



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR
 450 110th Ave NE., P.O. BOX 90012
 BELLEVUE, WA 98009-9012

DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE

PROPONENT: City of Bellevue

LOCATION OF PROPOSAL: N/A

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL: Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments, in accordance with RCW 36.70A, amending the Transportation Element to include new policies related to the best practices for implementing light rail and amending existing policies and text, where appropriate, to reference the long term plan adopted by Sound Transit in 2005.

Incorporation by reference means the inclusion of all or part of any existing document in an agency's environmental documentation by reference. Pursuant to WAC 197-11-635, the Final Environmental Impact Statements for the Bel-Red Corridor Project and Downtown Implementation Plan Update and Downtown Subarea Plan Review are incorporated by reference. These documents are part of the environmental record for the Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statements are available for review at City Hall during regular business hours and may be purchased.

FILE NUMBER(S): 07-123050 AC

The Environmental Coordinator of the City of Bellevue has determined that this proposal does not have a probable significant adverse impact upon the environment. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C). This decision was made after the Bellevue Environmental Coordinator reviewed the completed environmental checklists and information filed with the Land Use Division. This information is available to the public on request.

- This DNS is issued after using the optional DNS process in WAC 197-11-355. There is no further comment period on the DNS.
- This DNS is issued under WAC 197-11-340(2) and is subject to a 14-day comment period from the date below. Comments must be submitted by 5 p.m. on _____.

This DNS may be withdrawn at any time if the proposal is modified so that it is likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts; if there is significant new information indicating, or on, a proposals probable significant adverse environmental impacts (unless a non-exempt license has been issued if the proposal is a private project), or if the DNS was procured by misrepresentation or lack of material disclosure.

This DNS is only appealable as part of the City's action on the amendment to the Land Use Code. In order to comply with requirements of SEPA and the State of Washington Growth Management Act for coordination of hearings, any appeal of the SEPA threshold determination herein will be considered by the Growth Management Hearings Board along with an appeal of the City Council's action. See LUC 20.35.250C.

Carle V. Hillend
 Environmental Coordinator

6-19-08
 Date

OTHERS TO RECEIVE THIS DOCUMENT:
 State Department of Fish and Wildlife King County
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
 Attorney General



City of Bellevue
Department of Community Development
State Environmental Policy Act Threshold Determination

Created on 3/26/2004 1:37 PM PCD Page 1 6/17/2008

Proposal Name: 2008 Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan - Initiated by City Council action - Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPA)

Proposal Address: Citywide

Proposal Description: Amend the Transportation Element to include new policies related to the best practices for implementing light rail. Amend existing policies and text, where appropriate, to reference the long term plan adopted by Sound Transit in 2005. A brief summary of proposed amendments includes:

- Replacing existing Figures 9 and 10 with a new Figure 10, "Sound Transit 2005 Long-Range Plan" and replacing existing references in the Transit and the Regional Transit policy sections;
- Updating references and information for policies in the Regional Transit and High-Capacity Transit sections to reflect the most recent regional planning efforts and terminology; and
- Adding a new subsection to the High Capacity Transit section, entitled "Light Rail Transit," consisting of new policies grouped into five subheadings.

File Number: 07-123050 AC

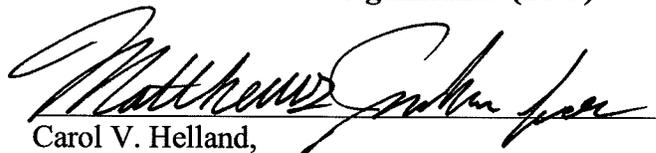
Applicant: City of Bellevue, Department of Planning and Community Development

Decisions Included: SEPA Threshold Determination

Planner: Michael Kattermann, AICP, 425-452-2042

State Environmental Policy Act

Threshold Determination: **Determination of Non-Significance (DNS)**



Carol V. Helland,
Environmental Coordinator

Bulletin Publication Date: June 19, 2008

Appeal Deadline: An appeal shall be filed together with an appeal of the underlying Process IV action. The appeal shall be by petition to the Growth Management Hearings Board and shall be filed within the 60-day time period set forth in RCW 36.70A.290.

For information on how to appeal a proposal, visit the Permit Center at City Hall or call (425) 452-6800.

I. Proposal Description and Objectives

The proposal is to amend the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, including revising existing figures and policies to reflect more recent regional plans and adding a new subsection to the High Capacity Transit section, entitled “Light Rail Transit,” consisting of new policies grouped into five subheadings. Figure, text and policy amendments include:

- Replacing existing Figures 9 and 10 with a new Figure 10, “Sound Transit 2005 Long-Range Plan” and replacing existing references in the Transit and the Regional Transit policy sections;
- Updating references and information for policies in the Regional Transit and High-Capacity Transit sections to reflect the most recent regional planning efforts and terminology;
- Adding a new subsection to the High Capacity Transit section, entitled “Light Rail Transit,” consisting of new policies generally addressing issues related to the development of a light rail system and grouped into the following five subheadings:
 - General – requiring compliance with local land use and transportation plans, encouraging a partnership with the regional transit provider and involving the public throughout the project;
 - Routing and Alignment – connecting major activity centers and recognizing and supporting the different land use objectives for each area;
 - Community Integration – using quality materials and context sensitive design techniques and protecting neighborhoods from project impacts;
 - System Access – facilitating access to the system for potential riders and designing facilities for safety and ease of access for a broad range of needs, ages and abilities; and
 - Construction and Mitigation – partnering with the regional transit provider, involving the public and communicating throughout the project, minimizing disruption and inconvenience and locating staging areas in non-residential areas where practicable.

The amendments are intended to help inform and position the city to maximize the benefits and minimize the impacts of a light rail system in Bellevue.

II. Environmental Record

The environmental review consisted of analysis based on the following documents included in the environmental record or incorporated by reference if so noted:

- Environmental Checklist for the Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments, May 29, 2008
- Bel-Red Corridor Project, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), January 2007
- Bel-Red Corridor Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), July 2007
- Downtown Implementation Plan Update and Downtown Subarea Plan Review, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), October 2002
- Downtown Implementation Plan Update and Downtown Subarea Plan Review, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), April 2003

Incorporation by reference means the inclusion of all or part of any existing document in an agency's environmental documentation by reference. Pursuant to WAC 197-11-635, the Final Environmental Impact Statements for the Bel-Red Corridor Project and Downtown Implementation Plan Update and Downtown Subarea Plan Review are incorporated by reference. These documents are part of the environmental record for the Light Rail Best Practices Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statements are available for review at City Hall during regular business hours and may be purchased.

III. Proposed Timing and Phasing

The Bellevue Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the amendments on July 9, 2008. The Bellevue City Council may act on the amendments as early as August 4, 2008.

Sound Transit is due to issue a Draft EIS in fall 2008 that analyzes several alternative alignments through Bellevue. The Sound Transit Board is expected to select a preferred alignment in 2009 with a Final EIS to be prepared on that preferred alignment. These proposed light rail best practices policy amendments to the Comprehensive Plan do not address specific alignments. Additional amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be necessary prior to and/or subsequent to selection of an alignment by Sound Transit.

IV. Environmental Summary

Purpose and Need to Which the Proposal is Responding

These proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments are responding to public questions and concerns about the potential impacts of a light rail system in Bellevue. The City Council created a Light Rail Best Practices Committee in summer 2007 for the purpose of identifying "lessons learned" by other cities with light rail systems and developing guiding principles and policy recommendations, including amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, for consideration by the City Council.

If the City Council adopts the Comprehensive Plan amendments as described, then additional actions (e.g. Land Use Code amendments, Street Design Manual amendments, interlocal agreements) will be necessary to implement the proposed policies.

Major Conclusions, Significant Areas of Controversy and Uncertainty

The policies evolved out of the initial public concerns, subsequent public discussion and comment, research of other systems and literature, and information obtained by the Committee from visits to other light rail systems in operation and under construction. The major conclusions can be summarized by the five guiding principles identified by the Committee in their final report:

- Connect “somewhere to somewhere” by conveniently serving the places where people live, work and play;
- Light rail should be developed in a manner that complements, not diminishes, the character and quality of Bellevue;
- Anticipate impacts and advocate for exceptional mitigation;
- Alignment profile should consider the unique qualities of each part of the community; and
- An early, ongoing public involvement program is essential for success in Bellevue.

The main areas of controversy related to particular alignments and potential impacts on individual properties and neighborhoods. Specific concerns related to the potential displacement of single family homes for the siting of light rail tracks, a tunnel portal and construction staging areas. Additional controversy related to the use of an existing railroad right-of-way (BNSF) versus the use of new light rail right-of-way or existing street right-of-way. Some of the controversy could be addressed in a generic sense through proposed policies; however, because the Committee was specifically directed to not address particular alignments much of the issues were outside of the Committee’s charge. Some uncertainty remains and will continue until more information is available from Sound Transit about the potential impacts of the various alignments.

Issues to be Resolved, Including Environmental Choices to be Made Between Alternative Courses of Action

Recognizing that environmental impacts will occur with development of a light rail system, Sound Transit is currently conducting environmental review under both NEPA and SEPA requirements. A Draft EIS, due to be issued by Sound Transit in fall 2008, analyzes several alternative alignments through Bellevue. The Sound Transit Board is expected to select a preferred alignment in 2009 with a Final EIS to be prepared on that preferred alignment. These proposed light rail best practices policy amendments to the Comprehensive Plan do not address specific alignments. Additional amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be necessary prior

to and/or subsequent to selection of an alignment by Sound Transit.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposal

Environmental Review of the attached non-project environmental checklists indicates no probability of significant adverse environmental impacts occurring as a result of the proposals. Therefore, issuance of a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) is the appropriate threshold determination under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements. The Environmental Checklist is available for review in the project file.

Adverse impacts which are less than significant are usually subject to City Code or Standards which are intended to mitigate those impacts. Where such impacts and related regulatory items correspond, no further documentation is necessary. For other adverse impacts which are less than significant, Bellevue City Code Section 22.02.140 provides substantive authority to mitigate impacts disclosed through the environmental review process.

V. Conclusion and Determination

For the proposal, environmental review indicates no probability of significant adverse environmental impacts. Therefore, issuance of a **Determination of Non-Significance** pursuant to WAC 197-11-355 and Bellevue City Code 22.02.034 is appropriate.

Other adverse impacts that are less than significant may be mitigated pursuant to Bellevue City Code 22.02.140, RCW 43.21C.060, and WAC 197-11-660.

VI. Mitigation Measures

There are no recommended SEPA-based mitigating measures for this proposal. The lead agency has determined that the requirements for environmental analysis, protection and mitigation measures have been adequately addressed in the development regulations and comprehensive plan adopted under chapter 36.70A RCW, and in other applicable local, state or federal laws or rules, as provided by RCW 43.21C.240 and WAC 197-11-158. This agency will not require any additional mitigation measures under SEPA.