to minimize effects on aquatic habitats. If evening and nighttime recreation (e.g., star viewing) is an important activity at the Arboretum, then it would be helpful if WSDOT considered special lighting adjustments through the Arboretum to minimize night sky pollution. We are not sure whether ambient lighting from other sources makes this a moot issue, but encourage WSDOT to discuss this concern with the University of Washington and the City.

F-004-018 For Section 4(f) mitigation for the Arboretum and Arboretum Waterfront Trail, the Department defers to the City and University of Washington to identify appropriate mitigation measures.

F-004-019 **Construction**

The SDEIS mentions that pile-driving, jackhammering, and the use of concrete-breakers, saws, and other demolition equipment will be limited to daytime hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays, with more stringent restrictions on weekends. We note that weekend day use is likely the peak time for recreation. Therefore, use of heavy demolition or installation, especially pile-driving, should ideally be avoided on weekends.

Technical Issues

F-004-020 1. On page 4-41 of the SDEIS, SHPO stands for State Historic Preservation Officer, not State Historic Properties Office.

F-004-021 2. On page 158 of Attachment 6, first full regular paragraph, line 6, "Arboretum Foundation" should be replaced with Washington Department of Natural Resources. The Arboretum Foundation does not own any part of Ship Canal Waterside Trail within the Section 6(f) boundary. However, the Washington Department of Natural Resources does.

F-004-022 3. On page 110 of Attachment 6, first paragraph under Foster Island, Exhibit 34 should actually be Exhibit 47.

F-004-023 **Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act**

As you are aware, the National Park Service (NPS) must approve any conversion of property protected by Section 6(f) of the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The NPS acknowledges that additional environmental review will be completed before a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination under Section 6(f) can be made. The NPS and WSDOT have met and agreed that a more in-depth 6(f) analysis, focusing solely on the selected alternative, will be done later. The SDEIS, including the Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation contained therein, is a great start towards the full NEPA analysis.

F-004-024 We are aware that WSDOT will be running a parallel NEPA process to address impacts associated with constructing mitigation after there is agreement with the City and University of Washington on a potential replacement site. While NPS does not select the mitigation site, we are responsible for determining whether the site meets Section 6(f) mitigation requirements and reviewing the environmental impacts associated with development of the replacement property.

F-004-025 There is an error in the recitation of the Section 6(f) laws within the SDEIS. The text box is correct. However, the first sentence under the section "What would be done to mitigate for adverse effects that cannot be avoided or minimized?" should have the words "or developed" inserted between "purchased" and "with," so that the sentence reads as follows:

> Section 6(f) of the LWCF requires that replacement property be acquired for recreational lands purchased or developed with grants from the fund.

F-004-026 In the final 6(f) analysis, when that ultimately occurs, it will be necessary to have conceptual plans developed for all parkland remaining in Section 6(f) protection so that the NPS can determine whether the remainders will function as viable recreation units or not.

The conversion graphics are very helpful, though we believe the conversion footprint is too conservative. However, this can be addressed further once a build option has been chosen. Similarly, although there is some information in the SDEIS and Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation regarding the recreational utility impacts and mitigation, more analysis will be needed before NPS can make a final NEPA determination.

F-004-027 For questions concerning Section 4(f) comments, please contact Kelly Powell, National Park Service, Pacific West Region, 168 S. Jackson St., 2nd Floor, Seattle, WA 98104-2853; phone: (206) 220-4106 Kelly_Powell@nps.gov.

For questions concerning Section 6(f) comments, please contact Heather Ramsay, Project Manager, National Park Service, Community Assistance Programs, 909 First Avenue, Floor 5, Seattle, WA 98104-1060; phone: (206) 220-4123, Heather_Ramsay@nps.gov.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental
Policy and Compliance

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 3755
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REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Regulatory Branch

APR 30 2010

Katie DeLeuw
SR 520 Bridge Replacement Project
Plaza 600 Building
600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Reference: SR 520 Bridge EIS

Dear Ms. DeLeuw:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

We have only two comments on the document:

F-005-001

- Under Option K, tunnels would carry vehicular traffic underneath the Montlake Cut. The top surfaces of tunnels under any portion of the Lake Washington Ship Canal (LWSC) would need a minimum clearance of 15 feet below the authorized 30 foot depth of the navigation channel.

F-005-002

- Section 4.14, titled Navigation, begins with the statement "The U.S. Coast Guard is responsible for identifying and maintaining navigation channels in U.S. waters such as Lake Washington and Puget Sound." The U.S. Coast Guard operates the Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service, and administers a permit program for bridges spanning navigable waters. They also maintain channel-marking buoys and other navigation aids, and carry out marine safety and law enforcement duties. But it is the Corps of Engineers that maintains navigation channels. The Corps built the LWSC and the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, and has operated the system as a Congressionally authorized navigation project since 1916. We have active, major dredging projects to maintain navigation in the Snohomish, Duwamish, and Columbia Rivers, Grays Harbor, various Commencement Bay waterways in Tacoma's Port Industrial Area, and occasional maintenance dredging from Bellingham to Willapa Harbor. We also maintain waterways with our Regulatory Program, which ensures that structures built over or in navigable waters will not have an adverse effect on navigation. We suggest adding the Corps as a second subject in the sentence, so it reads

  > The U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are the two federal agencies responsible for identifying and maintaining navigation channels in U.S. waters such as Lake Washington and Puget Sound.

F-005-003

At this point, we realize that the Seattle District has limited regulatory jurisdiction over the replacement bridge. The jurisdiction we do have is over the fill components of the structure to be placed in waters of the United States: Lake Washington, Union Bay, Portage Bay, and their associated wetlands. We look forward to reviewing and finalizing the wetland delineation and coming to an understanding of the physical placement of bridge and ramp components. I remain the Corps point of contact for this case, and if you have any questions, please call me at (206) 764-6907 or use e-mail jack.kennedy@usace.army.mil.

Jack Kennedy
Transportation Liaison Team

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, Washington 98115

May 12, 2010

Jenifer Young, Environmental Manager
SR 520 Project Office
600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Ms. Young:

F-006-001

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the supplemental draft environmental impact statement (SDEIS) and Preferred Alternative for the State Route (SR) 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, as provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on January 5, 2010. And thank you also for the ongoing discussions with the resource agencies involved in the pre-consultation of this important transportation project. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the SDEIS and is providing comments, consistent with our statutory responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Our comments focus on the potential impacts to ESA-listed Puget Sound (PS) Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), PS Chinook salmon critical habitat, and PS steelhead (*O. mykiss*) and the impacts to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Chinook and coho salmon (*O. kisutch*).

Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comments

- The bridge profile for the western approach for the six-lane alternative from the 2006 DEIS was higher than the profiles for options A, K, and L in the SDEIS. The higher profile would significantly reduce the impacts from shading to the migratory corridor for juvenile Chinook salmon. Please explain why WSDOT and FHWA chose to lower the approach bridge profile for all six-lane options and a compare the impacts of the higher DEIS profile with the SDEIS profiles.

F-006-002

- Separate from the SR 520 Program, WSDOT is developing an innovative stormwater treatment (IST) best management practice (BMP) for fixed bridges. If this BMP proves to be move effective at removing stormwater pollutants than existing technologies, could it be incorporated into the design for the SR 520 Bridge?

F-006-003

- An immersed-tube tunnel as described for Option M would have significantly greater impacts to fish resources that any of the three options considered in the SDEIS. Construction of an immersed-tube tunnel requires excavating the Montlake Cut which would cause substantial impacts to Chinook salmon, steelhead, Chinook salmon critical habitat, and essential fish habitat for Chinook and coho salmon. The SDEIS options avoid in-water work within the Montlake Cut, which is the migration corridor for all anadromous fish within the Lake Washington basin.

F-006-004

- It is not clear whether the cost estimates from section 1.11 include all avoidance, minimization, and mitigation costs. Please provide additional information as it becomes available. Is there a sufficient budget for all of the anticipated environmental impacts?

F-006-005

- Exhibit 5.4-4 shows the profiles for the existing bridge and Options A, K, and L. It would be helpful to extend the profiles east to the floating section so that they show the height of each option over the entire salmon migratory corridor. Also, the fish tracking studies conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service referenced the existing pier numbers. WSDOT should include the existing pier numbers for the profile figures in order to correlate the profiles with the fish tracking study. This would improve the ability to assess the potential impacts to migrating ESA-listed species.

F-006-006

- On page 5-139 the SDEIS discusses the overall impacts from the project on fish resources. It concludes, "However, current analysis indicates that the project is not expected to negatively affect overall salmonid populations or ESUs in the watershed." Please provide additional detailed information and analysis to support this conclusion. The information presented in the SDEIS is very general.

F-006-007

- Finally, NMFS understands that FHWA and WSDOT have initiated government-to-government consultations with the affected tribal governments concerning the impacts of this project on their fisheries and cultural resources. We strongly support and encourage these efforts. NMFS is also required to ensure, via Secretarial order 3206 that all affected tribal governments are kept appraised of our ESA consultation on this project and encourage FHWA and WSDOT to allow their participation in the consultation process

Preferred Alternative Comment

F-006-008

- The six-foot wide, planted median strip for the portion of SR 520 adjacent to Portage Bay could be used for stormwater treatment and infiltration. NMFS would like WSDOT to explore the possibility of incorporating a media filter drain, compost ameliorated filter strip, or other stormwater BMP into the design of the median strip to enhance stormwater treatment in that area.

F-006-008

We hope these comments are helpful to WSDOT and FHWA as you work to refine the SDEIS and PA. We are confident, that with continued collaboration, the project will meet the transportation needs of the region and avoid, minimize, and mitigate any adverse effects to species and their habitats listed under the ESA and MSA. If you have questions about our review, please contact Michael Grady of the Washington State Habitat Office at (206) 526-4645, or by electronic mail at Michael.Grady@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

for Barry A. Thom
Acting Regional Administrator