

Bellevue Redmond Overlake Transportation Study (BROTS)
Focus Group Discussion
August 20, 2008
5:30pm – 7:30pm

The BROTS interlocal agreement between the City of Bellevue and the City of Redmond addresses transportation consequences of land use within an area that overlaps both jurisdictions. The following comments are from the third of four focus groups conducted for public participation in order to help determine what the problems are, what the solutions are, and what is important to members of the east Bellevue community. This third focus group consisted of community members that reside within the east Bellevue area.

The comments listed are a summary of group and individual observations and ideas (not verbatim) that are the result of asking the focus group three questions (the questions are found above each comment section). A short PowerPoint presentation was given at the beginning of the BROTS Focus Group Discussion that provided background of the 1999 BROTS agreement and the 2008 BROTS issues, objectives, and options.

1. What's it like out there?

Tell us your experience with existing traffic conditions in east Bellevue that the City could address with transportation improvements and strategies. What is it like to travel around east Bellevue – by any means – for your job, to do errands, for recreation or other activities?

The Eastgate Way area by I-90. In the mornings and evenings is a zoo. There is just too much traffic. I practice avoidance.

- When the Microsoft people move into the new buildings in that area it's just going to add to the traffic mess that is already there going through the neighborhoods.
- When 405 stacks up, especially southbound through Bellevue in the afternoons, then people start to use the neighborhood arterials.
- People coming from east I-90 and are trying to get onto 148th, but have to take that Eastgate Way exit at 156th.
 - When taking that exit cars have to stop at 156th and take a left. Then they go west about one block and take right onto 148th.
 - It would make sense to have a ramp that takes them directly to 148th

In the same area there is a park near the Microsoft buildings. There is an understanding that soccer fields, a baseball diamond, and possibly a big recreational building are proposed for that park. If that is the case

- The only way in and out is on 160th

- 160th ends at the Boeing buildings so traffic will be a nightmare as parents drop off and pick up their kids.
- The guards at Boeing said there will soon be more employees working in those buildings.

Avoid the Overlake and Crossroads areas all together.

The eastbound exit off of 520 is very congested.

It's very difficult to ride a bike on 156th going north. Once you get past NE 8th there is so much congestion

- I avoid peak times but it is frustrating that there are no bike accommodations

Even if all the improvements are made for traffic on the N/S arterials, how are the cars going to get onto I-90?

- They are going to get through faster just to sit and wait to get onto I-90

Another problem is the intersection by Albertson's at 150th and SE 37th.

- The design of the onramp to I-90 there (by Pizza Hut) backs traffic up into that intersection.

You have to time your shopping specifically to avoid the area during peak traffic times.

- Frustrated people practically run you off the road.
- If people try to do errands during their lunch break, they are in a hurry
 - I think there should be amenities within the business parks so workers don't have to drive around the neighborhoods.

The blinking light at Northup and W. Lake Sammamish intersection does not help

It's difficult to turn right or left from 26th onto W. Lake Sammamish because traffic is backed up all the way from I-90 past the intersection – all the way past the little store.

- need some way to get onto I-90 easily and very fast

It is possible that if the traffic is improved going N/S then more people would try to use those routes.

The problem might be related to 520

- People take I-90 and 148th to get around 520 to get to Microsoft

Buses stop traffic when they are picking up people.

Facilitator:

- Traffic modeling has shown that during peak hours, there is a substantial number of cars that do not have an origin or destination in Bellevue.

- There has not been a lot of residential growth in the area but there has been a lot of office growth – the office growth has been drawing the traffic through neighborhoods up to the Overlake area.

Need to get employers to contribute

- Employers shouldn't offer free parking.

Need to keep in mind not to have the Eastgate P & R a major node for bus transit.

- traffic on Eastgate Way is already too congested.
- Need to have the major loading areas farther east.
 - Or revise the on/off ramp system from I-90

On regional cooperation – federal, state, county, city government – you can see that the cooperation is not working very well because there is a large traffic problem in the Eastgate area.

- I-90 needs to add more lanes to alleviate some of the backup.
 - What steps have been taken to address this problem?

Facilitator:

Issues that come out of the BROT study will help identify joint regional projects

- If I-90 is a problem then the BROTS agreement can identify that and mobilize the politics of Bellevue and Redmond to work with other jurisdictions to get those solutions accomplished.
- The focus groups are helping to identify these issues

Would like to see some “No through traffic” signs on some roads such as within the route:

NE 8th heading east, turning right onto 164th (south), left on SE Phantom Way (east), right onto 168th (south), and then over to 161st and onto I-90.

It is difficult for older people to walk because of the traffic and steep hills

The neighborhoods seem as safe as they were 10 years ago. The problem is once you hit the main arterials, the traffic has increased and it is not very safe.

Not enough police to enforce speed limits and full stops at intersections

It is difficult getting in and out of the Rockwood/Rockcreek area (along 140th and 148th).

2. What should we do about it?

We would like your feedback on the transportation improvement concepts that we have developed so far – 1) Transit 2) Transportation Demand Management (TDM) 3) Non-motorized 4) Channelization/Operations 5) Neighborhood Livability. What projects, or combinations of projects, do you think would make the biggest difference?

Should consider leaving some of the park by Boeing as a “natural” park.

Improve I-90, 405, & 520 to alleviate the neighborhood traffic problem.

- Need to have more coordination with other government agencies

148th is the backbone of the problem but it is impressive how much traffic is handled by 148th. Look at:

- BCC, where everyone has to have a car.
- Eastgate P & R is a regional problem.
- Overlake where everyone is getting off 520 and having to head east

We should look at the best ways to make 148th more efficient

If there are major employers that are causing most of the traffic problem, then they should carry a larger part responsibility of having buses picking up their employees.

Traffic calming – the traffic circles and C medians are ok but no to the traffic humps.

- traffic humps hurt if you have a sore back
- the residents have to go over them all the time while the traffic passing through only have to go over them occasionally.

Key is to get the light rail in where it is planned from the Bel-Red Corridor study

Do we know where the traffic originates from?

Is there a lot of traffic that comes from other than where we live?

- If this is the case, then wouldn't it be better to increase mass transit to move these people?
 - We are talking about the increase in the number of cars that come into our neighborhood – there doesn't seem to have been a huge increase in the number of people that live in this area in relation to the increase in the number of SOVs.
 - It would seem that an increase in mass transit during the peak morning and afternoon hours would help relieve the neighborhoods of all the congestion.
 - If the provider of the mass transit would provide very much subsidized bus passes to get people out of their cars and onto buses during these peak hours.
 - Something like the bus service to football games

Need to educate the public about the usefulness/convenience/ease of taking the bus.

- Need bus-turn outs at bus stops.
 - The system in Bellevue is very inconsistent. If the public is educated about the system then they will give priority to the buses
 - The buses have the right-of-way just like a school bus
 - We are not brought up to use public transit so the mindset is to drive SOVs.
 - We need to educate the public and start at a young age.
 - The public needs to show that there is a demand for service

Need to do something with cars. Families cannot take the bus.

- how do you take three kids under the age of 5 on the bus. If one is crying and you need to leave right away you can't wait a half hour to take the bus.

Parents shouldn't drive their kids to school

- make the roads safe for kids to walk/ride bikes to school
- make it safe for kids to ride the bus to school

Put roads underground so cars can bypass intersections.

Also need underground parking

Time the lights on those major arterials and increase the speed so they can move faster

- there are lots of examples in southern CA
- minimize the lights so the transitory traffic can move through
- overpass on 140th & 148th over NE 8th
- SE 24th could go under.

Terminate the Bel-Red project to eliminate rezoning.

Reduce population/employment growth projections/allocations from King County (& OFM)

Reduce commercial/growth limits in BROTS area

3. What is important to you?

Since the 2008 BROTS will run through 2030 there is adequate time to program the funding of new projects but we need to identify priorities in the short term. What transportation projects – in any of the categories – would be your top priority?

Improve 148th – keep it the backbone and make it efficient so people won't feel the need to use the other arterials.

- should emphasize more transit capacity

Light rail in the areas planned in the Bel-Red Corridor study

- It is important to implement the light rail and BRT before the people come.
- We'll be in trouble if the infrastructure isn't in place before the people come.

The I-405 project that is underway is important to help alleviate that N/S congestion.

- There should be some other major project that could be done on 520 and I-90 to help keep more people on the freeways instead of taking the arterial streets.
- Move 148th exit heading east off of 520 to spot past 148th.

Need to do more to improve bicycle routing and pedestrian facilities

- fix the inconsistencies on 156th
- Need safer routes

Need to have designated N/S and E/W streets such as 148th and NE 8th to concentrate mass transit.

- designate other arterials for non-motorized movement
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Long term planning instead of a band-aid. Plan way ahead instead of two to five years

Have major employers like Microsoft and Boeing get involved in mass transit

- have their own transit that goes into Eastgate
- have them use flex time work hours

Improved bus service

- a local bus schedule that runs locally and regularly
 - better bus service for BCC students
- have electric buses

Do not widen 156th because of its sensitivity to water drainage. Phantom Lake has never been the same because of the large amounts of runoff.

- making 156th a bike corridor would be a good idea

Do not implement any new projects

- terminate the Bel-Red project rezone
- reduce BROTS commercial/growth limits
 - The traffic congestion growth during peak and off-peak traffic hours has been a result of the City of Bellevue staff and council pursuit of growth
 - e.g., Bel-Red project rezone. Unless this growth is reduced, there is no way to reduce BROTS traffic congestion.