

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Discussion of the design and function of Bel-Red's proposed NE 15th/16th multimodal corridor.

STAFF CONTACTS

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POLICY ISSUES

How should the City best capitalize on a new multimodal and open space corridor through the heart of the Bel-Red Subarea? The proposed new NE 15th/16th corridor would extend through the subarea, from NE 12th Street near 116th Avenue eastward to the existing NE 16th Street right-of-way near 134th Avenue NE.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

Action
 Discussion
 Information

This Study Session is one in a series of ongoing Council briefings on the progress of work to implement the Bel-Red Steering Committee's recommendations. Tonight's focus is on the preliminary concepts relating to the design and function of NE 15th/16th.

Staff seeks direction on whether the design parameters proposed for NE 15th/16th corridor should be used to further refine the design and right-of-way requirements for the corridor, and as an input into the financial plan to fund Bel-Red capital investment.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan includes a number of proposed new public infrastructure projects. The most ambitious of these, and a key focal point for the whole subarea, is a new NE 15th/16th corridor that extends from NE 12th Street near Overlake Hospital eastward to 134th Avenue NE, through an area where the City currently has very little existing right-of-way. Development of the NE 15th/16th corridor is a key project for the Bel-Red Subarea. It is intended to provide auto access to existing and new development, accommodate new trips moving through the area from Downtown and elsewhere, provide a light rail corridor, establish a major east-west pedestrian and bicycle connection between Downtown and Overlake, and function as a green amenity for people living and working in the area. Of the roughly \$450

million capital need for the Bel-Red Subarea for transportation, parks, and stream enhancements, the NE 15th/16th corridor constitutes about \$268 million, or 60% of the total (this does not include potential Sound Transit right-of-way or construction costs through the corridor). Of the \$268 million preliminary cost estimate for NE 15th/16th, roughly \$173 million is for right-of-way and \$95 million for engineering and construction.

There are two factors that will reduce the ultimate right-of-way cost to the City; (1) development adjacent to NE 15th/16th would dedicate some portion of the right-of-way while retaining development rights to be used on the remaining portion of their property, and (2) some amount of the up-front right-of-way purchased by the City would be available to sell as remnant property suitable for redevelopment. It is envisioned that NE 15th/16th would be constructed in a phased manner, beginning on the west end (116th Avenue to 124th Avenue) and moving east in subsequent years (124th Avenue east to NE 20th Street).

Current concept for NE 15th/16th

Tonight's Study Session is intended to walk the Council through the design considerations that resulted in the current conceptual design for the NE 15th/16th corridor. The current concept for the corridor includes the following major components:

- Four lanes of vehicle movement plus turning pockets
- Preservation of a Light Rail Transit at-grade alignment with two stations in the median along NE 15th/16th
- Integration of connective green elements throughout the corridor, including urban open spaces, significant tree canopy, medians
- Parks and open spaces along the West Tributary and Goff Creek
- An off-street pedestrian and bicycle path extending from end to end
- In portions of the nodes, a low-speed, local access road to the north as a "placemaking"/urban design feature and to provide direct access to adjacent uses
- On-street parking within the nodes to help invigorate commercial uses and provide pedestrian buffer
- Wide sidewalks on both sides
- Required ground-floor commercial uses in station areas to activate the sidewalks in these locations and strengthen the land use interface.

There are a number of unique segments of the NE 15th/16th corridor relating to the right-of-way need, roadway construction technique (i.e. at-grade or bridge structure), and urban design treatments (see Attachment 1). The portions between 116th Avenue and 120th Avenue and between 124th Avenue and 128th Avenue are primarily bridge structures. Potential light rail would join up with NE 15th west of 120th Avenue based on either a NE 12th Street or NE 6th Street crossing of I-405 (the two alternatives being analyzed by Sound Transit). The portions of the NE 15th/16th corridor within the nodes are envisioned as a roughly 197-foot cross-section that includes a provision for 58-foot wide transit stations (see Attachment 2). The remaining portions outside nodes are envisioned as a roughly 150-foot right-of-way (including 30 feet for light rail transit).

Evaluation process

The NE 15th/16th corridor is unique in that it is being planned from the very beginning (where no roadway exists) to include provisions for multiple travel modes and an array of urban design and placemaking features. NE 15th/16th is also planned to carry a substantial amount of traffic; close to 20,000 to 30,000 average daily trips in portions of the roadway by 2030. Over the past few months, staff evaluated a number of design options based on the following considerations, or principles:

- The cross-section should have a multi-modal focus, accommodating light rail (or other interim transit), automobiles, pedestrians, and bicycle facilities
- The alignment of light rail has the potential to dominate the character of the corridor; it must be sited and designed to integrate with planned uses
- The design must include a signature green linkage using urban open spaces and other amenities
- A non-motorized corridor should be included that connects pedestrians and bicyclists to Downtown Bellevue and Overlake, and to the pedestrian trails envisioned along each local stream's interface with NE 15th/16th
- The interface between the public right-of-way, adjacent land uses and light rail stations is critical to the character of the corridor
- Total right-of-way is a key consideration (many of the Bel-Red roadway projects have a very high right-of-way cost to total construction cost ratio, the \$268 million NE 15th/16th project is estimated to be 64% right-of-way costs)

Analysis of alignment

Included in the analysis by staff was a detailed 3-D evaluation of how light rail might occur through the corridor, including potential at-grade, above-grade, and below-grade alignments. The staff conclusion is that an at-grade alignment in the median of NE 15th/16th is the most appropriate treatment that balances cost and urban design considerations, and could ultimately work with either a NE 12th or NE 6th crossing of I-405 by light rail. At-grade and elevated alignments are being analyzed as part of the Sound Transit environmental impact process. Based on work done by staff, a tunnel alignment would only be a consideration for the 120th to 124th Avenue segment through the Wright Runstad property currently being planned as the Spring District. Staff will provide more details of this analysis on May 27, including visual representations of the alternate light rail alignments and right-of-way cost considerations.

Parks and open spaces

The treatment of the urban open spaces along NE 15th/16th and the character of other public spaces were also of great importance when thinking about the design of the corridor. The park/open space component in the nodes is recommended to be more urban in nature (plazas, outdoor public spaces, etc.) along with key connections to planned parks and green open spaces at the West Tributary and Goff Creek. One treatment that was evaluated, but not included in the current design concept was a continuous "park blocks" feature as part of the NE 15th/16th right-of-way. The idea of a 60 to 100-foot swath of park space within the nodes, that separates the buildings from the transit stations, was thought to deter from the desired land use interface of the station areas.

Land use interface

The recommended treatment for ground-floor uses within the station nodes and provision of other public amenities as part of the right-of-way is guided by the principle to have a strong land use interface. The proposed Bel-Red Land Use Code requires retail and commercial uses front the station areas. These uses, along with on-street parking and a local access/frontage road on the north side of NE 15th/16th within the nodes will help to invigorate the public realm.

Pedestrian and bicycle connection

The proposed design includes an off-street pedestrian and bicycle greenway be included on the north side of the roadway as a key urban design feature. It would stretch from Downtown Bellevue, and the new NE 12th Street bridge over I-405, east to Highland Park near 140th Avenue. The pedestrian and bicycle facility would also provide key connection to the BNSF railroad corridor and other planned non-motorized trails near the West Tributary and Goff Creek.

Public review process

Staff has briefed the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, and Parks & Community Services Board on the current design concepts for NE 15th/16th. The Planning Commission reviewed preliminary designs and was interested in the land use interface and ultimate right-of-way number as it relates to pedestrian crossing distance. Business and property owner panels occurred on May 13, the Spring Forward Expo took place on May 15, and a public hearing will occur on May 28.

The Planning Commission will continue review of the design and function of NE 15th/16th following the public review period, including refinement of the vision for the NE 15th/16th corridor and the general right-of-way need that will help guide the location of future development.

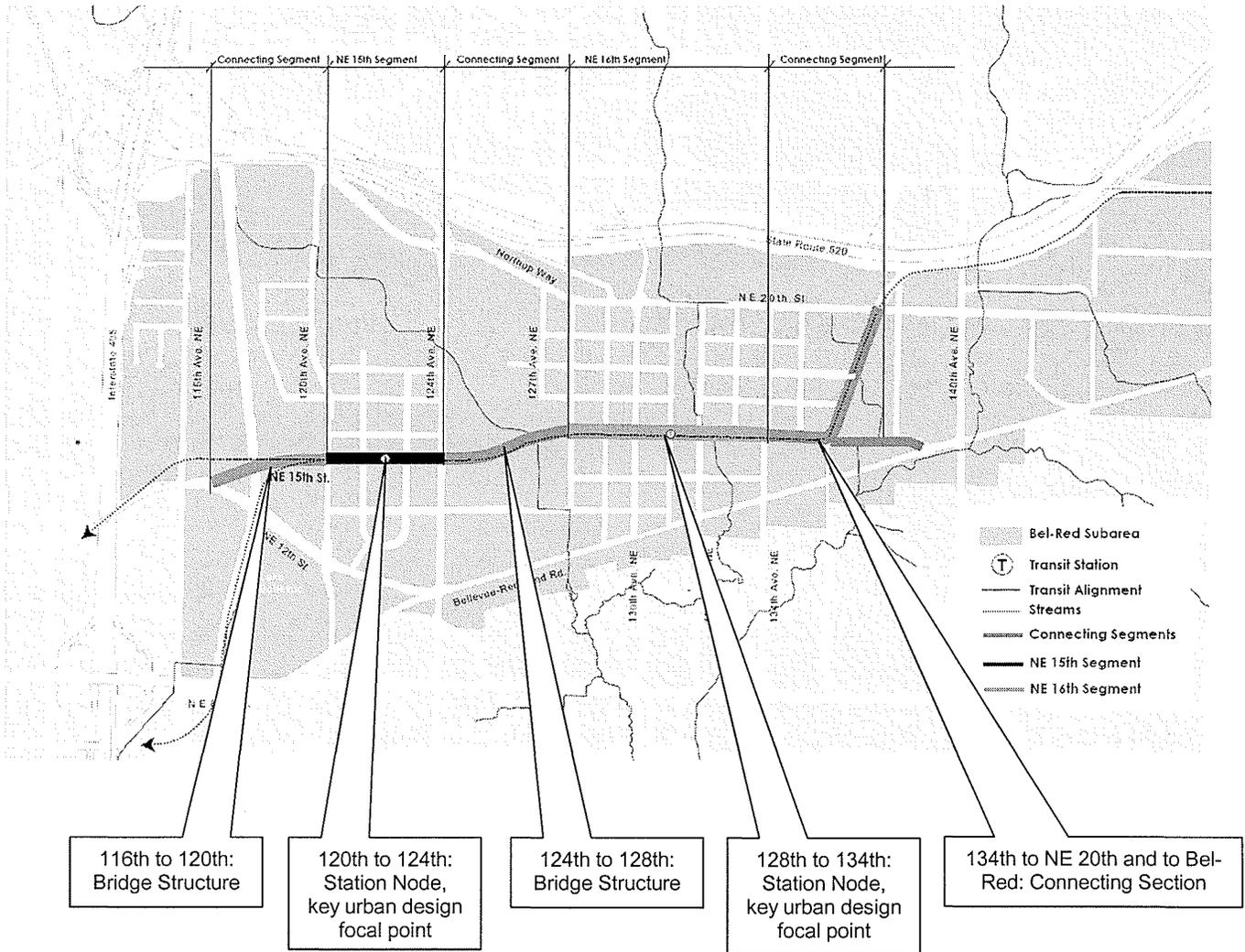
Staff will summarize the Transportation Commission and Park Board review as part of the staff presentation on May 27th.

ATTACHMENTS

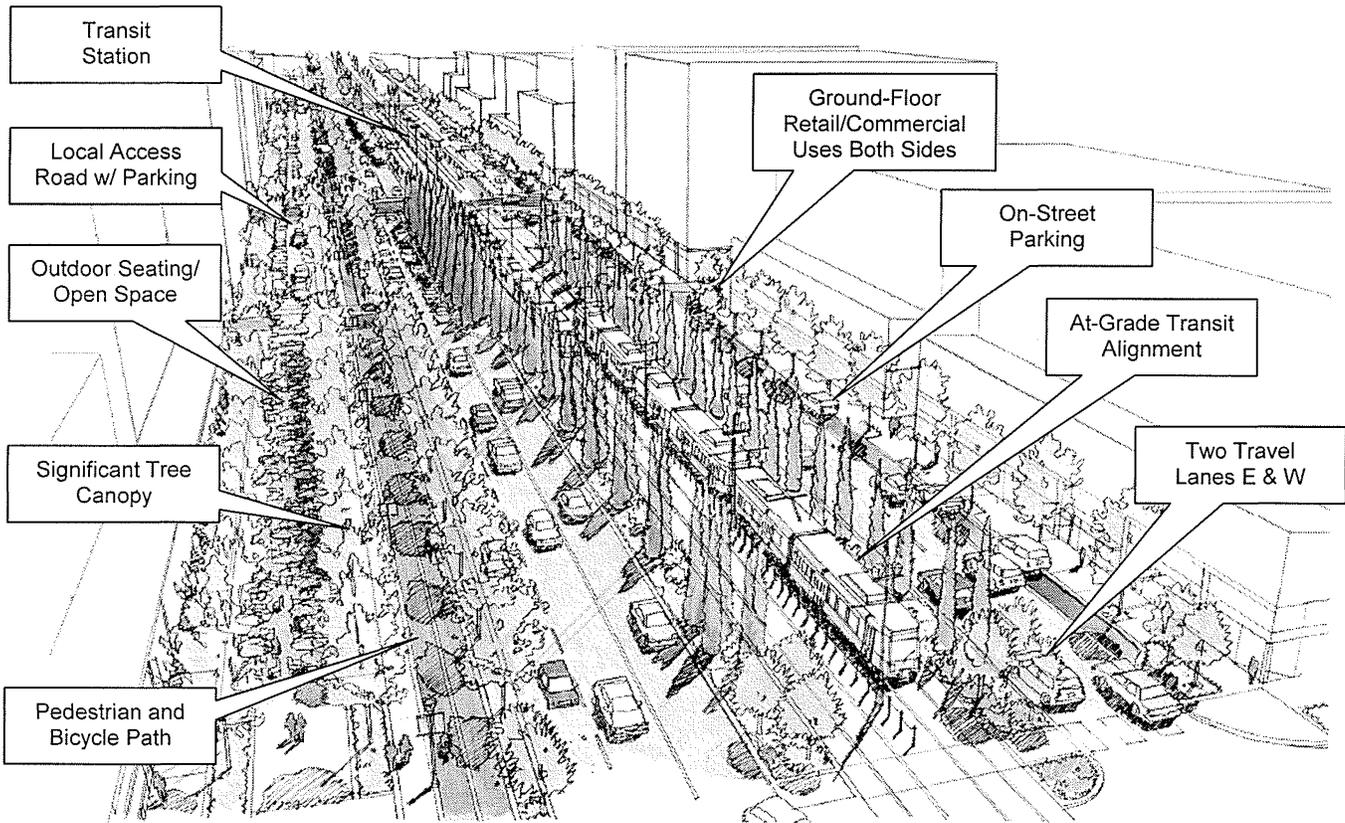
1. Map of the NE 15th/16th corridor
2. Preliminary design concept sketches for NE 15th/16th

ATTACHMENT 1

Map of the NE 15th/16th corridor



ATTACHMENT 2
Preliminary design concept sketches for NE 15th/16th



Concept sketch of NE 15th/16th right-of-way allocation within transit nodes



Concept sketch of off-street pedestrian and bicycle path, north side of NE 15th/16th