

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6321

As of January 21, 2010

Title: An act relating to mitigating the impacts of the state route number 520 corridor project on the Washington park arboretum.

Brief Description: Mitigating the impacts of the state route number 520 corridor project on the Washington park arboretum.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/21/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: The Washington Park Arboretum (WPA) was established in 1934 and is recognized in statute as an official arboretum of the state of Washington. Its 230 acre site contains a collection of over 20,000 trees, shrubs, and vines from around the world. The City of Seattle is responsible for the park and park related functions of the WPA, known as Washington Park. The University of Washington is responsible for the plant collection and education related to the WPA.

The WPA is located in the vicinity of the State Route (SR) 520 bridge across Lake Washington. The existing SR 520 bridge is currently scheduled for replacement. Under current law, the Department of Transportation is required to mitigate for environmental impacts a highway project will have on the surrounding areas.

The Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) executed in 2009 provided funding to allow for tolling to begin on the existing SR 520 bridge to help finance the replacement bridge project. The use of toll revenues is expected to be addressed in a toll agreement between the UPA parties.

Summary of Bill: One percent of any revenues from the toll imposed on the SR 520 bridge, up to \$1 million in a fiscal year, are to be deposited into a new account called the Washington Park Arboretum Support Account. Once a year half of the funds are to be transferred to the University of Washington solely for the preservation, maintenance, and

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enhanced presentation of the WPA. The other half of the funds are to be transferred once a year to the City of Seattle solely for the preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of the Washington Park. Funds in this account may not supplant existing funds for these facilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 2010.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Whatever option is chosen for replacement of SR 520, it will have adverse impacts on the area. A new bridge will increase traffic, there will be no serene experience, and plants cannot be planted in the affected area. The bridge causes noise and pollution and visual blight, noise is a big issue in this area. This money is very important to the Arboretum and would allow us to hire additional staff. This is an outdoor classroom used by many people, access to the site is unsafe due to traffic volumes and the speed of traffic. The existing SR 520 highway precludes constructive visitor use and has greatly degraded the experience of the Arboretum user. If WSDOT rented Lake Washington Boulevard it would cost \$0.8 and \$1.34 million.

OTHER: WSDOT is working on mitigation options for the SR 520 bridge replacement and the Arboretum. There is a lot of mitigation that needs to be done in the SR 520 corridor. WSDOT will work hard to develop a satisfactory mitigation plan.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Tom Hinckley, School of Forest Resources, University of Washington; Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanical Garden; Sarah Reichard, University of Washington; Sue Nicol, Independent Horticultural Consultant.

OTHER: David Dye, WSDOT.