

## Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

September 3, 2015

**Article: "Seattle pushes for fewer openings of traffic-clogged Ship Canal bridges"**

**Wednesday, September 2, 2015** in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, pages A1 and A9

### Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the photograph and graphs. Do you know where the photograph was taken? Why do you think Seattle is pushing for fewer openings on Ship Canal bridges? At first glance, what information do the graphs tell you?

### Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today's article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the "context," or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

*regulations*

*vessels*

*congestion*

*petition*

*idling*

*encroach*

*enabled*

*drawspan*

*mariners*

*pleasure craft*

*commute*

*canal*

*motorists*

*crosstown*

### Comprehension:

1. Who wants to change the hours during which the Ship Canal bridges stay down?
2. During what four hours must the bridges currently stay down?
3. Why does the Seattle Director of Transportation argue that these hours should be changed?
4. What is Scott Kubly seeking permission for?
5. Why does Kubly want the pleasure craft to have scheduled openings?
6. When does the petition with the Coast Guard have to be filed by?
7. When a bridge opens, how far can congestion stretch on either side?
8. What is the average length of an opening and the required time for traffic to clear in minutes?
9. What does Lt. Cmdr. Steve Fischer, Northwest bridge administrator for the Coast Guard need to examine before he forms an opinion on SDOT's proposed change?
10. How long could it take to revise the Ship Canal's drawspan rules?
11. On average, how many cars and buses cross the three city bridges combined per week day?

### Post-Reading:

**Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:**

**“Currently, the bridge decks stay down from 7 to 9 a.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m. weekdays, under U.S. Coast Guard regulations that have existed for decades. Huge commercial vessels of more than 1,000 tons may request openings at any time.**

**Those four hours no longer reflect growing traffic congestion or extended commute times, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) argued in a statement Tuesday.”**

Do you think it's fair that huge commercial vessels of more than 1,000 tons may request openings at any time? Why or why not? Do you agree with the current four hours during which the bridges must stay down? If you think they should change, what hours do you think they be changed to?

### Building Language Skills:

**Read the following passage, review the graphs on page A9 and complete the activity below:**

**“The pleasure craft, we want to have scheduled openings so people in their boats know when to show up, and motorists can plan accordingly,’ Kubly said.**

**The city expects to file its petition with the Coast Guard by Nov. 1.”**

Personally, what do you think about having scheduled openings for pleasure craft versus other boats? Imagine you work for the City of Seattle. Write a petition to the Coast Guard outlining the necessity of and reasons for scheduled openings of Ship Canal bridges. Cite data from the graphs and within the article itself.

### Comprehension Question Answers:

1. The Seattle Department of Transportation's director, Scott Kubly, is proposing these changes.
2. Currently the bridges must stay down from 7 to 9 a.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m.
3. The Seattle Director of Transportation argues that these hours should be changed because they no longer reflect the growing congestion or extended commute times.
4. Scott Kubly, the SDOT director, plans to seek Coast Guard permission to use a system of scheduled bridge openings, instead of raising drawspans on demand with as little as 10 minutes' notice. He argues that that way, there would be fewer openings, and more boats would pass each time.
5. If the pleasure craft had scheduled openings people in boats would know when to show up and motorists can plan accordingly.
6. The petition with the Coast Guard has to be filed by November 1.
7. Congestion can stretch for a mile on either side.
8. The average length of an opening lasts 4.8 minutes and can require 10 minutes for traffic to clear.
9. Fischer needs to first examine the bridge logs, traffic counts and other facts.
10. It could take a year to revise the drawspan rules because it would require a formal change to the Code of Federal Regulations.
11. 112,000 cars and buses cross the three city bridges combined per week day.