

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BEL-RED CORRIDOR PROJECT  
PUBLIC MEETING  
MINUTES

June 8, 2006  
5:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers  
Bellevue City Hall

Planning Director Dan Stroh welcomed everyone present and thanked them for attending. He said a lot of time and energy has been put into thinking about the Bel-Red corridor over the past few months. He explained that the large study is being guided by a Council-appointed 16-member steering committee, and that the comments raised during the meeting would be summarized and shared with them to help them in their decision making process.

Much of the Bel-Red area was developed 30-plus years ago, and it has been many years since the city studied the area systematically. During that time, there has been a great deal of change. The Growth Management Act is the governing law and it says the land within the Urban Growth Boundary must be used more efficiently. There is more congestion in the region. There are major growth centers that have developed at either end of the Bel-Red corridor: downtown Bellevue on the western end, and Microsoft and Overlake on the eastern end.

Sound Transit Phase II is in the planning stage, and it presents an opportunity to create a new transportation corridor through the area and to think logically about how the land uses could capitalize on the opportunity. If it is built, high-capacity transit will come from Seattle across the I-90 bridge to downtown Bellevue, then through the corridor out to Overlake and downtown Redmond.

Mr. Stroh said the planning effort under way for the Bel-Red corridor is intended to result in a coherent idea for how the area fits into the larger whole. If a new vision is not created for the area, the city will miss out on major opportunities to sync land uses with potential high-capacity transit, and there is a good chance that part of the area will stagnate.

The steering committee spent several meetings focused on current conditions in the Bel-Red corridor, including the market and economic realities and forecasts, land use, transportation and environmental issues, and how to think about high-capacity transit. The steering committee has benefited greatly from public feedback in developing the four preliminary draft alternatives.

The Bel-Red area has essentially been locked up because of transportation constraints. The transportation grid is immature at best, making opportunities for circulation through the area limited. Because of the geographic location of the corridor, it has the potential for impacting the surrounding areas. Unless careful consideration is given to how the area can grow smart, gridlock could be the ultimate outcome, and unacceptable congestion would result in neighboring areas.

Mr. Stroh said the draft alternatives represent visions for how the area could develop over the coming years. They represent much more than just a zoning exercise; the adopted vision will require a variety of tools for implementation, including zoning changes, catalyst projects, public infrastructure investments, special financing tools, and incentives.

It is too early in the process to select a preferred alternative. The current focus is on identifying the right menu of alternatives to study in more detail in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement

(DEIS), a document that is intended to yield objective information through analysis of the alternatives; it will serve as the basis for the steering committee in making rational judgments about which alternative vision makes the most sense. Rather than seeking the right alternative, the focus is on making sure the right things to study further are identified. The steering committee is scheduled to decide at a meeting on June 29 on three alternatives to carry forward to the DEIS; a no action alternative will also be studied.

Mr. Stroh was asked how the comments of the public will be taken into consideration by the steering committee. He explained that detailed notes will be taken of the public comments and handed to the steering committee for their June 12 meeting. The public is welcome at every steering committee meeting, and throughout the process to date there have been opportunities for the public to provide input. There will not be another public meeting before the committee is slated to take action on June 29 on which three alternatives should be carried forward to the DEIS.

Strategic Planning Manager Kevin O'Neill said the City Council established ten project principles to frame the study. The principles include looking at the Bel-Red area for the long term, identifying a differentiated economic niche, integrating land use and transportation planning, and focusing on neighborhood protection and enhancement as well as creating new neighborhoods. There have been a variety of opportunities for receiving public comment throughout the process to date, including a scoping meeting, community meetings, and panels for business and property owners from the area.

Mr. O'Neill said all of the comments received to date have fed the development of the four draft alternatives. There have been concerns raised about compatibility between existing land uses and future land uses; some have voiced a desire to preserve many of the uses that exist in the area currently; some have supported the notion of allowing new uses in the area; there have been comments offered regarding the need for transportation improvements; and there has been support offered for parks and open space and the opportunities that exist to improve the streams and wetlands in the corridor.

The role of the steering committee is currently centered on narrowing the four conceptual action alternatives into three alternatives that will be moved forward to a lot more analysis and review in the DEIS. That process will include additional opportunities for community input. The steering committee will begin to develop a preliminary preferred alternative later in the year; a final version of the preferred alternative will be developed in early 2007. Two or three additional community meetings are planned to help inform those processes. All of the information that has been generated by the project is available on the project website.

Mr. O'Neill explained that in addition to the guiding principles handed down from the Council, the steering committee has adopted a set of specific objectives. They deal with market feasibility, land use, neighborhood impacts, environmental quality and sustainability, parks and open space, and transportation. Each of the objectives were used in developing the draft alternatives.

With regard to market feasibility, the objectives include incorporating elements of the market forecast; serving a distinctive market niche in the area; meeting market needs and economic realities; and leveraging opportunities on both sides of the corridor, including the areas near Overlake Hospital and Overlake in Redmond.

Mr. O'Neill noted that because the Bel-Red corridor was developed many years ago, the age of the buildings is evidence of opportunity for a fair amount of redevelopment in the coming years.

The area is ideally situated, and there are a variety of uses in play currently. Much of the land is underdeveloped based on an analysis of improvement value to land value. Rising land values make future investments in manufacturing and warehousing uses difficult.

The market and economic analysis concluded there are opportunities to compete for corporations. As the area redevelops, it should not seek to compete with the downtown, rather it should complement the downtown. There are opportunities to create housing in the corridor, for treating the environmental elements as development amenities, and to establish transit villages. A do-nothing scenario will only lead to continued uncertainty about the area and some difficulties in redevelopment.

Looking out to the year 2030, the market forecast concluded there is a strong market for new office space, some new retail, opportunity for housing, and that there will be a net loss of light industrial space.

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said the objectives adopted by the steering committee that relate to transportation focus on all modes of transportation, everything from high-capacity transit to sidewalks and new streets, to providing improved access within the corridor, to other places in Bellevue, and to the regional transportation system. Many of the desired transportation components are lacking in the area. The street system is immature and has a number of gaps. A lot of traffic enters and leaves the Bel-Red corridor every day, and some circulates within it.

With regard to environmental quality and sustainability, Mr. McDonald said the public and the steering committee have highlighted the need to focus on the natural systems that exist in the area as well as the built environment and ways to use resources wisely. There are five stream corridors in the area, all of which are afforded some regulatory protections through the critical areas ordinance. The level of protection is dependent on the type of stream and the type of nearby development. Streams that have fish present or have components making fish populations possible receive more protection. In addition to regulatory protections for streams and wetlands, there are a lot of programs used by the city to enhance the functions and values of the environmental assets. The city can also promote environmental sustainability by developing parkland and open space in the vicinity of streams.

Mr. McDonald said sustainability of the built environment includes a focus on conserving energy and natural resources by incorporating components of smart growth, such as transportation options, low-impact development, water conservation, mixed use developments, and transit-oriented development.

If redevelopment in the Bel-Red corridor includes offices and new housing neighborhoods, there will need to be parks and open space amenities created to support them. The study is looking at ways to integrate parks and open space elements within the various land use concepts, and ways to improve the overall parks system by including trails and linkages. Much will depend on the ultimate demographics of the area. Small, local parks could serve the community as it evolves over time with a residential component; such facilities are generally located within walking distance and include features ranging from athletic fields to playgrounds and formal gardens.

The notion of incorporating a major recreational facility in the corridor has been entertained by the steering committee. The Department of Parks and Community Services is interested in the opportunities that are present in the area to develop a 15- to 20-acre facility that could include a building with an aquatic center or other indoor recreation uses. The central location of the corridor makes it suitable to link park systems and amenities in all compass directions via trails

and greenways. The Burlington Northern-Santa Fe railroad is currently in private ownership, but King County is actively seeking to purchase the right-of-way; it could be converted to use as a public trail. A green crossing at NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street over I-405 could connect the downtown with the railroad right-of-way.

Mr. McDonald said the more urbanized areas of the corridor will present opportunities to develop plazas surrounded by retail and restaurants. The opportunities may present themselves in the vicinity of high-capacity transit stations or in office developments.

Mr. O'Neill said the steering committee objectives relative to general land uses include the relationship between jobs and housing, accommodating service uses, development nodes that could take advantage of high-capacity transit serving the area, and an appropriate scale of development on the order of five to six stories.

According to the market study, the high end of the 2030 development program for office and retail is about 4.5 million square feet; the lower end is closer to 2.5 million square feet. The outlook for housing ranges from a high end of about 5000 units to a low end of about 2000 units. The various draft alternatives incorporate different ranges of development, one that seeks the middle ground, one that emphasizes housing over employment, one that emphasizes employment over housing, and one that pushes both housing and employment to the upper ranges.

If high-capacity transit comes to the corridor, the land uses should be focused on the station locations. The ideal location for stations is an area that can be surrounded by supportive land uses. Having a station along SR-520 would be less than ideal since a full circle of development could not occur around it.

Mr. O'Neill said there have been no decisions made with regard to an alignment for high-capacity transit. The alignment could travel to Overlake and Redmond paralleling SR-520, but the initial indications are that alignment would not work all that well. With an alignment that passes through the heart of the corridor, there could be nodes of development at 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE near the hospital, at 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE near the large Safeway site, in the heart of the area at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE/132<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE, and out at the east end of the area at 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE or 152<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE in Redmond.

Mr. O'Neill said the baseline alternative incorporates the uses that are already in place. The no action alternative will assume no major land use changes or transportation improvements beyond those already identified in the CIP. The no action alternative does assume high-capacity transit in the corridor, but without a station anywhere other than near the hospital.

In terms of the action alternatives, Alternative 1 the node of greatest intensity is located in the heart of what is now the industrial area. It is envisioned to have a mix of housing and commercial uses. The alternative includes an area for office campuses and carves out an area for service uses. The alternative does not contemplate much change along the north and east ends of the planning area. None of the alternatives have anything other than low-density office along the southern boundary.

Alternative 2 has the same nodes of development activity but assumes higher amounts of employment. The alternative has fewer opportunities for housing, but does allow for some along the northern boundary, and in the eastern portion of the corridor mixed with retail.

Alternative 3 has the nodes at 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE near the hospital and one in the center of the area near 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The alternative is centered around the notion of mixing commercial

and housing focused on a main street area near 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The eastern station is moved to 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Alternative 4 has a node at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and another at 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE. The alternative incorporates higher housing and higher employment and as such is the alternative with the highest densities.

Mr. O'Neill explained that all of the alternatives assume major trail enhancements, including in the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way. All of the action alternatives also assume a full suite of transportation improvements, including an extension of NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street; improvements to both 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE with improved access to SR-520; and the extension of NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street across I-405 to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and on to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. None of the alternatives show a major recreational facility; it is assumed such a feature could be included in any of the alternatives.

All of the action alternatives are based on the market forecast; have an office focus along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; maintain low-density office on the south end of Bel-Red Road; retain retail/commercial uses along NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street; and assume the same basic package of transportation improvements. Each action alternative also assumes a set of park improvements to support the land use changes, and each assumes some improvements to riparian corridors and wetlands. The development program forecasts are different for each alternative, as are the location of the development nodes. Some alternatives preserve areas for specific uses that exist in the corridor.

Mr. Stroh brought to the front and introduced a panel of staff members to answer questions from the audience. The panel included himself, Mr. O'Neill, Mr. McDonald, PDPM Manager Glenn Kost, Senior Environmental Planning Manager Michael Paine, and Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman.

*Question:*

*In your different alternatives, what are the timeframes when the actual rezoning and development will begin, and when will they all be completed?*

Mr. O'Neill said the planning process is expected to last through April 2007 and will result in adoption of a final vision. Once that happens, the city will undertake an exercise to update the Comprehensive Plan and subarea plan for the area, and potentially some of the zoning. That will occur in late 2007 and will be a public process. The implementation plan, however, will be determined based on the development program, infrastructure needs and financing. Given the various constraints the area faces, there is no way all of the zoning could be brought online right away; the likelihood is there will be a phased approach used to change the face of the corridor over time.

*Question:*

*Given alternatives one through three, which one of those would generate the highest rate of traffic in and out of the area?*

Mr. Sparrman explained that traffic generation is a function of two variables: density of land use and modesplit. With more office and residential uses, there will be more total trips generated. However, converting trips to walking or transit will reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Of the four alternatives, Alternative 2 offers the greatest possibility for generating the most trips because it has the highest level of office uses relative to housing.

*Question:*

*Considering the number of high-capacity transit stops, how many individuals will need to live within a quarter-mile range of each station to support them, and do any of the alternatives meet the criteria?*

Mr. Sparrman said there is no absolute number in terms of density to be achieved. What is needed is sufficient density. Under each of the alternatives the identified nodes of development have been designed to justify having a station. He added that spacing between stations is a critical factor as well.

*Question:*

*Some of those stations appear to be more where there are office facilities as opposed to residential facilities, and will there be enough people to support them if there is very little residential? How will the people be moved from the Bel-Red stations to downtown Bellevue if in fact they are coming from across the lake to get here?*

Mr. Sparrman said potential high-capacity transit facilities outside the study area are not shown on the alternatives. In the coming months there will be a focus on potential alignments and station locations in downtown and elsewhere. The hospital campus is currently being expanded and in the near future is likely to have as many as 5000 or more employees working there; such a large density of employment could support a transit station. There will be a transit station located in the downtown as well, and from there people will be able to get across the freeway to the hospital.

*Question:*

*What are you anticipating in terms of numbers of people living in the units? Redmond is not anticipating having families in highrise residential developments; their anticipation is the residents will be mostly single persons and married couples without children. That gets back to the issue of the need for parks and transportation. What are you using in your anticipation of these units? How many people for each unit?*

Mr. Sparrman explained that once the steering committee determines which of the three alternatives should move into the DEIS analysis process, the various components will be quantified. The total number of daily trips per type of land use will be generated and modeled on the transportation system. Once the environmental analysis is completed, it will be possible to report to the steering committee and the public exactly what the trip demand will be under each of the alternatives.

Mr. Kost pointed out that kids are not the only reason to have parks; green spaces and open areas are enjoyed by everyone. The individual components of parks depend heavily on demographics.

*Question:*

*Traffic is the major concern in that area, not only in that area but in the residential area above it. The intersection at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street has been a failing intersection for many years. I hope your consultants are looking at the EIS reports that were done concerning proposed interchanges on SR-520 at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; those are failing intersections. On the alternatives, it is very difficult to assess the traffic impacts or the density because they are descriptions of possible uses without being land use designations. Some zoning designations generate more traffic than others, and having only a description makes it difficult to assess the alternatives. The public does not know what is allowed under the various descriptions, or what mixed use or residential means.*

Mr. Sparrman said the city is very much aware of how the existing transportation system is functioning. Clearly in the peak periods there are problem areas in the corridor; how the system works currently and how it will work in the future will be a very important part of analysis. The notion behind the EIS is to fully disclose what the impacts are, what can be mitigated and what cannot be mitigated. About seven years ago the city actively pursued having a new interchange on SR-520 somewhere between 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 140<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. That effort was halted for a number of reasons. The situation is different now given that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has a number of active projects in the pipeline to improve both SR-520 and I-405. The braided ramp project will rebuild part of the existing interchange at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, and the thinking is that a full interchange at that location can be created to provide better access into the Bel-Red area. As the land uses in the area change, the transportation system will need to step up and evolve to meet the new demand.

Mr. Stroh stressed that the study is not at the point of determining actual zoning boundaries and will not be there for some time. It is hoped that the generalized bubbles on the alternatives maps will set a general vision for the area. He explained that the office campus term being used envisions a mix of office buildings with a maximum height of five to six stories with a maximum FAR of 1.0 to 2.0, which is more than allowed anywhere in the city except for the downtown and Factoria.

*Question:*

*What is the difference between a services core and retail?*

Mr. Stroh said over the years the public has been clear about its desire to maintain some of the traditional services that exist in the Bel-Red area, everything from printing to auto repair and auto body shops. The services core idea in one of the alternatives revolves around maintaining an area for those kinds of services for the long run. It would take a combination of regulatory and incentive tools to maintain a services core.

*Question:*

*What is the FAR for the medical office? How high will the buildings go in that area?*

Mr. Stroh said one of the alternatives includes a high-capacity transit station in the vicinity of the hospital. The medical office developments there might be allowed greater height than would be allowed elsewhere in the corridor. Under direction from the City Council, there is no intention to create anything that would compete with downtown Bellevue, so in no event will FARs be expected to be higher than 2.0, and heights are not anticipated to exceed six stories.

*Question:*

*How firm is that NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street line? Is that pretty much a given for the central east-west corridor?*

Mr. Sparrman said NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street is a fundamental building block for the planning exercise. If high-capacity transit is approved as part of Sound Transit Phase II going from Seattle to downtown Bellevue to downtown Redmond, it will go through the Bel-Red corridor. The early thinking of Sound Transit was that it would be located either on Bel-Red Road or the SR-520 corridor; use of the SR-520 corridor is questionable, and the city cannot afford to lose capacity on Bel-Red Road. The NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street alignment provides a logical way to get the full use out of a high-capacity transit investment in the corridor.

*Question:*

*How feasible is it not to have a transportation node centered around Overlake Hospital? It*

*seems there almost has to be one there given the level of service that is going to be generated.*

Mr. Sparrman said both the city and the hospital believe the node to be very important. The challenge will be deciding where the stations should be located, given the need for some spacing between them.

*Question:*

*My understanding is that the city's buildable lands report and subsequent analyses by the staff confirmed that there is no need to do any rezoning or land use intensification in the city in order to meet the growth projections. I have attended all of the meetings and the topic has never been discussed. I do not see it even referenced in the Leland Consulting Group report. Was this taken into account in doing all this work?*

Mr. Stroh explained that the buildable lands report is a requirement of the Growth Management Act. It is a test to see if lands are being used efficiently and to make sure the growth targets can be met. The current growth targets are adopted through the year 2022; the planning horizon for the Bel-Red project is 2030. The city will be updating its growth targets soon after the next federal census to look out 2012 to 2032. The likelihood is it will be found that the city will be running out of land for residential development. Whether or not the Bel-Red corridor should play a role in helping to meet the residential needs of the city is a policy question. The primary policy question for all jurisdictions will be whether or not growth should occur more intensely inside the Urban Growth Boundary, or if the boundary should be pushed out, taking more open space and rural resource lands.

Mr. O'Neill said the Bel-Red steering committee has discussed the issue. The Leland study looks at the area from the standpoint of market and economics, not zoning. It is not a given that the city will decide to accommodate future growth in the corridor; that will be a policy choice.

*Question:*

*I support the idea of having a major recreational facility; I do not know if it needs to be 20 acres, but I support the idea. My question is are you communicating at all with the Crossroads redevelopment plan? I live three blocks south of Bel-Red Road off of 148<sup>th</sup> and have volunteered to sit on the Crossroads redevelopment committee. Most of the landowners there want mixed use, lots of housing, and I am really afraid for the high density in an area that already has a terrible traffic problem.*

Mr. Stroh said there are common staff on both projects. He agreed with the need to coordinate the two planning efforts, as is being done, and to think about how the entire area works together as a whole.

*Question:*

*I already addressed my concern about impacting the residential areas to the south. I hope the next time there might be some ideas rather than just little bullets to say discourage through traffic and discourage spillover parking. To be honest, currently the city has done a poor job. I give you a failing F. We need to see that, because as much as you try to put these transportation places in, and maybe upgrade 16<sup>th</sup> or whatever it is, you are going to get people to spill over to try to go to 8<sup>th</sup>. To the south there are a couple of arterials people will try to head to, and the poor old residential streets that have that through way are going to come under attack. I think you need to have more umph in your presentation to quell some of the fears the residential people in that area have. The other one concerns the streams. There is another critical ordinance going through where the streams now instead of 50-foot barriers will be increased to 100. It could be that the streams are currently piped. If they are opened, that could carve your*

*area up somewhat terrifically. My property does not go on Kelsey Creek; I am 50 feet short, so at the moment I am lucky and happy. But if they raise it to 100 feet, they take 50 foot of your land, yet they want you to pay taxes on it. I called it a land grab when I wrote my email to the city. You need to look at it in your plan, because if you are going to do something here, the question is should those piped streams become open. That will take land from you.*

Mr. Sparrman said he would give a grade of C at least on the efforts of the city to protect its residential areas. The city takes the issue very seriously. In designing the transportation system in the area, there are not a lot of choices available. The reason the city prefers a new connection to SR-520 at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is because at that location it will be possible to physically prevent traffic from going north into the Bridle Trails area. Growth will add pressures to the transportation system as a whole; that is a challenge everyone is painfully aware of.

*Question:*

*Some of the traffic will want to head south to get to I-5 and I-90.*

Mr. Sparrman said that is correct, and one of the key things the city wants to get out of the EIS analysis of the three alternatives will be the north-south travel demand and impacts.

With regard to the streams, Mr. Stroh said it is hoped that the Bel-Red study will accomplish some positive gains in terms of rethinking some of the urban stream corridors. Redevelopment could in fact be an engine to generate a better outcome for some of the streams than happened the first time around when far less thought was put into how the streams should be maintained. There are opportunities to both restore and enhance some of the riparian corridors in a way that could yield a benefit both to the environment and as an urban amenity.

Senior Environmental Planning Manager Michael Paine explained that for developed lots, such as lots with a primary residence on it, the buffer from streams will only be 50 feet, not 100 feet. For developed properties, there will be no changes from where things stand currently. Any newly created lot, however, will see a buffer of 100 feet.

*Question:*

*I am in the Bridle Trails area and I am surprised that there has been a decision made on that onramp/offramp. I think the one you are talking about incorporates a flyover to direct traffic south, and with the topography there you end up with that flyover level with some of the properties that do not even have a view of the freeway. The noise will be drive up the hillside into neighborhoods that do not have such problems today. I did not think the city of Bellevue was driving that alternative; I thought it was WSDOT. When they brought those alternatives in and we had a meeting just like this one, no decisions were made that we were told of. This is a big surprise to us. There are other areas where you could do those offramps that would especially tie into some of these alternatives, and I do not think it is necessary to have them together. You could have a lane going east opposite Viewpoint Park at 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE because it provides a natural barrier to the neighborhoods.*

Mr. Sparrman stressed that all of the project ideas remain ideas only; they all need a lot more study to figure out if they will even work. There is a whole range of issues that will need a full airing and full public debate. There are no projects on the table that are done deals, other than those that are currently funded. He explained that the city of Bellevue is driving the planning process, not WSDOT and not Sound Transit. The flyover ramp referred to is a project idea that was talked about three years ago as part of the downtown Implementation Plan process; that concept was dropped and has not been pursued since, in part because it was not deemed feasible, and in part because it would have noise and aesthetic impacts for the Bridle Trails neighborhood.

*Question:*

*I know you are targeting 124<sup>th</sup>, but that is so close to I-405 it ends up being an alternative route to I-405 to get farther south and bypass the downtown, or going north on 116<sup>th</sup> and catching I-405 in Kirkland. I live right on NE 24<sup>th</sup> and I look out on the freeway. The traffic is often stopped, and there is traffic going up and down NE 24<sup>th</sup> to bypass SR-520. Putting ramps in there will be just another way for people to get off and go wherever they are going. It does not really prevent driving through the neighborhoods. It will spill it down into the neighborhoods to the south. Bridle Trails has opposed locating ramps anywhere between 130<sup>th</sup> and I-405 because it would take away the existing entrance ramp, leaving the residents of Bridle Trails to go south to gain access to I-405, or north to get to SR-520.*

Mr. Sparrman said the analysis will identify all of the pros and cons. When the previous study was done as part of the downtown Implementation Plan, many of the projects under discussion for the Bel-Red area were not around. In addition, WSDOT is planning major improvements for the interchange of I-405 and SR-520 that will improve the segment on SR-520 between 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and I-405. The project will have a huge positive impact on much of the traffic congestion the area has currently.

*Question:*

*Do you have any consideration of the noise reduction from SR-520 in this corridor? And given that there is this high-capacity transit plan, how will it impact the noise level on the neighborhoods south and north?*

Mr. Sparrman suggested that high-capacity transit will have a negligible impact on the noise levels generated by SR-520. Highway noise is a problem in the whole region, not just in Bellevue, and there are a lot of people struggling with it. High-capacity transit by itself, if actually built, will likely take up a lot of the travel demand, but there will still be a large demand for the freeways and the noise levels will continue.

*Question:*

*I am wondering who did the makeup of the committee here in the room and why women and minorities are not represented. I guess the question is, how was the committee chosen?*

Mr. Stroh explained that those answering the questions are staff who agreed to come and interact with the public. The steering committee guiding the study is a 16-member group of citizens, all of whom were appointed by the City Council.

*Question:*

*I still would like to hear whether or not there would be a willingness to daylight some of the streams, such as Goff Creek, Sears Creek, Valley Creek. They have been pretty much put under culverts, but there still are some areas where they are daylighted and provide good aquatic benefits. If money is the issue, WSDOT is in the process of looking at mitigation for SR-520, and some of their thoughts are focused on Issaquah and out of the immediate area. Is there a consideration to daylight?*

Mr. Stroh reiterated that there are wonderful opportunities being presented to enhance the area by daylighted piped stream sections. There was a report done by Herrera Environmental Consultants that is available on the project website. One of the things they did was map the streams by quality, and which stream segments are piped. About 75 percent of the streams in the corridor are open. Some of the piped sections would be very challenging and expensive to daylight given that buildings have been constructed over the top of the pipes. The study will be

focusing on where it will make the most sense to engage in stream restoration and enhancement, and what it will take to get there.

*Question:*

*The property that you have designated in these different areas, how would making these different designations impact current property owners. Are the people who own these properties going to have a choice, or is it going to be like a lot of situations that are taking place already across the United States?*

Mr. Stroh stressed that no one is talking about taking private properties and converting them to other uses. The changes that are being talked about would happen over time, and there are lots of questions about how it would be carried out. For example, existing uses may be allowed to remain in place but as legal nonconforming uses; another approach would be to allow existing uses to remain without making them nonconforming while at the same time allowing new uses to locate in the area. The committee has not gotten to that level of detail yet.

*Question:*

*You have a density issue, and I applaud your efforts at trying to meet the needs of the community in different ways. I agree with trying to get civic arts and recreational facilities in. The circles with the T's on the map are transit centers, and certain density requirements will be needed to support them. Do you have an idea of what the percentage increase in density will be for those areas? I do know the alternatives change, one has two transfer stations and the other has three, so what percentage increase do you expect?*

Mr. Sparrman said there is no absolute number threshold. Some of the locations have no transit demand at all currently. The process of actually siting the stations will rest with Sound Transit, and they will evaluate whether the cost of constructing a station will be justified by a return on investment in terms of ridership.

*Question:*

*Density is an issue in this area, and this is one way of dealing with it. I appreciate you allowing us to give you comments and trying to diversify uses.*

Mr. Stroh commented that the land use alternatives will need to make sense with or without high-capacity transit. The nodes of development that offer opportunities for changes in land use can stand alone, though high-capacity transit will bring with it a variety of new opportunities.

*Question:*

*It seems like the biggest problem we have been talking about is transportation. It certainly has been known for quite a while that the biggest reason for the transportation problem is no one lives right in the corridor itself. Are you, or will you be, collecting and quantifying the demographics and zip codes of where people are, what is the migration flow, where they are coming from and where they are going to? And considering the Growth Management Act, what alternative plan would help reduce that by having more people perhaps in the future live and work more closely to this area, like downtown Bellevue will be becoming?*

Mr. Sparrman said the better the balance between housing and employment the better off the area will be. The modeling for the downtown area shows that as the population grows there will be fewer vehicle trips on the transportation system. An origin/destination study will not be conducted as part of the study, primarily because the corridor has very few residents. The city's model does, however, predict where people come from to access certain types of uses.

*Question:*

*On the growth management aspect of it, which alternative would reduce the traffic and keep more people living and working in the area?*

Mr. Sparrman answered that from a transportation perspective, the more housing the better; the ratio of housing to office needs to be slanted in favor of housing, and that is best represented by Alternative 3.

Mr. Stroh reiterated that the process is focused on studying the full range of alternatives, and the focus is currently on identifying the factors, not the best alternative. What happens most often in such studies is the recommending body winds up picking and choosing and putting together a hybrid alternative.

*Question:*

*What would happen to this whole plan if someone decides to move the Sonics into the middle of the corridor? I keep reading about it every two weeks when it hits the news.*

Mr. Stroh said staff and the committee have seen the same newspapers and heard the reports on television about the Sonics moving. Bellevue is one of the places that has been talked about, and the Safeway site is often front and center because it is a huge block of land and it is on the market. The committee has not crafted a land use alternative around having a Sonics stadium in the corridor because there is no firm proposal to that end; if one emerges, it will be necessary to study it as a separate issue.

*Question:*

*In Redmond, Microsoft factors into a lot of the city planning. Living in Bridle Trails like I do, Microsoft factors into a lot of the traffic in the area. To what extent do you talk to Microsoft about it? They are just clogging up a lot of the roads around here.*

Mr. Stroh said the Bel-Red area has for many years been the subject of interlocal planning between the cities of Redmond and Bellevue. Microsoft has for many years been a chief factor. Both jurisdictions closely monitor what is going on at Microsoft, including the recent development agreement between Redmond and Microsoft. Nintendo is also a major player in the Overlake area of Redmond. Those companies have been dynamic economic engines for the Eastside and the whole region. Redmond is currently in a planning process focused on the Overlake area, and that certainly is a factor in the Bel-Red study. It will be necessary to factor Microsoft's long-term plans into Bellevue's long-term plan for the Bel-Red area; that will be done in the spirit of the years of interlocal coordination that Redmond and Bellevue have had and continue to enjoy.

Mr. Sparrman added that everything Microsoft has developed to date, along with their plans for additional expansion, are covered under the Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Study agreement. The agreement, however, extends only to 2012. After a vision is determined for the Bel-Red corridor, it will be necessary to coordinate it with the plans Redmond has for their side of the area so that there will be a single system in place that will work for everyone.

*Question:*

*All four plans on the south boundary line indicate low-density office as a transition area. How does that compare in the plans to the existing zoning? Is it going to be exactly the same? Will there be slightly more density but still low density?*

Mr. O'Neill reiterated that the process is not far enough along to be talking specifically about

zoning. However, the vision contemplates essentially the same intensity of development along the southern edge of Bel-Red Road as currently exists.

*Question:*

*Right now it is limited to two stories, so you are not going to have a three-story option there?*

Mr. O'Neill said that level of specificity will come later in the process. He stressed that the area serves as a very good buffer between the residential neighborhood to the south and the more commercial areas to the north, and the intent is for that approach to be carried forward.

Mr. Stroh added that the committee recognizes the fact that Bel-Red Road has a character. The flavor of the street is important to people, and there have been no suggestions made to bring about drastic changes that would alter the character.

*Question:*

*Going through this process is amazing, and you guys are doing a tremendous job with it. Economic opportunities to bring to Bellevue are always being looked for. One of the challenges faced often has to do with zoning. I would love to have a guideline to build the zoning on, however. One major issue is the lack of predictability and reliability in dealing with the zoning that is in place.*

Mr. Stroh said that challenge is being faced often in the land use world. There were uses identified for the light industrial district when the area developed that do not even happen anymore. The challenge in the Bel-Red corridor is developing a vision for having the area grow smart. The vision will need to have enough detail so it can be known whether it will accommodate the trips. Some have called for easing the zoning and letting anything go because they have had to turn away potential tenants; that approach, however, would send the area into absolute gridlock.

*Question:*

*It would be easier for us to understand the density and the height of the buildings if there were a clear preview of the study area. Second, you have talked about open space and urban plazas, and those will be good places for the residents, but it all seems designed for adults. The kids should be allowed to give some input as to what they would like to see in the playground areas. Third, traffic in the area will not stay in the corridor but will link to other parts of the city.*

Mr. Stroh said the process is in its early phase where the focus is on visioning and developing alternatives. A lot of information will come out of the EIS analysis. In the fall, the steering committee will review the results and come up with a preliminary preferred alternative that will begin to fill in the details of height and exact uses. In the spring of 2007, the steering committee will take additional public feedback and conduct some additional analysis in working toward adopting a final preferred alternative and a series of specific implementation tools. The entire package will be adopted later in 2007.

With regard to involving kids in the planning process and designing places that will actually work for children, Mr. Stroh said it is always a good idea to get the opinions of children. Mr. Kost said the city recently completed development of a couple of skate parks. The process of designing them involved asking the skaters, who will use the parks, what they wanted to see. The process is a long way away yet from designing civic plazas, or even from knowing exactly who the amenities are to be provided for. When that time arrives, everyone, including the children, will be invited to offer their opinions.

Mr. Sparrman agreed that the Bel-Red area is not self-contained when it comes to transportation issues. What happens inside the corridor affect the broader area and vice versa. In analyzing the transportation issues, the focus will be on the broader area, including areas outside of Bellevue, both locally and regionally, and both transportation and transit.

*Question:*

*Thank you for your kindness in answering our questions. I want a yes or no only on this: will there be parking including around those transportation nodes?*

Mr. Sparrman said the question is actually a complex one. He said there is no intent to provide park and ride facilities as part of the transit stations to serve the broader regional system. Park and ride facilities, and maintenance facilities, should be toward the end of the line.

*Question:*

*First of all, why is it decided now, or is there no change, in narrowing from four down to two before the steering committee comes up with what is the single one they are going to vote for. There's quite a bit of difference in the traffic that will come out of the different layouts, so why would you not narrow it down to two and have the public involved in which of the two is the best? And second, it seems like the traffic will come through by way of some sort of study, but the area can definitely not accommodate any more traffic. Getting rid of a lot of smaller, mid-size service-oriented businesses is a bad idea; we need to retain as many of the service and light industrial areas we can to try and offset what is going to become a traffic nightmare like Overlake.*

Mr. Stroh said having three alternatives on the table will yield more information from the review than two would; it will be easier to understand the range of tradeoffs with three alternatives in the EIS. Clearly the area is constrained currently because of the transportation system, and part of the analysis will include a package of transportation improvements to see how they perform alongside the proposed land use patterns. Without significant transportation improvements, the area will not be able to support much in the way of land use changes.

Mr. Sparrman agreed and said that is the reason why the study needs to contemplate broad transportation system improvements.

Mr. Stroh thanked everyone for attending and offering comments. He said a record will be made of the proceedings and delivered to the steering committee for review. He urged everyone to fill out the provided comment cards with any additional questions and observations.