



State Route 520 Eastside Transit and High-Occupancy Vehicle Program

King County, Washington

Washington State Department of Transportation



Counterclockwise from top: Bird's eye view of the SR520 Eastside corridor; boarding platform in the SR520 median; recreational facility developed with community input provides a view of Lake Washington (all photos ©Washington State DOT)

Improvements to address freeway seismic vulnerabilities led to significant transit, bicycle-pedestrian, and trip reliability benefits while creating new public open space.

CONTEXT

- Completed in 2015.
- Western.
- Urban/Suburban.
- \$363 million.
- 2.3 miles.
- 700 buses daily.



HIGHWAY TRANSFORMATIONS

- Adds transit/high-occupancy vehicle lanes, shoulders, bicycle-pedestrian elements, and three landscaped highway lids.
- Compatible with a potential future light rail.
- Provides environmental enhancements including “fish-friendly” culverts.

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT DRIVER?

State Route 520 (SR520) connects Seattle to cities east of Lake Washington (the “Eastside”). Inspections of the highway’s fixed bridges, built in the early 1960s, determined they were at risk of collapse in an earthquake, while the original SR 520 floating bridge was vulnerable to severe windstorms and waves. Further, growth in the area was forecasted to continue at a rapid pace. To better withstand seismic activity and address current and future travel time delays, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) moved to replace the highway’s bridges. This effort served as the impetus for improvements to the Eastside corridor that remedied longstanding issues and provided new livability enhancements.

HOW DID THIS CONNECT THE COMMUNITY?

The SR520 Eastside Transit and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Project adds numerous connectivity benefits. SR520 was widened from four lanes to six lanes, adding dedicated transit and HOV lanes in each direction. Wider and safer shoulders were also added throughout the Eastside corridor. When SR 520 reconstruction is complete all the way to I-5 in Seattle, these travel time reliability and **improved transit service** components are expected to reduce typical peak-hour commutes between Seattle and the Eastside by half an hour. WSDOT also designed the project to be compatible with a potential future light rail system.



A landscaped highway lid provides multimodal connectivity (©WSDOT).

The Eastside project also adds three landscaped highway lids across SR520. These lids physically reconnect communities long separated by the old highway. They also link local bicycle and pedestrian paths to the first segment of a regional shared-use trail that parallels SR520. This 14-foot-wide path will eventually stretch 12 miles from Seattle to Redmond and significantly improve non-motorized commuting options and recreational opportunities for area residents. WSDOT also partnered with local municipalities to build connections from the SR520 shared-use trail to nearby community resources and amenities.

Two of the three highway lids feature accessible **transit user accommodations** that provide stairway and elevator access to sheltered transit

stops located in the SR520 median underneath the lids. These median transit stops offer riders safer access and more reliable travel than prior configurations. By providing connections to local and regional bicycle-pedestrian paths, the lids also offer **expanded access to transit**.



SR520 includes livability enhancements (©WSDOT)

In planning and developing the project, WSDOT employed **context sensitive solutions** to ensure improvements to the Eastside corridor were shaped by community input. Public engagement activities included dozens of outreach activities and multiple community **design charrettes** that helped establish corridor features and aesthetics. These activities ultimately influenced the design of the highway lids, shared-use trail, and transit stops. The project also provides “fish friendly” culverts and other enhancements to the natural environment.

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS?



RENEW

By significantly reducing peak-hour travel time along the corridor, the SR520 Eastside Transit and HOV project addresses the region's growing mobility needs while also improving travel by transit and non-motorized modes. Further, the project brings a host of livability and environmental benefits that will help to ensure the region's future success. WSDOT's benefit-cost analysis estimated a 123 percent return on investment when factoring for things like short-term jobs creation and travel time savings, but not factoring for induced growth.

For more information: <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/MedinaTo202/>