

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
LIGHT RAIL BEST PRACTICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

June 3, 2008  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-108

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Joel Glass, Co-chair, Transportation Commission  
Jennifer Robertson, Co-chair, Planning Commission  
David Karle, Parks and Community Services Board  
Francois Larrivee, Environmental Services Commission  
Douglas Mathews, Planning Commission  
Lise Northey, Transportation Commission  
John Rogers, Environmental Services Commission  
Faith Roland, Parks and Community Services Board  
Claudia Balducci, City Council, Liaison  
Dr. Don Davidson, City Council, Alternate Liaison

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Kattermann, PCD  
Dan Stroh, PCD  
Maria Koengeter, Transportation  
Janet Lewine, PCD

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. Welcome and Review of Agenda

Co-Chair Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Senior Planner Mike Kattermann reviewed the desk packet materials.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. May 6, 2008

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Glass. Second was by Mr. Rogers and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment

Ms. Christie Hammond, 128 109 Avenue SE, spoke on behalf of the Surrey Downs East Link Committee. She introduced the committee members who were present. She noted that on June 2 one of the committee members received an unsolicited call from the community outreach coordinator for Sound Transit who wanted to firm up a previously planned meeting between Sound Transit and the committee. During the conversation the committee member shared a concern that the Sound Transit presentation to the City Council on June 23 would indicate a

possible parcel taking, and expressed the hope that Surrey Downs residents would not learn about that at the meeting. The committee member was told that any property owner who might be impacted by condemnation will be informed by letter prior to that meeting. The committee convened on June 3 with two specific concerns: a change in the Sound Transit alignment map that now indicates a tunnel portal in Surrey Downs Park, and the possibility that the recent actions of Sound Transit could be a preemptive strike to diffuse and dilute the efforts of the best practices committee and the City Council to adopt supportive Comprehensive Plan language. The news from Sound Transit heightens the importance of adopting strong, clear and concise language in all aspects of the best practices draft in order to shape the future of transit in Bellevue. To that end, the following changes should be made to the draft: 1) page 21, Comprehensive Plan policy 5 should begin with “Boundaries of residential areas should be kept intact and protected from impacts of light rail; 2) pages 83, 86 and 93, clarify that there should be no staging in residential areas; 3) page 22, Comprehensive Plan policy 6 should begin with “Light rail corridors should be sited to protect...”; and 4) page 59, remove the word “priority” from the beginning of the second sentence of the first paragraph.

#### 4. Presentation and Preliminary Approval of the Draft Report

Ms. Robertson asked for comments on the executive summary.

Mr. Rogers referred to the fifth item on Page IV and suggested the language was not as explicit as the committee wanted. He said there is no indication as to what “early” means and proposed eliminating the word from the first sentence.

Mr. Karle suggested replacing “early” with “immediate” to make the point clear to Sound Transit, which appears to be making a move prior to the release of the EIS in the fall.

Councilmember Balducci clarified that Sound Transit will be coming to the City Council on June 23 with some information as requested by the Council. That will in fact be part of their early and ongoing public involvement process. She said she understood the sentiment with regard to use of the word “early” but did not know what would be better.

Mr. Glass suggested the meat of the matter should be addressed in the public involvement section, not in the executive summary. Mr. Rogers concurred.

Ms. Northey voiced the opinion that the word “early” adequately gets the point across but leaves it to the Council to determine how early “early” should be.

Mr. Karle commented that if in fact Sound Transit is sending out condemnation letters already, the process of choosing an alignment will be shaped accordingly. Councilmember Balducci clarified that no one has said Sound Transit is sending out condemnation letters; what they are doing is contacting people who could be affected by the alignments being studied in the EIS. There certainly can be no condemnation without an approved alignment.

Senior Planner Maria Koengeter explained that Sound Transit is currently preparing the DEIS. The anticipation is that it will be released in September. The information from some components of the document is available and Sound Transit intends to begin releasing it to the public; that includes information about potential full property takings, travel times, ridership, and costs. In the coming weeks Sound Transit will be sending emails to its listserve to say that the information is to be released. Letters will also be sent to the property owners whose properties may be impacted by full takings. The information will be presented to the City Council on June 23, after which Sound Transit will offer to meet with business groups, neighborhood groups and

so forth.

Councilmember Balducci suggested adding language along the lines of “As planning is already under way, the recommendation of the committee is that the public involvement process should start immediately.” There was agreement to add that language.

Mr. Mathews called attention to section 4 on page IV and pointed out that the committee has not specifically discussed the three light rail segments and suggested that the language should clarify parenthetically what is being referred to.

Ms. Northey suggested the executive summary should include a listing of the best practices identified by the committee. She said people should not be forced to read the whole report to find out what the best practices are. Ms. Koengeter said there are about 30 best practices so it would take a full page or more to list them all. There was agreement to include them as proposed along with an introductory sentence.

Ms. Northey pointed out that on the second page of the executive summary there is a picture of a tunnel and at-grade system; she suggested a photo of an elevated system should be added.

Referring to the third guiding principle, Ms. Northey suggested it should be reworded to read “Light rail will reinforce Bellevue’s role....”

Ms. Northey referred to the picture on the fourth page showing the sharrows and suggested that because the city does not have a policy regarding the use of sharrows, the document should not have a picture of them. Mr. Kattermann pointed out that sharrows are discussed as a best practice.

Councilmember Balducci agreed with Ms. Northey and suggested the language should simply reference adequate provisions for bicycles. Mr. Kattermann said taking that approach will eliminate some of the actions. Ms. Koengeter asked if the committee wanted to leave the discussion in the findings of what a sharrow is.

Mr. Larrivee pointed out that sharrows are in fact being used in other cities and as such they should be mentioned in the findings as an option for connecting bicycles and pedestrians to light rail.

There was agreement to remove the photo and to further discuss the issue as part of the discussion of the connecting people to light rail section of the report.

There were no comments with regard to the introduction section of the report.

With regard to the project methodology section, Mr. Larrivee suggested calling specifically the best practice manual developed by the Valley Transit Authority in San Jose. Mr. Rogers agreed, noting that later in the document it is specifically stated that there are no similar best practices manuals available; the fact is there is such a manual, though it was developed through a different process. Ms. Koengeter said the manual in question is referenced in the document as a caption to a picture and could be specifically referenced in the case study memo, Appendix B. Mr. Kattermann pointed out that the document in question is more of a technical manual than a best practices manual for planning; the document was in fact developed after the light rail system was completed.

Mr. Larrivee suggested that if the document was used as a reference, it should be credited

accordingly. Mr. Kattermann said the document may have been used by David Evans and Associates in their research. Their bibliography could be included as an appendix to the report with a specific reference to the manual. There was agreement to take that approach.

Mr. Larrivee referred to page 8 and the reference to the information submitted by the ad hoc committee of the Surrey Downs neighborhood and asked if there would be any way to include in the report a reference to where that information is available, since it is not included in the report. Ms. Roland noted that the information is available online and all that would be needed is a link to the website. It was agreed to include a link in the introduction to the new appendix.

Mr. Rogers called attention to the last part of the third paragraph on page 8 and suggested adding “and regularly provided input at committee meetings.”

Answering a question asked by Mr. Glass, Mr. Kattermann said the information from Surrey Downs is not available on the website but it can be scanned and added. The information received at the public open house events is on the website along with the individual emails that came in and were included in the committee packets.

Turning to page 9, Mr. Rogers suggested revising the first sentence of the section referring to the light rail best practices catalog to read “The best practices are organized into eight topic areas initially selected by the committee....”

Ms. Northey suggested a bar should be added to page 12 listing the guiding principles. Councilmember Balducci suggested that because they are so important, the guiding principles should be given their own section and heading.

Mr. Glass proposed using a different stock of paper for the chapter headings so the reader will know when they have moved on to another section.

Ms. Robertson noted that the connecting somewhere to somewhere section includes no reference to connecting Bellevue to Redmond and Microsoft. She proposed adding a sentence reading “linking Bellevue and Seattle with Redmond and its major employer Microsoft is also important for regional mobility.” There was agreement to add the sentiment but to refer to major employment centers rather than to Microsoft specifically.

Mr. Larrivee questioned the use of quotation marks around the words in the second guiding principle. There was agreement to remove them.

Mr. Larrivee referred to the bottom of page 13 and suggested that rather than just an inconvenience, light rail can be devastating to residences and businesses. He proposed that there should be some greater recognition of what poorly planned implementation can do. Mr. Rogers concurred and suggested use of the phrase “..achieved without some significant short-term disruption and inconvenience....”

Councilmember Balducci proposed revising the section to say there is a risk of long-term negative consequences, then have that flow into proven techniques to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts, and delete short term to make the impacts manageable.

Ms. Roland argued against including a doom and gloom statement. She said the whole point of having the best practices document is to have a roadmap to follow toward a positive outcome and successful system. Councilmember Balducci agreed and clarified that the statement she proposed should be preceded by the phrase “If done incorrectly....”

There was agreement to change the second sentence under the third guiding principle to say that light rail will reinforce Bellevue's role in the region.

Mr. Rogers called attention to the last sentence on page 14 and suggested it should be revised to read "Bellevue's efforts to be prepared and a willingness to act to protect and advance Bellevue's interests and position the City to ensure that the project is developed as a net benefit for the City."

There was also agreement to add to the fifth guiding principle the sentence "As planning for East Link is currently underway, the city and Sound Transit should begin immediately to identify the next phase of the public involvement program for the East Link project."

Turning to the community and neighborhoods section, Ms. Robertson referred to the request of the Surrey Downs neighborhood to revise the fifth Comprehensive Plan policy by adding "Boundaries of residential areas should be kept protected from the impacts of light rail."

Mr. Glass noted that the committee had previously discussed the issue and questioned including language that could mean the sacrificing of the entire light rail project to protect one or two properties.

Ms. Roland allowed that condemning one property could mean saving ten others. She said a "not ever" policy would preclude that approach as a choice.

Mr. Rogers suggested that the substance of the comment from the community is adequately addressed in the report.

Mr. Larrivee called attention to the fifth Comprehensive Plan action item on page 21 and suggested it should be reworded to be clearer.

Councilmember Balducci said the intent of the community is to highlight the need to protect the neighborhoods, but the way the language is written that concept is buried. She suggested flipping the sentence around to read "Protect Bellevue's residential and commercial neighborhoods from the negative effects of light rail by promoting actions of the regional transit provider that minimize environmental, traffic and noise impacts." She further commented that the term "boundaries of residential areas" is unclear and if utilized as proposed could prohibit light rail from coming through any part of Bellevue.

Ms. Northey pointed out that the proposed language falls short of the intent of the Surrey Downs East Link Committee, which is to say there will be no houses in Surrey Downs taken as result of light rail.

Mr. Karle agreed that the language of the Surrey Downs East Link Committee, if incorporated, would eliminate all areas of the city from consideration. There will in fact be impacts associated with light rail, and some of them will affect residential areas. The language crafted for the

communities and neighborhoods section will give the City Council the tools needed to give the neighborhoods a voice down the road when the actual planning process kicks off.

Mr. Kattermann reviewed with the committee the proposed Comprehensive Plan language changes as outlined in the memo dated May 30.

Councilmember Balducci pointed out that the proposed language for policy TR-75.2 eliminates the call for the city to develop a close working relationship with the transit agency. It was agreed that the point should not be lost, whether included in Comprehensive Plan language, as a discussion attached to a policy, or elsewhere.

Planning Director Dan Stroh proposed retaining the first policy in the community and neighborhoods section as included in the draft, then adding in the new policy focusing on how the best practices report is to be used.

Mr. Kattermann called attention to policy TR-75.12 and noted the language has been restructured for readability, and that the term “non-sapling” was replaced with “significant,” a term that has a particular interpretation in Bellevue code.

Councilmember Balducci pointed out that there is quite a bit of daylight between “sapling” and “significant” in the code, noting that a significant tree is considerably larger. It was agreed staff should find the right word to implement the intent of the committee and use it.

With regard to use of the phrase “superior design” in place of “good design,” Mr. Kattermann suggested the important thing is the notion of context sensitive design which will of itself drive urban design to a large extent.

Mr. Kattermann referred to policy TR-75.16 and proposed striking “more” from the last sentence. He also proposed changing “advocate” to “promote” in the fifth policy action.

Mr. Mathews referred to policy TR-75.14 and suggested some definition is needed to indicate what kind of impacts the policy seeks to mitigate.

With regard to best practice “A” in the community involvement section, Mr. Rogers stressed the need to include the notion of carrying community involvement through to operation of the system. He suggested adding a colon to the end of the penultimate sentence of “A” and “and operation of the system.”

Mr. Rogers proposed revising the sentence to read “...review of environmental analysis of alternatives; selection of a preferred alternative; design of the project, including identification of impacts and mitigation; construction and implementation of mitigation; and operation of the system.”

Councilmember Balducci suggested that wording leaves out construction of the system. She proposed review of environmental analysis of alternatives; selection of a preferred alternative; design of the project, including identification of impacts and mitigation; and construction and operation of the system.” Her proposal was adopted by the committee.

Turning to the section on connecting people to light rail, Mr. Glass called attention to page 34 and the section on park and ride facilities and suggested the discussion included with the main point does not really say anything. He suggested incorporating some of the language into the description of the best practice.

Mr. Kattermann reviewed with the committee revisions made to the policy language as outlined in the staff memo.

Ms. Robertson called attention to item 6 on page 22 and noted that the Surrey Downs neighborhood had requested the language to be changed to read “Light rail corridors should be sited to protect residential neighborhoods....”

Ms. Northey suggested the proposed revision is far different from the original language in meaning, and Councilmember Balducci added that it is far narrower. What the neighborhood is seeking is a policy focused on how light rail should be sited, which is beyond the scope of the committee.

Mr. Larrivee propose revising the language to read “Protect residential neighborhoods adjacent to light rail facilities from spillover impacts, including parking and cut-through traffic, resulting from system alignment, construction, and/or operation, with techniques such as residential parking zone programs, parking patrols, and traffic calming measures.” The group concurred with the suggestion.

With regard to the land use section, Mr. Kattermann proposed eliminating the discussion paragraph following the first Comprehensive Plan policy. He also proposed revising the language of the second policy to read “Ensure that any future land use that occurs around station areas is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan land use vision for that area....”

Mr. Glass held that the section might be the appropriate place to insert policy language about preserving existing residential neighborhoods. He noted that there is best practice language in the document that talks about that, but no policy language. Mr. Karle suggested simply adding in parentheses “e.g. South Bellevue and Mercer Slough” to the end of the third bullet under the second policy.

Ms. Northey called attention to the language of the first policy and asked why the city should bind itself to being consistent with regional plans. She noted that sometimes the city should advocate for changing regional plans to match Bellevue plans. She proposed striking “regional and.”

Mr. Mathews called attention to the second Comprehensive Plan policy in the street design and operations section and proposed changing "...prevent and mitigate impacts..." to "...present and mitigate negative impacts...."

Mr. Rogers suggested changing the third bullet under the seventh policy to read "Increase the likelihood of safe behavior by drivers and pedestrians."

Ms. Northey suggested the language of the seventh policy should be "Address pedestrian safety issues in roadway design and operations."

Mr. Rogers referred to policy 11 and suggested "...CIP project..." should read "...CIP projects...."

With regard to the section on elevated, at-grade and tunnel, Mr. Rogers suggested the third sentence of the second paragraph under summary of research and findings should be revised to read "Natural features that might preclude an at-grade alignment include waterways, wetlands, ravines, rolling terrain, and the types of soils and geological formations."

Ms. Robertson noted that the Surrey Downs committee had asked to have the word "priority" eliminated from the second sentence of the first full paragraph on page 59. It was agreed to make the change.

Mr. Karle suggested that the train speed bullet should be moved to the top of each of the three categories in the tables on page 56.

Ms. Northey proposed eliminating the "fits several environments" bullet from the at-grade advantages table given that it does not really mean anything.

Mr. Rogers suggested including in the tunnel advantage table "least visual and noise impacts," and to revise the first disadvantage bullet to read "Highest cost per mile to construct and highest potential for construction cost escalation." His suggestion was agreed to by the group, but the wording was changed to "least cost predictability."

Mr. Karle called attention to page 58 and suggested that the sentence starting with "The speed limitation of 9-10 mph..." is confusing. He suggested it should be worded to read "The speed limitation of 9-10 mph inhibits ridership through the downtown segment." The committee concluded the sentence should read "The speed limitation of 10 mph discourages ridership and constrains system capacity by limiting the number of trains that can travel through the downtown segment."

Mr. Karle further suggested that the balance of the same paragraph should be revised. The committee discussed it and concluded it should read "While staff from the city of San Jose regard the choice of at-grade as the right choice because of the community objectives, transit agency staff stated that, in hindsight, a tunnel would have been a better choice for operational

reasons. Like San Jose, downtown Bellevue is one significant destination of many along the line. Therefore, the alignment choice for downtown Bellevue must consider travel time both to and through downtown. The Committee also experienced a service interruption in downtown when a portion of the line was closed for most of the day due to a building fire on the transit mall. The transit agency immediately activated a “bus bridge” to create a temporary link around the closure, but it highlighted for the Committee how quickly service can be interrupted. The Committee recognized the atypical event and realized similar circumstances could affect the service of any profile. However, the Committee concluded that an at-grade system in a downtown setting is more susceptible to interruption than an elevated or tunnel segment because of the potential conflicts with pedestrians, other vehicles, and general traffic congestion.”

Mr. Kattermann reviewed the policy language changes for the section of the report. With regard to the sixth policy, he noted that in the third bullet the language had been changed from “maintaining access” to “providing access.”

Mr. Karle suggested the intent of the bullet was to maintain the access neighborhoods currently have, and the proposed revision means something much different. Ms. Robertson disagreed, commenting that the focus is on providing access for people who live in Bellevue to get to the train. Mr. Kattermann explained that the proposed language is based on the adopted best practice which says “In South Bellevue, the alignment should fit in with the existing context and provide local access while balancing neighborhood and environmental impacts.” It was agreed to provide clarification by revising the first bullet to read “protecting the character of existing neighborhoods, including adequate ingress and egress to the neighborhood,” and revising the third bullet to read “providing local access to the system for Bellevue neighborhoods.”

Mr. Glass called for striking the words “and fit the budget” from the last bullet under Policy 11.

Mr. Kattermann proposed adding to the end of Policy 8 “in the siting and alignment of light rail facilities.” He said the phrase is needed to provide context.

**\*\*BREAK\*\***

Turning to the property values section, Ms. Northey called attention to the first two sentences of the second paragraph on page 67 and suggested they contradict each other. Mr. Kattermann commented that the sentences attempt to summarize what the research showed. Some studies indicated a decrease in property values, but in general they indicated an increase around light rail stations.

Ms. Robertson suggested combining the two sentences to read “Although some studies found a decrease in value for residential properties located in very close proximity to stations, most studies indicated that the residential properties typically increased in value.”

Ms. Northey suggested the last paragraph of the summary of research and findings section should be the first paragraph of the section.

Mr. Kattermann reviewed the policy revisions for the property values section.

Mr. Kattermann reviewed with the committee the policy revisions for the station security section.

Turning to the section on construction impacts, Ms. Robertson noted that Surrey Downs had previously asked for two changes to the section. The first was the request to remove the phrase “except where no practical alternative exists” in all paragraphs relating to construction staging. The consensus of the committee was to not make the change.

Mr. Karle proposed adding to the paragraph on construction staging areas the notion that they are used for tunnel boring. Ms. Koengeter explained that in response to a previous committee discussion, a definition for staging area and the types of uses was added to the bottom of page 80. Mr. Karle agreed with the definition but asked that it specifically include tunnel boring.

Ms. Robertson referred to the discussion box on page 86 and suggested adding to the end of the paragraph “therefore locating such staging areas in residential areas is quite undesirable and should be avoided where practicable.” Mr. Kattermann suggested that language would merely repeat the policy; he said the section is intended to serve as a further description of the intent of the policy.

Councilmember Balducci suggested the language proposed by Ms. Robertson would be appropriate for a discussion sentence under the third Comprehensive Plan policy. It gets at the reason why the policy is so important.

Ms. Roland countered with the fact that the downtown is a residential area. If the reference were specifically to single family residential neighborhoods, the statement would be specific to certain alignments. She held that the language should not be included.

Councilmember Balducci agreed that the specific reference to residential neighborhoods could be problematic, but said the notion of avoiding areas where people live should not be. Where feasible, staging areas should be located as far away as possible from where people live.

Ms. Northey suggested strengthening the language of best practice B on page 83 based on the language proposed by Ms. Robertson. There was no consensus to move in that direction.

There was agreement to retain in the paragraph under best practice B “Construction staging areas should not be located in residential neighborhoods except where no practicable alternative exists.”

There was agreement to have the discussion box language read “Construction staging areas for light rail projects are primarily used for the storage of equipment and materials as well as activities such as tunnel boring, employee parking, deliveries and construction offices. These areas typically encompass several acres and remain in use for the duration of the project. Tunnel

boring areas generate additional truck trips to haul away dirt and debris and typically require a larger staging area.”

Mr. Kattermann reviewed with the committee the changes to the policies in the section.

Mr. Rogers pointed out that most of the expectations of Sound Transit listed on page 87 relate to things that will be required by various permits. There was agreement to make mention of that in a side bar.

With regard to the next steps section, Mr. Karle suggested that everything in the report wraps to either a Comprehensive Plan amendment or some other action the City Council can take in due time, with the notable exception of forming a citizens advisory committee. He suggested that a CAC should be appointed within 60 days from the issuance of the final report.

Councilmember Balducci suggested the recommendation should be couched in language such as “as soon as possible” rather than a hard and fast date. Mr. Karle said his preference would be to have a CAC fully appointed prior to the issuance of the East Link DEIS in the fall. Councilmember Balducci said in that case the recommendation should be that the City Council have a CAC up and running prior to the release of the DEIS. Language could be included which outlines the reason for the urgency. Mr. Karle agreed.

Ms. Koengeter informed the committee that the proposal of staff for the final report is to print some with all of the appendices but to primarily print the report with appendices available on CDs with all of the information included.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Glass, Mr. Kattermann explained that the Norton Arnold company was involved early in the process through the initial open house and was focused on the design of the public involvement process.

Ms. Robertson suggested the word “persons” in the public involvement report should be changed to “people.”

Ms. Northey said she found the public involvement report very enlightening. She said her preference would be to have it appear earlier in the report, especially the synthesis of community comments. There was agreement to move it up to be Appendix A.

## 5. Final Report Transmittal Letter

It was agreed to add to the transmittal the recommendation of the committee to form a CAC prior to the release of the East Link DEIS.

Ms. Northey referred to the penultimate paragraph on the last page of the draft transmittal and suggested that “...did not find a similar project...” is confusing given that the focus is on the committee itself rather than a light rail project. It was agreed to provide clarification.

## 6. Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for June 17.

## 7. Adjournment

Ms. Robertson adjourned the meeting at 9:57 p.m.

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Staff to the Light Rail Best Practices Committee

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Date