

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BEL-RED CORRIDOR PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

June 1, 2006
4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Creighton, Co-Chair; Terry Lukens, Co-Chair; Kurt Springman; Joel Glass; Doug Matthews; Sue Baugh; Norm Hanson; Earl Overstreet; Bill Ptacek; Dean Rebhuhn; Ken Schiring; Pat Sheffels;

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kurt White; Steve Dennis;; Laurie Tish

OTHERS PRESENT: Kevin O'Neill, Matt Terry, Dan Stroh, Michael Paine, Emil King, Diana Canzoneri, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Goran Sparrman, Kris Liljeblad, Bernard van de Kamp, Tresa Berg, Department of Transportation; Shelley Mirelli, Department of Parks and Community Services; George Crandall, Don Arambula, Crandall Arambula; Torsten Lieneau, CH2MHill

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. Welcome and Review of the Agenda

Co-Chair Terry Lukens called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and welcomed the committee members.

2. Approve Minutes from May 4, 2006, Steering Committee Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Ms. Baugh. Second was by Mr. Schiring and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Report on Results from May 16 Business and Property Owner Panels

Strategic Planning Manager Kevin O'Neill noted that the committee members were provided with verbatim transcripts of the four panel discussions. He said some 40 people in all attended and they were asked to offer feedback on the same issues the committee and staff have been struggling with, including future development opportunities, the future of light industrial uses in the area, the service uses issue, the connection between allowing growth and being able to serve it through transportation infrastructure, high-capacity transit, and the value of environmental and park and open space amenities. There was a very good cross section of business and property owners participating in the discussions.

4. Report on May 5-6 Planning Charrette in Redmond's Overlake Area

Mr. O'Neill explained that a charrette is a focused design process. He said the charrette sponsored by Redmond and focused on the Overlake area included Redmond elected officials,

planning commission members, and citizens. Mr. O'Neill said he was invited to participate on behalf of the city of Bellevue, and several Bellevue residents attended as well.

The Overlake area of Redmond borders the eastern boundary of the Bel-Red corridor project study area. It comprises some 500 to 600 acres, much of which is designated for a high technology center and is taken up by the Microsoft campus. The focus of the charrette was on the southernmost part of the area, referred to as Overlake Village, where the current development pattern is stand-alone uses such as Sears and Overlake Plaza. When Redmond updated its Overlake neighborhood plan in 1999 they wanted to see the area develop with a combination of housing and ground-floor retail in five- to six-story buildings. However, development and redevelopment in the Overlake Village area has not happened according to the vision, and those who participated in the charrette were asked for ideas to refine and help implement the vision.

Mr. O'Neill said many of the issues facing the Bel-Red corridor study are being faced by Redmond, namely transportation infrastructure, serving future growth in the area, where to site a future high-capacity transit station in the neighborhood, and the market analysis. The process of updating the Overlake neighborhood plan with a planning horizon of 2030 will be ongoing over the next year and a half. Their work should be kept in mind as the Bel-Red study progresses since the two areas are interconnected.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Rebhuhn, Mr. O'Neill said Bellevue staff has been coordinating very closely with Redmond for a long time, but there have been few attempts made to touch base with Kirkland staff.

Mr. Creighton asked if much time was spent in the charrette focusing on the intersection of NE 24th Street/148th Avenue NE. Mr. O'Neill said the issue was raised and it was acknowledged that it is one of the worst interchanges anywhere. The traffic volumes on 148th Avenue NE generally are very high, but at the intersection there are some 40,000 cars per day. No big solutions were proposed. Redmond realizes it will be difficult to achieve a housing vision in the vicinity of the intersection, so they are focusing more on 152nd Avenue NE as the main street of the urban village. Finishing a bridge across the freeway at NE 36th Street was discussed by the group as well.

Mr. Hanson said the thinking of the Bridle Trails neighborhood is that a collector/distributor lane should be created to tie in the NE 40th Street interchange and the interchange at NE 51st Street. Redmond's plan calls for the construction of a 7500-car parking garage to the west of SR-520 at NE 36th Street. Anyone wanting to go from there to Seattle or to the south are going to have to go down 148th Avenue NE to get onto the freeway. Having a collector/distributor lane would reduce the pressures on the intersection at 148th Avenue NE. Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said the Redmond development agreement covers the increment of growth at Microsoft as part of the ceiling in the BROTS agreement. The overcrossing proposed in the vicinity of 152nd Avenue NE is intended to serve growth on the campus. The potential for a collector/distributor lane is something the cities of Bellevue and Redmond would have to discuss together.

5. Introduction of Draft Land Use/Transportation Alternatives

Planning Director Dan Stroh reminded the steering committee members that much of the Bel-Red area was developed 30 to 40 years ago, and the area has not seen any systematic planning for many years. As a result, there is no clear vision for how the area should develop over time, and how it fits into the wider land use and economic strategy of the city. The world has changed since the area developed: growth management requires the more efficient use of urban lands,

very strong centers at the eastern and western ends of the corridor have developed, and Sound Transit Phase II is contemplating bringing high-capacity transit through the area, bringing with it new opportunities for land use. If a new vision for the area is not created there will continue to be no coherent vision, a major opportunity to synch land uses with high-capacity transit will be missed, and much of the area could stagnate.

Mr. Stroh said the work of the committee to date has provided everyone with educational opportunities. There have been technical reports to the committee on topics such as the market and economic realities of the area, land use, transportation and environmental conditions, how to think about high-capacity transit and transit-oriented development, and what the general public believes should happen in the area. The focus has been on capturing different ways the area could grow in the future.

Staff and the consultants have taken the various building blocks and assembled them into logical, comprehensive alternatives for how the area may develop over time. One of the key challenges for the area has been the limited transportation capacity. The grid system is immature, and there is little regional connectivity; it is not an overstatement to say the transportation system has served over time to lock up the development potential of the corridor. At the same time, the city cannot step back and just allow any type of development to occur there; that approach would send the area into total gridlock very quickly, sending additional congestion into the surrounding areas and neighborhoods.

Smart growth in the area will require making tough choices about how much growth can be accommodated, where it should go, and how it can come about in ways that will reduce the number and length of trips.

Mr. Stroh said the draft alternatives are all about vision. They represent more than just a zoning exercise and lines drawn on a map. The alternatives include elements of land use, transportation infrastructure, parks, urban amenities, elements of the natural environment, and placemaking features. Implementation of the vision will require a variety of tools, including zoning, investments in public infrastructure, special financing options, catalyst projects, and incentives. Development of the implementation strategies, however, will occur further down the line.

The task at hand is not to pick the best alternative but rather to try and refine the draft alternatives to make sure the best ideas will be forwarded for further study in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. That analysis will provide an objective base of information concerning how the various ideas will really work, which ones make sense and which ones do not make sense. Many months down the road the committee will be asked to make a recommendation on a preferred alternative and the various tools needed to get there.

Mr. O'Neill said the ten principles established by the City Council to guide the Bel-Red corridor project include being ambitious yet grounded in reality, economic vitality, existing assets in the area, the opportunities surrounding high-capacity transit in the corridor, integrating land use and transportation, community amenities, neighborhood protection and creation, sustainability, and interjurisdictional coordination. The process has involved a great deal of public comment to date and will continue to do so throughout the study.

The steering committee endorsed a set of objectives at its meeting on April 6. The draft alternatives are largely framed around those objectives, which include market feasibility, land use, neighborhood impacts, environmental quality, parks and open space, and transportation.

Mr. O'Neill briefly reviewed with the committee the study timeline. He noted that there will be

a series of meetings in June that will culminate in the selection of the alternatives to be studied further in the DEIS.

The four objectives around market feasibility are incorporating elements of the market forecast, serving a distinctive market niche, meeting market needs and economic realities, and leveraging nearby opportunities. Leland Consulting Group was contracted to conduct the market analysis. They produced a map showing the ratio of improvement value to total value, which is an indicator of redevelopment potential. The area has not see a lot of new development, though there has been some investment in existing properties. The area is distinguished by having several large property owners, including Safeway, Coca Cola, Cadman, and Barrier Auto.

The market study concluded that the area is strategically located. It has significant economic anchors on the west and east sides, is near the intersection of two major transportation corridors, has a real diversity of uses, and is largely underdeveloped based on the ratio of land to improvement values. The fact that land prices have increased significantly makes investment in new manufacturing and warehouse uses unlikely.

The recommendations of the market study highlight the opportunity to compete for corporations, to create a new identity for the western half of the planning area, attract development that will complement but not compete with the downtown, add housing, treat the wetlands and riparian corridors as a development amenity, use transit to incentivize development, develop a medical office corridor along 116th Avenue NE, and include more auto uses in the area. The Leland study suggested that a no action approach will result in further piecemeal development over time, making the area less enticing.

The market study also highlighted a high demand for office, some demand for additional retail, a high demand for residential, some demand for hotel uses, and a general loss over time of industrial space.

Torsten Lieneau, a transportation consultant with CH2MHill, said the objectives adopted by the steering committee relative to transportation include addressing multimodal transportation improvements in the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods, providing improved access to the regional system, improving local access and circulation, and accommodating the planned level of development for the area. He said there are a number of regional projects going on in the area that will influence the transportation system in the corridor, including capacity improvements on I-405, I-90 and SR-520, as well as improvements to the regional bus routes.

Continuing, Mr. Lieneau said the transportation network within the corridor is largely lacking. As land uses are added to the area, the hierarchy of roadways need to be kept in mind. There is also very little transit serving the area currently; there is transit service that runs along SR-520 and I-405, on NE 8th Street, and some on Bel-Red Road. Non-motorized options in the study area are limited as well.

The committee members were shown a graphic depicting where the traffic would go if new types of land uses were added to the area. It indicated that more than half of the trips would be to the freeways, and to a lesser extent toward local streets. Only about ten percent of the trips will begin and end in the study area.

It is necessary to analyze what will happen if nothing at all is done in the study area. For the no action alternative, the assumption relative to transportation will be that there will be no investments in the system other than those already funded in adopted city plans. The no action alternative will also assume high-capacity transit traveling through the corridor, but without any

stops other than one near Overlake Hospital.

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said one of the key principles established by the Council, adopted by the steering committee and endorsed by the public, is consideration of environmental components, both the natural environment and the built environment under the umbrella of sustainability. The committee was shown a map of the streams in the study area color-coded based on the quality of the streams to provide certain functions and values. The various streams were typed based on the presence of fish or the ability or inability to support fish populations. Under the critical areas ordinance, the size of the buffer for each stream type varies; streams without the ability to support fish are required to have 50-foot buffers, while streams with fish or having the ability to support fish must have 100-foot buffers. The size of the buffer is largely dependent on whether an adjacent site is developed or not, though in the Bel-Red corridor there are few if any undeveloped sites. Any new structures would have a wider buffer, and public investment could be put into developing parkland and outdoor recreation facilities, or enhancing stream buffers by creating an expanded wetland or stream buffer within a riparian corridor. Existing structures within buffers can remain without being nonconforming.

Mr. Stroh said the alternatives include a number of ideas for park facilities that are difficult to capture at the visioning level but which are embedded in each of the alternatives. He explained that the Department of Parks and Community Services conducted an analysis of level of service standards and the needs that might be created by new development in the area for local parks on the scale of two to five acres.

A number of urban amenities of different scales will be needed to serve the new land uses in the area. A major recreational facility covering 15 to 20 acres and serving the area and beyond is a possibility. Such a facility could include ball fields and a large building housing a mix of activities, such as an aquatic center. The committee has agreed that a large recreational facility should be considered, but not at any specific location or in any particular alternative given that it could fit into any land use alternative. There are also opportunities to connect the wider parks system via trails and open space within the corridor.

The Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way could serve as a trail. King County is in the process of acquiring the right-of-way, and one of the leading ideas for how to use it is a rails-to-trails conversion; the right-of-way could also serve transit.

Mr. Lieneau said a basic package of roadway and transit improvements has been developed showing what will be required regardless of the land use alternatives. He explained that an actual grid overlay cannot be determined without knowing precisely where land uses will go under the preferred alternatives; that will come later in the process.

Mr. Lieneau said a new east-west corridor through the center of the study area is contemplated in the draft alternatives roughly along the alignment of NE 16th Street; it includes a connection to the downtown in some manner. Another connection to downtown is anticipated, either at NE 4th Street or NE 6th Street connecting to 120th Avenue NE. Widening will be required for 120th Avenue NE, 124th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE anywhere from three to five lanes. The Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way is looked at as an essential non-motorized improvement for the study area. A new access to SR-520 is shown completing the half interchange that already exists at 124th Avenue NE. The transportation improvements all focus on the need to reduce impacts on the adjacent neighborhoods and keeping the traffic within the study area.

The various draft alternatives incorporate high-capacity transit stations at different locations

depending on the land use alternatives. In general, there are about five different possible station locations. High-capacity transit could be routed through the corridor along Bel-Red Road, or along the new NE 16th Street alignment. Regardless of where the stations are located, they will need to be supported by appropriate land uses in the immediate vicinity.

George Crandall, consultant with the firm Crandall Arambula, suggested that if high-capacity transit comes to the study area it will be necessary to think carefully about what land uses might be appropriate to locate around the stations. The ideal approach is to make each station a neighborhood hub, with grocery stores, some retail, office, support services, and public gathering spaces. The highest density residential should be located as close to the station as possible to increase the likelihood of transit ridership.

Mr. Crandall said the existing land use patterns are important to take into consideration. There has been a clear voice calling for the retention of the existing service uses. A development program that is responsive to the market and keyed to the market forecasts informs each of the draft alternatives.

Draft Alternative 1 is based on the mid-range forecasts for employment and housing. It includes a couple of critical elements, including a transit station on 122nd Avenue NE and NE 16th Street that has a retail main street neighborhood hub.

Alternative 2 is focused on having higher employment and lower housing. The transit station is at the same location as in Alternative 1, as is the retail main street. Alternative 3 strives to achieve a balance between jobs and housing. The transit station and retail main street is moved to 130th Avenue NE and NE 16th Street. Alternative 4 accommodates the higher end of the forecasts for employment and housing. The transit station and retail main street remains at 130th Avenue NE and NE 16th Street, but an additional transit station is added at 122nd Avenue NE and NE 16th Street in the heart of an area of medium density office development.

Mr. Crandall said within each alternative the mix of uses varies, but each has housing, retail and commercial, as well as civic amenities and art; most also retain the service functions that exist currently in the area. The alternatives are all conceptual and are not fine-grained in any way. The large park and open space concept can be fitted into any of the alternatives.

Mr. O'Neill said there are both differences and similarities regarding each of the four draft alternatives. Alternative 1 specifically carves out a sanctuary for services uses, but they could be accommodated in the retail commercial areas as well. Alternative 3 creates a specific light industrial area.

Mr. Ptacek asked what assumptions are included regarding the high-capacity transit line running at grade or elevated. Mr. Lieneau said no decision in that regard has been made, and the alignments could support either. It is highly unlikely that the alignment would be constructed underground. Mr. O'Neill added that an alignment along Bel-Red Road likely would be elevated to avoid giving up any general purpose capacity.

Mr. Ptacek asked why 130th Avenue NE was chosen in two of the alternatives as the main street. Mr. Crandall said a main street requires a lot of traffic, and 130th Avenue NE connects well to other areas. Because the street is already there, it would be very easy to move toward implementation. Don Arambula, also with Crandall Arambula, said the 130th Avenue NE station location also was chosen in order to satisfy the notion of the idea of having a circle of surrounding uses.

Ms. Baugh asked how a chosen alternative will evolve in the coming years relative to zoning. Ms. Crandall said the zoning is typically changed to accommodate the adopted vision. Existing uses are generally grandfathered in, but it will take codes, ordinances and standards to ensure things will go in the planned direction.

Mr. Springman suggested that in addition to having the zoning and everything in place there will need to be some triggering mechanisms. The key elements that will have to occur in order for anything else to occur need to be identified. For the draft alternatives as outlined, one such key element would be the creation of NE 16th Street. Mr. Crandall noted that the process with the steering committee will include developing implementation strategies, which will among other things outline what will need to happen first.

Mr. Stroh allowed the issue is actually quite complicated and involves far more than just drawing lines on a map. The vision might include residential uses in some areas, but no one will develop residential units without first having some major amenities that will help to create an attractive residential environment. When housing began to develop in the downtown in the mid-90s, it happened around Downtown Park, in the Ashwood area near the library, and in those areas where major amenities were brought online. Catalyst investments of those types are a prerequisite, as is a practical nuts and bolts infrastructure. It likely will also take incentives to get the area to change along with a sophisticated phasing strategy to ensure that the land use changes remain in synch with transportation infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Mathews asked if the committee will be given the opportunity to mix and match the elements within each draft alternative. Mr. Stroh allowed that that will be part of the process.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Hanson, Mr. Lieneau said it is not possible to create a connection to I-405 from the study area because of the proximity of the SR-520 interchange. The intent is to improve the corridors connecting with the downtown so the existing connections can be used to access I-405. Mr. Hanson said there was at one time a plan to connect NE 116th Avenue NE to I-405 north of the study area without having to get onto SR-520 first. Mr. Lieneau said that is one of the improvements that will be considered as specific alternatives are analyzed down the road. It is not, however, one of the basic transportation alternatives.

Mr. Rubhuhn asked if the committee will be informed as to anticipated costs of the transportation infrastructure. Mr. Lukens reiterated that the committee will not be asked to select a preferred alternative at the meetings on June 12 and June 29. The focus will be on creating three alternatives to move forward into the EIS. Mr. Stroh said there will not be any information on costs available for the June 12 meeting.

Mr. Lieneau stressed that the transportation alternatives for each of the draft alternatives are the same. Once the land use alternatives get further refined, staff and the consultants will begin developing different types of transportation improvements for each alternative.

Ms. Sheffels noted that Alternatives 1 and 2 have a single transit station, while Alternatives 3 and 4 have up to three. She asked if the committee will be constrained by the number of stations Sound Transit says the area will be allowed to have. Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman explained that the study is focused on what is best for Bellevue. The findings will be presented as what the city wants. At the end of the day, however, there will be a negotiated process, and ultimately it will be the Sound Transit board that will determine the number and location of stations, the type of technology used, the alignment, and whether it should be at-grade or elevated.

Mr. Crandall stressed that the land use layout will have to make sense regardless of whether or not high-capacity transit comes to the corridor.

Mr. Lukens suggested the committee could benefit from having at the June 12 meeting a very brief overview of the CIP process, specifically how transportation projects go from being an idea to being a funded project.

6. Next Meetings:

- June 6: Business/Property Owner Panels on Draft Alternatives
- June 8: Community Meeting on Draft Alternatives
- June 12: Steering Committee Meeting to Discuss Alternatives
- June 29: Steering Committee Meeting to Determine Direction on Alternatives

Ms. Baugh asked what process is used to incorporate all of the public comments and their reactions to the proposed alternatives. Mr. O'Neill explained that the process involves melding together both technical information and public comments. Some of the things included in the draft alternatives relate very specifically to comments that have been received from the public, including the notion of a major park facility and the concept of accommodating the service uses. In the end, it will be up to the committee to prioritize.

Mr. Lukens suggested that any committee member not able to attend the meeting on June 12 should submit written comments for the committee to consider in its deliberations.

7. Public Comment

David Plummer said it is clear to him that the purpose of the Bel-Red corridor project is to intensify the land uses in the study area and to sustain the city's endorsement of Sound Transit's plan to run a high-capacity transit line from Seattle to Redmond. To date, the staff has not presented to the committee any information as to what type of development could be permitted under the existing subarea plan. Staff has also not presented any information about the buildable lands reports of the city and King County. No views counter to what the city is trying to do have been submitted to the committee. No information has been given to the committee to contrast the infatuation of the city with light rail adjacent to the corridor. Lastly, neither the committee or the staff has made any effort to contact any homeowners associations, of which there are about 59 in the city that are active.

Mr. McDonald said notices have been sent to all active homeowners associations indicating the availability of staff to attend meetings to explain the Bel-Red corridor project. The invitation remains open.

David Young said he is interested in knowing what the high-capacity transit system will look like, what the frequencies will be, and if the road will be vacant when there are no buses there.

Mr. Lukens said all of those issues will be discussed by the committee on June 12.

Roger White asked if the plan will be flexible enough to accommodate the construction of a project with a scope similar to Washington Square on NE 8th Street if the market called for it. He asked if there will be a height limit that will keep that from occurring.

Mr. Lukens said the committee will discuss on June 12 what level of density is appropriate for the area.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Lukens adjourned the meeting at 5:38 p.m.