



Legislation Text

File #: Res 31716, Version: 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION requesting that the Washington State Department of Transportation preserve one support pier associated with the Roanoke/R.H. Thomson Expressway; stating the City Council's intent to fund an engineering study of the pier's structural integrity; and stating the City Council's intent that the City accept ownership of the pier.

WHEREAS, beginning in the 1950s, the Washington State Department of Highways (now the "Washington State Department of Transportation" or "WSDOT") planned the Roanoke Expressway, later renamed as the R.H. Thomson Expressway (the "Expressway"), as a four-lane highway running through Rainier Valley, the Central District, Madison Valley, Montlake, Ravenna, Wedgwood, and Lake City; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, State Route 520 ("SR 520") construction was completed including stub ramps for the Expressway interchange near the Washington Park Arboretum, sparking a civic debate about the negative impacts of highways through urban neighborhoods and a decade-long campaign to stop further state highway construction in The City of Seattle (the "City"); and

WHEREAS, the campaign to save City neighborhoods from the Expressway was notable for its leadership by ordinary citizens, its grass-roots organizing techniques, and a diverse range of community groups that allied in opposition to it; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, the group Citizens Against the R.H. Thomson was formed to organize against the highway plans and included notable Seattle activists Maynard Arsove, Aaron Dixon, Margaret Cary Tunks, Larry Gossett, Alfred Schweppe, and Victor Steinbrueck, and many other activists; and

WHEREAS, on February 8, 1972, the Expressway was canceled following a decisive public vote against it; and

WHEREAS, the Expressway stub ramps were never used for highway purposes and instead became popular,

yet unsanctioned, recreational areas; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, Governor Christine Gregoire signed the Record of Decision for the SR 520, I-5 to

Medina Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, including removing the Expressway stub ramps; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, conceptual plans were completed and reviewed for the Arboretum North Entry project,

anticipating the peninsula owned by WSDOT will be transferred to the City for park use; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 2014, WSDOT agreed to work with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

(DPR) and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee to set aside concrete rubble, preserve a

“1963” concrete date stamp from the West Approach Bridge North phase of SR 520 Replacement

construction, and coordinate with DPR to salvage, within reason, additional fragments prior to

constructing the West Approach Bridge South phase; and

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2014, the Seattle Design Commission provided design review for WSDOT

plans to build a landscaped lid and other improvements in the Montlake and Arboretum areas of the SR

520 corridor, and included a recommendation “that the State and City explore the idea of retaining part

of the ramps to nowhere” as they “represent an important time in Seattle’s history and express a key

personality trait of our city”; and

WHEREAS, in July 2016, the citizen group Seattle Activists Remembered Celebrated and Honored (ARCH)

published a proposal to retain one support pier intended for the unused Expressway; and

WHEREAS, the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee expressed support for the ARCH proposal; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes the importance in City history of the citizen revolt against the

Expressway and how the efforts of civically engaged Seattleites saved many neighborhoods, hundreds

of City blocks, and thousands of homes from the harmful impacts of highway construction; NOW,

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE THAT:

Section 1. The City Council requests that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

preserve and not demolish one support pier, identified as Bent 6E (the “Pier”) the northeastern most pier of the Expressway mainline, consisting of no less than four concrete columns topped by a crossbeam, associated with the intended Expressway. WSDOT is requested to assist in the City’s efforts to retain the Pier in perpetuity as a cultural artifact, symbolic of the citizens’ movement that saved Seattle neighborhoods from further highway construction, and as a reminder to future citizens of the power of participation in our democracy.

Section 2. To determine how the Pier can be safely preserved and the cost of doing so, the City Council intends to fund an engineering study of the Pier’s structural stability in a freestanding state (after the roadway deck is removed), including a seismic risk analysis, recommendations for retrofitting as needed, and cost estimates for the work. The City Council requests that WSDOT temporarily shore the Pier as needed without significantly altering its integrity and present condition until the study is completed.

Section 3. The City Council intends that the City would accept ownership of the Pier with the WSDOT peninsula area after WSDOT completes the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program. The City would be responsible for maintaining and preserving the Pier as a cultural artifact or “ruin” for the benefit of future visitors to the Washington Park Arboretum North Entry area.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2016, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2016.

President _____ of the City Council

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2016.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)