

Bellevue Redmond Overlake Transportation Study (BROTS)
Focus Group Discussion
August 6, 2008
11:30am – 12:30pm

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 second 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 second focus group consisted of City of Bellevue staff 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.

Focus group members approximate locations:

- Near Ardmore Park
- Near Sammamish High School on 140th
- NE 12th Street
- Near Spiritridge Elementary
- Tam O'Shanter

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?

Some focus group members spend more time using NE 8th so not a lot of time going N/S.

- The signals heading east are not timed well during the evenings along NE 8th.
- You may get through one intersection quickly but then you get stopped at the next
- There are a lot of buses headed east bound in the evenings and traffic always cues up in the left lane to avoid buses in the curb lane. This makes the curb lane clear but no one is willing to get behind the bus.

For example:

If people approach 148th when heading east on east 8th and see a bus in the curb lane, they scoot over to the left lane. This causes traffic to back up all the way up the hill. No one wants to be behind the bus because they may not make it through the intersection.

- Usually avoid NE 8th and use Bel-Red instead because it is quicker.
 - There are very few buses on Bel-Red to slow down traffic.

In the peak evening hours the traffic heading south on W. Lake Sammamish Parkway can be backed up starting at the traffic circle at I-90 up to NE 24th.

- It's also solid going northbound in the mornings.

Go to work early so morning traffic is avoided.

- Going south to I-90 during peak hours you have to give yourself a lot of time because traffic hardly moves.

The north part of Bellevue seems to flow pretty well.

In order to get around you adapt to what is out there.

- Figure out ways to avoid the problem intersections.
- At 164th and Northup you can't turn left when you are going northbound on 164th because of the southbound stream. There is no break in the left turn
- SE 22nd and 148th – it's a two minute light. I know that so I plan for it.
- Can go on 140th or through BCC to avoid 148th at peak hours.
- Also can go down 164th, through the tunnel and cut through Albertsons.

Doing a lot of E/W movement you adapt by hopping through the N/S arterials as needed.

There isn't a problem other than at peak hours.

- Non of this matters much because we adapt to the traffic.
 - We know when and where traffic is bad at certain times of day.
 - How much do we want to balance protecting our neighborhoods vs moving traffic because it isn't a 24 hour a day phenomena

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?

Neighborhood livability – There is traffic now and there is going to be more traffic in the future.

- Some of the solutions are directed toward mitigating that traffic.
- Some of the solutions may be making the neighborhoods a nice place to live
 - Amenities and streetscapes and design ideas that don't make traffic go away but help the neighborhood a nice place to be.

- Need to keep in mind that traffic calming interferes with emergency response time.
 - Every time a traffic calming device is put in, the response time increases by 9 sec.
- People can adapt to the tweaks
 - Putting in traffic circles and things aren't that big of an impact because people will adapt.
 - If you start making it easier to go on 148th then people will leave the freeways and take 148th or other N/S roads.

Need to do something about both 164th and NE 24th and Northup intersections so people can turn left off of 164th onto NE 24th without having to sit through several light changes when they are the first in line.

- The modeling is telling us that we are part of the problem just moving around so either make the commute easier or move them somewhere else.
- Make these projects fix the regional trip stuff.

I think the answer is the BRT

- Since the problem isn't an all day thing it makes sense to implement BRT
- Put BRT in place and force people to use the point to point system.
- If BRT goes down 156th then there are all those 4-way stops. If you signalize 156th then the neighborhood will be unhappy
 - There would be no option to give BRT transit signal priority through the 4-way stops.

Need separate facilities to protect bikes from traffic

- I tell my son exactly what streets not to take

Why haven't you been looking at E/W traffic?

- If one N/S street is blocked then you jog to another N/S street using one of the E/W streets.
- This causes an impact on the E/W streets as well.
 - It is really noticed on NE 24th
 - Especially at 148th and NE 24th
- Need to identify the E/W movements and make the paths clear and defined so it is safe for bikes
 - Need to be able to link up E/W with the N/S so the bypass is safe.
 - Link up the shopping centers, pools, parks, schools, etc...

Need more bike opportunities in east Bellevue

Can there be right turn pockets like at 140th and 148th going westbound like the ones going eastbound on NE 8th ?

- There is a wetland issue at 148th and NE 8th
-

Why wouldn't you widen 148th?

Facilitator's response:

- Expanding the overall number of lanes is an impact on the neighborhood
 - It allows for more traffic to move through.
 - We want to discourage commuter traffic on the streets and try send them to the freeways as much as possible.
 - The expense would involve buying property on each side.
- It's expensive, has a huge environmental footprint, and it doesn't address the issue that council wants us to deal with (push as much of the commute traffic onto transit or onto the regional roadway system and not accommodate it with a 6 lane arterial roadway system).

What about the median? We own that, though I'm sure everyone would scream.

Facilitator's response:

- That would give us one lane but we would still have to buy property for the other lane.
- It would give us a lane for the reversible lane option we omitted that can be switched at peak traffic times.
- The elevated busway was eliminated due to costs and not enough benefit because it is only most effective during the peak commute hours.

What about using one of the lanes as an HOV lane?.

- BRT doesn't have that many stops
- Bring people to the center on a platform from a signal crossing or signal at an intersection.

TDM should make a huge amount of difference

- when large employers come in, what kinds of incentives are there?
 - Can TDM be used?
 - Can there be incentives to promote TDM?
 - Can employers be required to provide commuting options for their employees?
 - Limit the amount of parking to make it difficult for employees to park
 - Have employers give incentives to use public transit
 - Usually there is a minimum amount of parking and then the developer can put in any number of additional parking spaces.
 - However, there is a parking cap for Bel-Red.
 - This is an effort to reduce commute trips.

Is there a way to put Microsoft under the microscope?

- Parking at Microsoft is vast and it's free.

Redmond is not interested in requiring Microsoft to implement TDM

- At Lincoln center the Microsoft people pay nothing for parking while others pay 150/mo to park.

There is a limit

- We can't TDM Bel-Red and ignore Overlake's urban center

Living right on the boarder of Bellevue and Redmond it is difficult to keep track of what both cities are doing and what they are doing to you.

Facilitator's response:

- Redmond is not helping much in this BROTS process because they think they have done their public participation in the development in their Overlake plan.
- What we want to identify with BROTS are those projects that are inter-jurisdictionally paid for.
- A lot of the pedestrian, bike, neighborhood enhancement and traffic calming items will be nice projects on the list but they will be on Bellevue's ticket.
- The way to identify those projects is to track who is using those roadways.

We need stuff in place that ameliorates things we can't do anything about.

- There is a lot of room for non-motorized options that allows us to move around in respect to not making the turn movements that you want or avoiding certain areas
 - Channelization seems to just be enabling poor behavior

If there were a pull out or something along NE 8th that would free up that curb lane and may make a huge difference.

Can neighborhoods be protected from obvious cut through routes like what was done at NE 30th and Bel-Red?

- The city restricted travel so cars can only turn right or left onto Bel-Red instead of going straight through to 30th on the other side.
- Need to consider the impact to emergency vehicles.
- Implementing that type of traffic calming just pushes the problem to another 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?

BRT

Bike safety and more bike facilities

TDM