

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 15, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Glass, Jokinen, Larrivee, Simas

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Northey

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Rick Logwood, Bernard van de Kamp, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Northey who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Paul Krawczyk informed the Commission that the City Council was at their budget retreat and an update was expected by the next Commission meeting.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Simas and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. SR-520 Project Update

Capital Projects Manager Rick Logwood informed the Commission that the project to improve

SR-520 and replace the existing floating bridge is split into three segments: I-5 to the bridge, replacement of the bridge itself, and Medina to SR-202. The improvements proposed for the Westside segment reflect the recent recommendation of the Westside Legislative Workgroup that was submitted to the Governor in December 2009. Their preferred option, A-Plus, includes interchange and access improvements at Montlake Boulevard with improved access to and from the east for transit, in addition to other corridor improvements between I-5 and the floating bridge. The estimated costs for the improvements are within the established budget limit of \$4.65 billion for the program, though there continues to be a revenue shortfall.

The bridge improvement and replacement segment envisions a new bridge spanning Lake Washington with general purpose and HOV lanes. pontoons will ultimately be designed to allow for the future expansion of the bridge to address long-range high-capacity transit. The initial pontoon project will focus on the primary concern of preventing catastrophic failure of the bridge by constructing pontoons designed to support the existing cross-section. The design will include accommodation for future modifications to support a six-lane configuration, four general purpose lanes and two HOV lanes. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is close to completing the pontoon testing contract and developing the type of concrete and construction procedures that will be used in the production of the new pontoons, which are set to be constructed in Grays Harbor.

The third segment involves the Eastside transit and HOV project, which was the focus of the Environmental Assessment done by WSDOT in accordance with state and federal regulations. The review and comment period for the Environmental Assessment closed on January 7, 2010. The project focuses on physical improvements between Evergreen Point Road and 108th, and restriping the HOV lanes from the outside to the inside along the corridor between 108th Avenue NE and SR-202 in Redmond. The project includes three new lids, a new Bellevue Way bridge, and HOV direct access at 108th Avenue NE. The plan, which has received significant support from Eastside cities and agencies, has an estimated price tag of \$776 million, making it the least expensive segment of the three.

Mr. Logwood noted that there have been some changes since the original Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published in 2006. The revisions primarily are aimed at accommodating changes at Bellevue Way, Northup Way, 108th Avenue NE, regional trail facilities, and compatibility with city initiatives, the Northup Way corridor study, the transit system plan, and the ped-bike plan.

The new approach includes removing the loop ramps on the east side of the Bellevue Way bridge and accommodating access to and from Bellevue Way via a half-diamond interchange, with ramps to and from the west side of Bellevue Way. Removing the loop ramps will provide the opportunity enhance the ecology of the area by improving fish passage and restoring and improving the stream corridors.

The new bridge at Bellevue Way will not be a lid but it will include landscaping and a separate multipurpose pathway along the east side of the structure. The pathway will begin where the existing sidewalk ends at the WSDOT right-of-way limit to the south and will continue north to

Northup Way, which is consistent with the city's recently adopted ped-bike plan.

The staff-recommended transportation system improvements for the direct access HOV interchange at 108th Avenue NE are aimed at improving access and circulation by balancing lane capacity and effecting system efficiencies to address the conditions projected to exist when the project is completed. Other modifications include reduced lane widths to allow for the addition of dedicated bicycle lanes, particularly in the uphill direction on 108th Avenue NE from north of Northup Way to the project limit.

The noise analysis that was done as a part of the Environmental Assessment addressed much of the corridor to the west of Bellevue Way. The report did not, however, include an analysis of the noise levels east of Bellevue Way in the vicinity of 108th Avenue NE and the proposed direct access HOV interchange. Mr. Logwood stressed that the staff are very interested in pursuing a noise analysis relative to their recommendations to the project.

The staff also recommended WSDOT that an evaluation be done with regard to completing the regional trail facility as outlined in the adopted ped-bike plan. That would include completing the missing segment between 108th Avenue NE and where it currently ends at approximately 124th Avenue NE and NE 24th Street. Staff would also like to see WSDOT consider completing a soft-surface Points trail connection from the former Lake Washington roadbed to Bellevue Way

Mr. Logwood explained that there is legislation pending before the legislature, specifically with regard to the provisions that restrict tolling to the bridge.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Simas, Mr. Logwood clarified that the inside HOV lanes will connect with the HOV direct access ramps at 108th Avenue NE to and from the west. He said restriping will be required to continue the HOV lanes east to SR-202. The HOV direct access interchange at 108th Avenue NE will not include HOV ramps to and from the east.

Mr. Logwood said the corridor to the west of I-405 to 108th Avenue NE is expected to retain its current configuration and will remain 3+ for HOV lane use.

Mr. Logwood allowed that the Environmental Analysis did not fully address the potential impact or cumulative effect of tolling SR-520 and what it could mean in terms of traffic volumes on local arterial streets. He said staff pointed out that deficiency in responding to the Environmental Analysis.

Commissioner Glass commented that the light rail best practices committee focused on a number of best practices. He allowed that preventing erosion is certainly a best practice, as is keeping things neat and tidy during construction and cleaning up afterwards. He suggested best practices like those should be instilled on the city's transportation department. Mr. Logwood said those are details that certainly should be constantly monitored. Washington

state has standards and specifications that apply to highway construction that run the gamut from how to place barrels to specific safety issues. Sticking to those rules does not obviate the need to keep the work sites orderly and clean.

Commissioner Larrivee asked how the lids work in terms of the responsibility of ownership. Mr. Logwood said lids at 84th and 92nd will actually be owned and maintained by the state. Two of the lids have transit operations that will run underneath them. The overall design will reflect the context sensitive solution analysis, and the state will be responsible for the maintenance of those features. The city of Bellevue will be responsible for any landscaping on the Bellevue Way structure and the walkways.

Commissioner Jokinen asked if there are going to be any reversible lanes constructed on the Eastside. Mr. Logwood said the HOV ramps at 108th Avenue NE are dedicated lanes, one eastbound and one westbound, located in the middle of the roadway.

Mr. Logwood emphasized that the legislative actions relative to SR-520 have been focused on improving HOV flow, speed, and overall reliability.

B. Eastlink Project Update

Regional Projects Manager Bernard van de Kamp said the decision of the Sound Transit board in May relative to the Eastlink project mirrored to a large degree the preferences outlined by the City Council in February. There were, however, some differences. The preferred alternative handed down by the Sound Transit board narrows the list of options under serious consideration, but the environmental process places all alternatives included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, along with any new alternatives that evolve along the way, on equal environmental footing. The objective of Sound Transit currently is to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement and be at the 30 percent design stage for the preferred alternative by the end of 2010. The intent is to have light rail services operating on the Eastlink line by 2020 between the International District in Seattle and the hospital station on the east side of I-405, and operations through the Bel-Red corridor and out to the Overlake transit center by 2021.

Mr. van de Kamp said there has been a bit of an impasse between Sound Transit and the city of Bellevue with regard to Segment C, the downtown, in determining what alternatives can work and which ones are affordable. That has stirred lot of discussion in the community and has brought to light four new alternatives.

The rail line through Segment A will be constructed in the center roadway of the I-90 floating bridge. A project that has been partially completed will add an HOV lane in each direction on I-90 between Bellevue Way and I-5. The balance of the project is fully funded and is intended to mitigate the loss of the center roadway.

Mr. van de Kamp reminded the Commissioners that alternative B3 Modified is the Sound Transit board's preferred alternative. It was also selected as the city's preferred alternative; it was not studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement but is a configuration that reflects the concerns of the local community regarding the character of Bellevue Way and the possible impacts.

The alignment for Segment B connects with the center roadway configuration of Segment A

between Enatai Beach Park and the Bellevue Way interchange. The option of using the HOV ramps at grade would save money but would result in the loss of the HOV function. The state and Sound Transit agreed that keeping the rail elevated over the interchange would be the best approach. The elevated section will be lowered to be at grade as soon as possible on the east side of Bellevue Way, preserving access to the boat launch and pump station near SE 30th Street. It would be elevated at the South Bellevue park and ride, though not very high; that will facilitate traffic getting into and out of the park and ride lot without having to physically cross the tracks. The station at the park and ride lot would facilitate bus transfers. There are currently over 500 stalls at the park and ride facility; the proposal is to expand the capacity to between 1400 and 1500 to meet the lion's share of the projected 2030 demand.

From the elevated station at the South Bellevue park and ride the alignment heading north would dive down to below the grade of Bellevue Way. There has been a lot of work done focused on how to deal with access to the fruit stand, the blueberry farm, and Winters House. One option considered was to move Bellevue Way slightly to the west; another was to move the Winters House. The current focus is on creating a boxed culvert which would run the track about 20 feet below the grade of Bellevue Way and putting a lid over it in front of Winters House; the approach looks to be both feasible and doable within the current budget, and a major win in terms of avoiding environmental impact to the Winters House.

Further to the north, the focus is on keeping the rail line below the Bellevue Way grade until it transitions onto 112th Avenue SE. The options for the driveway at SE 15th Street that serves the Bellefield Office Park include elevating the line over it past SE 8th Street until the swing is made toward the northeast; the option minimizes the impacts to homes and businesses. The concept came out of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement comments and was not evaluated as a part of the original environmental work but will be evaluated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Other alternatives have been studied, including B7 which would go up the east side of Mercer Slough. That particular alternative would require some changes to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement as a result of the recent South Bellevue/WSDOT widening of I-405. The changes are generally minor but sufficient to change some of the environmental work. Sound Transit is changing its conceptual design and will update their environmental assessment.

Mr. van de Kamp said new information will be available in late March or early April regarding the side-running design along Bellevue Way. Another major issue is the fact that the 1500-stall parking garage proposed for the South Bellevue park and ride will generate a lot of traffic during the peak times, for which little if any traffic mitigation was proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The issue of what the mitigation should be is currently being addressed by the city and Sound Transit and it will likely involve adding a southbound lane from the vicinity of the park and ride to I-90.

Commissioner Simas noted that Bellevue Way is still a major travel route for traffic going from the downtown area to I-90. Putting rail along that roadway could limit the future expansion of Bellevue Way to accommodate the predicted traffic growth. Mr. van de Kamp said the mitigation under consideration would require a new southbound lane to restore traffic conditions to the no-build condition for 2030. The lane, in conjunction with a new signal on the south end of the park and ride, will likely solve the problem. The Comprehensive Plan currently prohibits the widening of Bellevue Way, though some consideration is given for HOV activity. The Council may consider widening Bellevue Way from the junction with 112th

Avenue SE south to I-90. A consultant is looking into the option to determine what would be involved and what the cost would be.

With regard to the Bel-Red segment, Mr. van de Kamp said the Council's preference to date includes crossing I-405 at NE 6th Street. The new alternatives being considered for the downtown all cross at NE 6th Street. The north hybrid alternative crosses through the Spring District. The Bel-Red plan calls for the development of the new NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor to accommodate light rail, with stations at 124th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE. In the Draft Environmental Impact Statement the preferred alternative is D2-A, which is primarily at grade. The initial thinking was that the line would run up the center of the new NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street. There has been quite a bit of discussion on the part of the Council and Wright Runstad, developer of the Spring District, to limit the width of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor. The originally envisioned five-lane cross section, plus light rail, at grade station and a ped-bike path, has been seen by many as just too wide.

The north hybrid alternative came out the effort to split out the various components and simplify the geometry of weaving light rail and the road together to the east of the Spring District. The alternative keeps light rail and the roadway entirely separate until approximately 124th Avenue NE or 130th Avenue NE where the road and rail braiding would come together. The line would run in the median to the east of the 128th Avenue NE/130th Avenue NE area. There are two sub-alternatives within the hybrid at-grade alternative. One has the line at grade through the Spring District, with an at-grade station and a plaza between the new roadway and the station. The second alternative has the line in a retained cut, an option which works well from a topography standpoint but less well from an aesthetic standpoint. Work on those alternatives is continuing; more information should be available by the end of March.

Mr. van de Kamp noted that another major piece of the puzzle is the multipurpose trail that is envisioned to run through the area. He said the issue is whether it should follow the rail corridor or the street corridor; there are tradeoffs involved with taking either approach. Another piece under review is the choice of being at-grade or elevated at 136th Place NE and Northup Way.

Turning to the downtown, Mr. van de Kamp said the recession has put a damper on both the city's revenues and the Sound Transit forecasted revenues. The preferred alternative identified by Sound Transit for the downtown includes an at-grade couplet. The Council has made it clear that the alternative is not acceptable to the city; the Council's preference is for a tunnel. A new tunnel alternative has been developed that runs along 110th Avenue NE that would be shorter than the tunnels evaluated to date; while costing less than the other tunnel alternatives, the new tunnel cost is estimated to be some \$300 million more than the at-grade alternative selected by Sound Transit. The city is on the hook for identifying new revenue sources to fill the gap. In addition, Councilmember Wallace has proposed an elevated line along 114th Avenue NE. The clock is ticking on the Sound Transit request for a city report by the end of the first quarter of 2010.

In December the Sound Transit board directed its staff to look at each of the new alternatives proposed for the downtown. City Manager Steve Sarkozy has directed city staff to work closely with Sound Transit staff on the evaluations and traffic analysis.

The Sound Transit-identified preferred alternative, C4-A, takes the form of a couplet operating northbound on the side of 110th Avenue NE and southbound on 108th Avenue SE. Vehicular

traffic on both of those roadways would become one way opposite to the direction of travel for the light rail system. The deep bore tunnel on 108th Avenue NE, which is alternative C3-T, has been estimated to be \$500 million more expensive than C4-A.

The value analysis work resulted in the C9-T alternative, which would involve a shallow cut-and-cover tunnel on 110th Avenue NE between Main Street and NE 6th Street, with a station underground essentially straddling NE 4th Street. The entrances to the station would be around NE 3rd Street on the west side and outside of City Hall on the east side. The line would also serve the Wilburton and hospital areas with a station in the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe corridor; the elevated station would essentially straddle NE 8th Street and include entrances from both sides of NE 8th Street.

Two new at-grade alternatives have been developed. C9-A is essentially identical to the new tunnel alternative, except it would be two-way at-grade on 110th Avenue NE. That would take away some travel lanes but would permit one northbound and one southbound lane, with turn pockets southbound at NE 4th Street, NE 2nd Street, and Main Street. The alternative would allow for right-in/right-out access for all of the properties along 110th Avenue NE. There are major reservations for how access would occur under the one-way couplet scenario.

The C11-A alternative is the other new at-grade option. It would enter the downtown at Main Street, but the east Main Street station would shift to the west and be placed on the south side of Main Street between 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE to better serve Old Bellevue. The two-way tracks would run along 108th Avenue NE, leaving room for one northbound and one southbound vehicle lane with left-turn pockets at NE 4th Street, NE 2nd Street and Main Street. The option would require the transit center to be rebuilt to accommodate a rail platform in the center of it. It would then head out toward the hospital station straddling NE 8th Street.

The new elevated alternative would continue from south Bellevue but would run along the 114th Avenue NE corridor. There would not be a station at east Main Street but would have one alongside the I-405 right-of-way between NE 4th Street and NE 6th Street. There would be an elevated pedestrian walkway connecting to the City Hall plaza and the transit center. The line would continue north to about NE 7th Street and then cross I-405 to the hospital station. The geometry involved would make it impossible to straddle NE 8th Street with the hospital station, however; it would need to be located several hundred feet to the north.

Commissioner Larrivee asked what advantages the new elevated alternative would offer. Mr. van de Kamp said the option was proposed by Councilmember Wallace who views it as a way to avoid any at-grade interaction in the downtown area. The general view is that the alternative would be less costly than any of the tunnel options, and possibly less costly than some of the at-grade alternatives. However, the alternative has the lowest estimated ridership numbers, though it would have the lowest impact on businesses during the construction phase.

Mr. van de Kamp said work to model the 2030 traffic conditions in the downtown is under way. The BKR model is being used to get the basic demand numbers; the model is more reflective of future conditions than the regional model is. The data will then be entered into traffic simulation software to learn more about performance indicators such as delay and travel speed.

City staff is working with Sound Transit to develop visual simulations. One of the criticisms of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement were the simulations that gave only a single

snapshot of what any given alternative would look like. While nicely done, they were limited in scope. A software platform is being used which will model the entire downtown and show actual buildings. The engineering design of the light rail line is being folded in so the resulting photosimulations will provide a very good sense of what things will look like in any given part of the downtown.

Construction effects and risks were arguably another shortcoming of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The work raised a lot of questions about how intense the work will be, how long it will take, who will be affected, and in what way.

Mr. van de Kamp said the results of the evaluation will be included in a report to be ready for release by the end of January. The information will be shared with the City Council, the Sound Transit board and other groups during February. The objective will be to get a recommendation from the City Council on what they believe is the appropriate solution for the downtown, communicate that to the Sound Transit board, and hopefully find common ground.

A consultant has been hired to conduct a review of the tunnel cost estimates done by Sound Transit to get a sense of how large the funding gap really is. That work should be done by the end of January. Parson Brinkerhoff has been retained to help with the downtown traffic analysis.

The new alternatives will each in one way or another have an impact on the City Hall plaza and parking garage. Staff is working to gain a better sense of just how much those facilities will be impacted.

An analysis is also under way focused on what local revenues could be contributed. The option of a downtown local improvement district has been discussed, as has the potential for a parking tax.

Mr. van de Kamp informed the Commissioners that a public workshop is scheduled for February 18 at City Hall. A public hearing is also likely to be slated for February 22 before the City Council. Once the decisions concerning the downtown are made, the focus will shift to the South Bellevue and Bel-Red corridors. All of the work will feed into additional environmental analysis that will wrap up by the end of the year. A final decision on what is to be built should be in hand by early 2011.

Commissioner Glass noted that Sound Transit has in the past had trouble with the noise created by the Central Link light rail system. He asked what has been done about that. Mr. van de Kamp said the environmental work done for the Central Link line was based on assumptions relative to the experience of other systems. After building the line, however, Sound Transit found that the trains they used on the Central Link line actually produced more noise than what was predicted, especially along curves and over switches. Sound Transit is obligated to meet the noise mitigation thresholds dictated by the federal government, so the problems must be fixed. The approach they are taking includes grinding the rails where flat spots have been created, making adjustments to the wheels on the trains, and constructing additional noise walls; they may also be replacing some of the switches and using biodegradable lubrication systems. The environmental work done for East Link was completed before the Central Link system opened, so the same noise assumptions were used. The actual experience with regard to Central Link is now being used in the assumptions instead.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Mr. van de Kamp one option brought to the table by a consultant was to take the rail line over I-405 at NE 12th Street and have it drop down onto 116th Avenue NE. While the option may be doable, it is not being proposed because it is not compatible with the planned new infrastructure for the Bel-Red corridor.

- 9. OLD BUSINESS – None
- 10. NEW BUSINESS – None
- 11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. November 5, 2009

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

- B. December 10, 2009

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

- 13. REVIEW CALENDAR
 - A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

The Commission reviewed the items scheduled for discussion at upcoming meetings.

- 14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date