

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

April 16, 2007
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmembers Balducci, Davidson, Lee, Marshall, and Noble

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Mayor Degginger called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. There was no Executive Session.

2. Study Session

- (a) Update on Sound Transit East Link Planning Process and Report on Community Feedback from Workshops

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding an update on the Sound Transit East Link planning process and a report on community feedback heard at two recent Sound Transit workshops in Bellevue.

Bernard Van de Kamp, Regional Projects Manager, introduced Don Billen, Sound Transit. Mr. Billen noted that the Council is already familiar with the draft package overview specifying major investments in light rail extensions and funding for I-405, SR 520, and other primary transportation corridors in the region.

Sound Transit recently completed a phone survey to determine how potential voters are perceiving the draft plan. Voters continue to indicate that transportation is one of the top issues for the region, and in general they are voicing support for the potential roads and transit package. Outreach activities include five public meetings held in the East Subarea, a speakers bureau, direct mail and advertising, and web-based outreach. Approximately 2,700 comments from the

East Subarea were received by mid-March, and nearly half of these responses were entered online.

In total there has been nearly 8,000 comments from all subareas on the draft Sound Transit Phase 2 proposal since last fall. Of the comments received voicing specific support of or opposition to the Sound Transit 2 draft package, 76 percent support the package. In general, the remainder favor transit but do not support the ST 2 draft package. Major findings indicate strong support for light rail extensions to the Tacoma Dome and Downtown Redmond but funding is not yet available. There is also a strong interest in extending the regional light rail system to Bellevue and the Overlake area.

Mr. Billen said public briefings have been held in a number of Bellevue neighborhoods to date, and Sound Transit is willing to conduct more meetings as requested by community organizations. Sound Transit has met with homeowners association members from the Surrey Downs area, and recently held five public workshops.

For purposes of the environmental impact statement (EIS), the 19-mile corridor has been separated into five segments: 1) I-90 crossing, 2) South Bellevue, 3) Downtown Bellevue, 4) Overlake, and 5) Redmond. The environmental review and analysis will extend over three years and will become more detailed as it progresses. Scoping meetings were held last fall to gather input on which alternatives should be studied in the EIS. In December, the Sound Transit Board identified which alternatives to study further. The project is now in the beginning of conceptual engineering of the alternatives, which will utilize input from the public workshops about how to further develop the alternatives. Release of the draft EIS is targeted for September 2008.

Turning to the design process, Mr. Billen said long-range planning and scoping have been completed. Following publication of the draft EIS in September 2008, more detailed information will be available. At that time, the Sound Transit Board will identify a preferred alternative that will be developed to a 30-percent, or preliminary, engineering level of design.

More than 300 citizens participated in the public workshops. A summary report and full compilation of comments received is being prepared. A common theme from all of the workshops was convenient station access, including for bicyclers. There is also a strong interest in coordinating bus routes and park and ride lots for station access.

Mr. Billen explained that the workshop in Bellevue covered both the south and west Bellevue areas of the project, as well as the downtown. There is community interest in route alternatives, with many supporting utilization of a portion of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right-of-way along I-405. Residents are concerned about the possible impact of displacing homes to accommodate the light rail system.

Mr. Billen described a screening analysis that is still available on Sound Transit's web site. It provides a qualitative comparison of the alternatives. Alternative B1, which travels from I-90 up Bellevue Way to Main Street, would require a higher number of relocations than the other

alternatives for this segment. Alignment along 112th Avenue SE requires fewer home relocations. The alternative along I-405 requires a slightly higher number of relocations due to a proposed new Park and Ride lot included in this option that would displace a number of businesses. Sound Transit is preparing lists of the number of displacements for each alternative, which will be included in the EIS as well.

Mr. Billen reviewed alternatives through downtown Bellevue. The option with tunnels under 106th and 108th Avenues requires a potentially higher number of relocations. A portal would be required for the transition between either an at-grade or elevated structure connecting to the downtown tunnel. A tunnel boring staging area requires an approximately 4- to 5-acre site. Sound Transit said the screening analysis evaluated a tunnel boring staging area at the southwest corner of Main Street and 112th, which potentially results in displacements of existing development. An alternative to avoid this impact is the Red Lion site east of the above-mentioned site.

An alternative for a staging area at the Y of Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE does not appear to have the potential to reduce displacements, and therefore Sound Transit has not pursued it further. The fourth site, at the District Court on 112th Avenue SE, involves a tunnel past SE 8th Street and under the District Court site. The site would then be available for park development upon completion of rail construction. This alternative avoids residential displacements.

Mr. Billen briefly reviewed comments from the workshop held in the Overlake area. Completion of Bellevue's study of the Bel-Red Corridor and the identification of a preferred land use plan will be used by Sound Transit to model potential ridership and station locations along the corridor to the Overlake area. Residents are interested in opportunities for local park and ride access to the rail stations.

Based on input from the City of Redmond, Sound Transit explored the possibility of shifting Overlake Village stations closer to NE 24th Street, which makes sense from an accessibility perspective and is compatible with an alignment along NE 20th Street. Redmond is strongly interested in service into its downtown, and there were more comments about bicycle access than from any other area.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Billen said the minimum turning radius for a tunnel is 250 feet. The EIS process will identify the property impacts of this as well as locations necessitating the purchase of underground easements. In further response, Mr. Billen said completion of the segment to the airport is scheduled for 2009 and to the University of Washington in 2016. The financial plan estimates completion to Northgate by 2018 and to Bellevue by 2021, followed by Overlake.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Billen said the list of potential home displacements distributed to Council a couple of weeks ago by residents estimates an impact to a minimum of 12 acres. Mr. Billen said this is two to three times the impact estimated by Sound Transit.

Councilmember Marshall asked whether Sound Transit would develop Surrey Downs park as mitigation if the site is used as a construction staging area. Mr. Billen said Sound Transit would clear the District Court building from the site and make lease payments to the City for the use of the site. The proceeds of the lease payments could be used toward development of the park.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Billen said two route alternatives (B3 and B7) cross the Red Lion site. The only variation is using the site for tunnel construction staging.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Billen said the current analysis is a high-level, conceptual one. More detailed planning and decision-making will not occur until Fall 2008. Even after selection of a preferred alternative in the Fall of 2008, the final EIS will continue to study all of the alternatives equally, and the Sound Transit Board will not make any final decisions until completion of the final EIS.

Councilmember Lee stated his interest in focusing on good pedestrian access to the light rail stations. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Billen said Sound Transit and City of Bellevue staff meet on a biweekly basis regarding the planning of the light rail project.

Mayor Degginger noted that the newly formed Best Practices Committee will conduct a comprehensive review of the City's planning policies as they relate to the impacts of transit.

(b) Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda

Planning Director Dan Stroh opened staff's presentation of the quarterly update on the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda, which was initiated by Council last September. The purpose is to conduct a proactive response to neighborhood issues including property maintenance, neighborhood character and redevelopment impacts, and neighborhood investment. Council direction is not requested this evening, as the issue will be before the Planning Commission for several months before it is returned with the Commission's recommendations.

Cheryl Kuhn, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, said property maintenance activities underway relate to rodent control, the alignment of Code Compliance efforts with the Neighborhood Liaison and Neighborhood Enhancement programs. Neighborhood cleanup activities continue, and volunteers are helping to improve and maintain properties for certain residents, and to provide referrals to human services they might need.

Turning to the area of neighborhood character, the four sources of information are: 1) Data from development files, 2) Community feedback, 3) Visual surveys of neighborhoods, and 4) Comparative Cities data. Major concerns arising from focus groups relate to redevelopment, particularly in Northwest and West Bellevue. The focus groups were not so much concerned with the size of redeveloped homes as they were about compatibility with scale and architecture. Impacts include the loss of privacy, sunlight, and territorial views as homes are built to height and setback extremes. The average size of a single-family home in 2004-2005 was 4,268 square feet, representing an average increase in size of 163 percent. Ms. Kuhn reviewed sample photographs to illustrate the impacts of concern to residents.

Ms. Kuhn said staff's next step is to relay this information to the Planning Commission for review during May and June, with the goal of recommendations from the Commission to Council by the end of June. General Council direction will be requested in July. If this direction includes Land Use Code amendments or Comprehensive Plan Amendments, staff will engage in discussions with the Planning Commission about the amendments in the fall.

Mayor Degginger acknowledged concerns about the bulk and scale of redeveloped homes, as well as the build-up of lots before construction of new homes. Issues to be forwarded to the Planning Commission include the preservation of vegetation and the loss of light to neighboring homes.

Councilmember Marshall thanked Ms. Kuhn and staff for their thorough reports on this topic. She appreciates the information regarding comments and concerns from the community.

Councilmember Lee concurred with Mrs. Marshall's commendation of staff's work.

Ms. Balducci concurred with Mr. Degginger's concern about the build-up of lots before the redevelopment of a site.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed concern about balancing the allowed build-up of sites and building heights with existing development.

(c) Supplemental CIP and Parks Ballot Initiative

Mr. Sarkozy opened discussion regarding a potential parks and open space ballot initiative. Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran said a ballot measure could be presented this August or in the Fall of 2008. Three alternatives have been identified for Council consideration:

- A 2007 Replacement Levy Lid Lift that continues an expiring 1988 Park Bond to acquire immediate open space needs and to preserve the existing park system.
- A 2008 Park Bond or Levy featuring the development of park capital projects currently being master planned and under consideration for the Supplemental Capital Investment Program.
- A combination of the first two alternatives to provide additional funding meeting long-term parks needs as identified in the Parks and Open Space System Plan.

Mr. Foran said levies tend to be better for short-term needs and bonds are more appropriate for larger, long-term capital projects.

Doug Sanner, Parks Fiscal/Quality Control Manager, explained that eight parks measures have been passed since incorporation of the city in 1953. In general, a measure was passed every four years, with the last successful measure occurring in 1988, when voters approved a \$16.5 million bond. The bond was split between acquisition and development projects including water features

at Downtown Park and a warm water pool at the Bellevue Aquatic Center. Adjusting for inflation, a comparable bond today requires approximately \$31 million. The bonds will be fully retired in 2008, leaving no park debt remaining for the City. The ten-year impact on Bellevue households averaged \$51 per house annually for the 1988 bonds.

To continue the expiring bond, the impact of \$50 per homeowner annually (average home value of \$530,000) would yield a property tax rate of 9 cents per \$1,000 assessed value. This would equate to a total of \$2.5 million annually from a 10-year bond. The 2002 voter initiative failed narrowly, and staff has conducted a significant amount of research to gauge voter preferences on preferred projects to be funded by additional money.

The City has worked with the Trust for Public Land, which conducted random sample phone surveys with approximately 400 respondents providing input. Highest priorities identified by residents include preserving and completing the existing park system, protecting open space, developing neighborhood parks, partnering with schools to improve athletic facilities, and expanding recreational opportunities for seniors and teens. Voter initiatives have the highest probability for success with a fiscal impact of approximately \$50 annually per household.

Mr. Sanner reviewed the two property tax funding mechanisms available. A levy lid lift requires simple majority (50%) approval. It provides pay-as-you-go capital and operating funding over the duration of the levy, with a term ranging from 10 years to permanent. Bonds require a supermajority (60%) approval and provide capital money up front, with repayment of the principal and interest over the life of the bond (typically 20 years).

Mr. Foran reviewed the timeline to be followed if the Council is interested in presenting a parks ballot measure for the August 21 primary:

- May 21 – Adoption of resolution calling for election.
- May 29 – Filing of resolution calling for election, preparing ballot measure language and explanatory statements, and committee appointments.
- June 1 – Arguments for and against ballot measure.
- June 4 – Statements in rebuttal.

Mr. Sarkozy requested Council direction of whether or not to pursue a parks voter initiative for the August 21 election. The next step would be to return to Council on April 23 to discuss the elements of a potential voter package.

Mayor Degginger noted previous Council discussions regarding a ballot measure to fund parks and open space acquisitions, and to better utilize existing facilities (e.g., installation of synthetic fields at Robinswood Park).

Mr. Noble expressed support for a levy lift measure to increase maintenance and operations (M&O) funding for existing and new parks. He encouraged an August ballot measure. He would like funding to move forward with the development of new park acquisitions (e.g., the Boeing Eastgate site).

Mr. Lee noted Bellevue's identity as a City in a Park. He feels continued funding is necessary to maintain parks and to expand the system consistent with its development over the past many years. Mr. Lee said a ballot measure should be designed to implement the parks vision, and that it should be specific as to how the money will be used.

Mr. Chelminiak noted the previous discussion regarding redevelopment and the loss of vegetation in the community. He feels it is government's role to preserve open space and to provide areas for recreational use. He supports presenting a ballot measure to voters

Mrs. Marshall expressed support for a 2007 replacement levy lid lift to replace the expiring 1988 park bond, as well as a 2008 park bond for long-term capital projects.

Mayor Degginger expressed support for a replacement levy lid lift over a 10-year term. He sees the levy lid lift as a mechanism for meeting near-term needs and a bond as a way to address long-term needs.

Ms. Balducci supports the use of voter initiatives to continue to fund the park system. However, she wondered if it would be confusing for voters to present a measure in 2007 and then again in 2008.

Mayor Degginger said one benefit of splitting the measures is to allow more time to identify and refine long-term capital needs. Mr. Foran concurred.

Mayor Degginger indicated Council consensus to continue discussions regarding the development of voter initiatives.

3. Council Business [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

Dr. Davidson attended meetings of MWPAAC (Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee) and the Regional Water Quality Committee.

Mr. Noble attended the Eastside Transportation Partnership meeting.

Ms. Balducci attended the ETP meeting and a meeting of Bellevue's Disability Board.

Mr. Lee attended a trade conference in Bellevue and a technological summit, both sponsored by the State of Washington.

Mrs. Marshall attended meetings of the Sound Transit Board and ETP.

Mr. Chelminiak attended the King County Council meeting to present the City Council's position statement regarding the flood control district. He attended a meeting of the Puget Sound Regional Council's Growth Management Policy Board.

Mr. Degginger participated in the American Institute of Architects' lecture program at the University of Washington, where he attended a session on urban waterfronts.

At 8:02 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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