

September 9, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee
From: Calvin Chow, Analyst
Subject: Resolution 31904 – Montlake Second Bascule Bridge

On September 11, 2019, the Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee will consider a resolution to support the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT's) development of a second Montlake bascule bridge across the Montlake Cut as part of the State Route 520 (SR 520) highway project. The proposed resolution would supersede Resolution 31411, and Section 2 and Section 3 of Resolution 31611.

Background:

The SR 520 project has been in development since early planning on the Trans-Lake Washington Study began in 1997 and was fully funded by the Washington State legislature in 2015 through the Connecting Washington transportation funding package. The funded project includes several phases of work within the Seattle city limits, including I-5 interchange improvements, a new lid of SR 520 at Roanoke, a new Portage Bay Bridge, a new lid of SR 520 at Montlake, new approach structures to the SR 520 floating bridge, and a second Montlake bascule bridge.

The project is managed by WSDOT, while the City of Seattle has been an active participant and partner in planning and design. In 2011-2012, WSDOT undertook the Seattle Community Design Process to refine design concepts on contentious elements of the SR 520 project. Following this process, the City expressed its position on the second Montlake bascule bridge.

In 2012, the City Council and the Mayor established City policy (through Resolution [31411](#)) that WSDOT should not construct a second Montlake bascule bridge "within the foreseeable future." Resolution 31411 evaluated the cost and impacts of a new bridge against the possibility of providing pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements by other means. Resolution 31411 stated that changed conditions, including the development light rail in the SR 520 corridor, may warrant further consideration of the second Montlake bascule bridge in the future.

In 2015, the City Council and the Mayor updated the City policy with respect to the second Montlake bascule bridge. In particular, Resolution [31611](#) recommended that WSDOT funding for the second Montlake bascule bridge be used for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements listed in Section 2 and Section 3 of the resolution.

With the Washington State legislature approving the Connecting Washington transportation funding package in 2015, WSDOT has the project funds necessary to construct a second Montlake bascule bridge, but has not announced a timetable for construction. WSDOT has

consistently stated its intention to conduct additional coordination and outreach with community stakeholders and City officials regarding the scope of the project.

Proposed Resolution 31904 acknowledges that there have been some significant developments in the SR520 Corridor since the City last weighed in on the second Montlake bridge. These developments include the opening of the University of Washington light rail station in March 2016. The station averages over 10,000 weekday boardings, and it serves as a transfer hub for King County Metro and Sound Transit bus service. The proposed resolution also notes the opening of the SR 520 bicycle trail in December 2017, which connects the University of Washington to the regional bicycle network.

Considering these changed conditions, the proposed resolution would replace the City's previous policy recommending against WSDOT building the second Montlake bridge with a position supporting WSDOT's development of a second Montlake bascule bridge. The proposed resolution would make it City policy to support the second Montlake bascule bridge in order to increase capacity for transit and high-occupancy vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists across the Montlake Cut, while maintaining the existing number of general-purpose lanes.

The proposed resolution would further request that WSDOT (a) establish opportunities for community and stakeholder outreach and input and (b) explore opportunities to advance the project's schedule such that it coincides with other SR 520 construction phases and reduces the overall disruption in the corridor.

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Exec Director
Dan Eder, Deputy Director