



News Release
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Arboretum and WSDOT Reach Ground Breaking \$7.8 Million Agreement
Will Fund Multi-Use Trail and Other Major Park Improvements, and Provides for Removal of “Ramps to Nowhere”

Seattle, WA---The Washington Park Arboretum will receive \$7.8 million as the result of a collaborative effort between the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC).

This agreement ensures the implementation of key projects in the Arboretum’s Master Plan as required mitigation for the effects of the upcoming replacement of the SR 520 Bridge. The ABGC advises the University of Washington, City of Seattle and The Arboretum Foundation on the management and stewardship of the Washington Park Arboretum for the benefit of current and future generations.

“The funding authorized by this groundbreaking agreement is the largest single amount ever dedicated to the Arboretum. It is exciting news for anyone who loves and uses our wonderful Arboretum,” says Jack Collins, Chair of ABGC. “Both the mitigation projects and the bridge replacement itself will provide some of the most dramatic improvements to the Arboretum in decades, including the removal of the infamous ‘ramps to nowhere’ in the wetlands and the construction of a new multi-use trail through the Arboretum and improvements to Arboretum Creek.”

In addition to the SR 520 Eastside improvements and the floating bridge, WSDOT currently has funding to construct the West Approach Bridge North, connecting the westbound lanes from the new floating bridge to Montlake in Seattle. Construction of the West Approach Bridge North will begin in summer 2014. The current 520 bridge structure in the Arboretum will stay in place to connect the eastbound lanes between Montlake and the floating bridge until funding is secured for the West Approach Bridge South. Together, the north and south halves of the West Approach Bridge will provide three westbound and three eastbound lanes connecting the floating bridge and Montlake.

Under the terms of the new agreement, WSDOT will pay Seattle Parks and Recreation \$7.8 million by the end of February to cover the costs of a first phase of mitigation projects in the Arboretum, tied to the recent funding secured to build the West Approach Bridge North. These projects include the design and construction of a 1.0 mile multi-use trail, as well as

improvements to Azalea Way Pond, parts of Arboretum Creek, and Foster Island. The design of the trail will begin this year. Construction will start as early as summer 2014, pending WSDOT's execution of the construction contract for West Approach Bridge North.

The multi-use trail is a major component of the Arboretum Master Plan, adopted in 2001. It will provide an important bicycle and pedestrian corridor connecting East Madison Street to the Montlake and University of Washington neighborhoods. Casual bicyclists will no longer have to face the hazards of car traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard to ride through the Arboretum. The new trail will also eventually link to Arboretum Drive East, forming a 2.0-mile interior bicycle-and-pedestrian "loop" in the Arboretum—a tremendous asset to Arboretum users and visitors.

In addition to the mitigation projects covered by the \$7.8 million, the agreement between WSDOT and ABGC creates a contractual framework for a final phase of mitigation that will take place in the Arboretum once funding is secured for the construction of West Approach Bridge South. These projects include the process to transfer the WSDOT Peninsula to the Arboretum, shoreline restoration, the creation of a new North Entry to the Arboretum, a new roundabout at Foster Island Road and Lake Washington Blvd, and daylighting and restoration of sections of Arboretum Creek.

"The projects described in this agreement will reinvigorate one of Seattle's most vital greenways," says Collins. "This is all the result of a very successful and important partnership between WSDOT and ABGC—which represents the City of Seattle, the University of Washington, and the Arboretum Foundation. We are very appreciative of WSDOT's recognition of the value of the Arboretum to the citizens of Seattle."

"Completing this agreement is a major milestone towards resolving the anticipated I-5 to Medina Project effects in the Arboretum," says Julie Meredith, WSDOT 520 Bridge Program Director. "This is a win for all parties involved—it is crucial for moving the West Approach Bridge North forward and allows WSDOT to meet our mitigation requirements while providing real benefits to the Arboretum." Meredith also explained that the mitigation planning was directed by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6392 in 2010, and thanked all the parties for helping WSDOT meet the legislative requirements to develop an appropriate mitigation plan for the Arboretum.

Agreement Timeline and Design Schematics: A detailed timeline of key events leading up to the signing of the mitigation agreement is posted on the Arboretum Projects page of the Seattle Parks and Recreation website: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/arboretum/>. Preliminary design schematics for the Multi-Use Trail and North Entry projects, prepared by the Berger Partnership, can also be downloaded from this page. To read a copy of the Arboretum Master Plan, visit <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/arboretum/arboPlanindex.htm>.

SR 520 Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/6392workgroup.htm>

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee: ABGC is comprised of representatives from the Arboretum Foundation, University of Washington Botanic Gardens, and Seattle Parks and Recreation, as well as appointees from the City of Seattle and State of Washington. For more information, visit <http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/abgc/>.

WSDOT's SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program page:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr520bridge/default.aspx>.

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