

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
*MEETING NOTES*

February 24, 2005  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bell, Commissioners Elliott, Northey

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice Chair Young, Commissioners Matthew, Wendle, Yuen

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Kristi Oosterveen, Nancy LaCombe, Steve Costa, Mark Poch, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

Because a quorum was not reached, the meeting was not officially called to order. Chair Bell began an informational meeting at 6:36 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, only Chair Bell and Commissioners Elliott and Northey were present.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz provided the Commissioners with copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Overlake Hospital master plan expansion project. He noted that together the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement constitute a complete project level evaluation of the near-term 2007 hospital expansion and NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street extension, and a programmatic evaluation of the longer-term 2030 projects.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

## 7. STUDY SESSION

### A. State of Mobility Report

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, reminded the Commissioners that the State of Mobility Report is produced every two years. The edition to be written next will cover the years 2003 and 2004. At the end of 2004 a survey was sent out to all chapter contributors, all Commissioners both past and present, and to the departmental leadership team; the survey asked specific questions aimed at determining the usefulness of the report and what might be done to make the report better. The data returned indicated that the report is used primarily as a reference tool.

Staff has discussed reducing the narrative behind the data. Ms. Oosterveen distributed to the Commissioners a condensed version of Chapter 5 of the 2001-2002 State of Mobility Report as an example of how the text of the document can be streamlined. She noted that the original twelve-plus pages were reduced to only seven pages by telling less of the story and getting straight to the point. Staff believes that by reducing the document to its essential data, it can be marketed to a broader audience. In addition to the written version, the document will be available online with links to different sites and project pictures; the online edition will include more contact information.

Ms. Oosterveen said the 2003-2004 report will be the last one generated for a two-year time period; beginning in 2005, the report will be produced annually. By the time the report is completed and presented to the Commission and the Council, the data in it is two to three years old. Historical trend information will continue to be provided in the document going back five years.

Staff is currently working to compile the information for the next report. The data will be in hand around the first of April, then the lead project team will review the information, formulate it and edit it. The various chapters will be available for review by the Commission in early May, and should be ready for final adoption by the Commission the middle of July. Adoption by the Council is slated to occur by the end of July.

Ms. Oosterveen explained that the layout for the various chapters will be revised. The level of service and concurrency chapter will be moved back up to Chapter 3 behind the regional advocacy chapter. That will be followed by the transportation planning chapter. Capital project implementation will be included in a separate chapter to better highlight completed projects and a narrative about decreasing revenues. The bicycle and pedestrian information will be split into two separate chapters.

Chair Bell indicated his support for the proposed direction for the document.

Commissioner Elliott observed that the pedestrian and bicycle systems have a lot of commonality and he questioned whether or not they should each be given a separate chapter.

Ms. Oosterveen answered that the two topics cannot be completely separated. It is the belief of staff that there is sufficient meat, however, for each to justify separate chapters.

## B. West Lake Sammamish Parkway Update

Project Manager Nancy LaCombe reminded the Commissioners that five alternatives were presented to the community, none of which received overwhelming support. Staff returned to Council with a request to continue the study because reaching an acceptable alternative did not seem that far away. With additional time granted, staff reviewed the materials and information gathered from the community groups, met with the bike interest representatives, and sat down with the West Lake Sammamish Homeowners Association. The result was the development of an alternative that staff believes meets the criteria set for the project in the very beginning, which were addressing traffic concerns, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety, and maintaining the neighborhood character.

The existing cross section of West Lake Sammamish Parkway ranges from 29 to 36 feet overall. Under the recommended alternative, the minimum cross section is 33 feet. The alternative includes a buffer in some locations where there is sufficient room, and a reduction in lane widths where necessary to permit a buffer, all of which is aimed at improving pedestrian safety. A four-foot wide shoulder is included on the water side for the entire length of the roadway to accommodate bicyclists. As drawn, the alternative includes the four-foot paved shoulder on the lake side, then a 10.5-foot lane, a 10-foot lane, a 1.5-foot shy distance in areas where there is a buffer, then either a two-foot or five-foot buffer, and a 10-foot multiuse trail on the west side.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Group voted not to support the alternative unless the southbound side of the Parkway includes a four-foot marked bike lane. No official word has yet been received from the Cascade Bicycle Club. The West Lake Sammamish Homeowners Association met and voted to support the alternative.

Ms. LaCombe said a field tour is planned for March 12. Chalk, duct tape or some other means will be used to mark the new cross section on the pavement in three different locations. Newsletters will be mailed to the community on February 28. Posters have been made up to alert people to the field tour, and the project is featured on the front page of *It's Your City* due to come out in about a week. There will also be an article in the newspaper highlighting the open house on March 12.

The Commission will be updated again on March 24 and will be asked for a recommendation. The matter is slated to be before the Council on April 11.

Commissioner Northey encouraged staff to line up its funding ducks to the extent possible. Ms. LaCombe said there is about \$170,000 left in the project budget. She added that the homeowners association may come forward with a request for a signal at 34<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Bell asked if the widening on the west side can be done without negatively affecting the myriad steep driveways that connect to the Parkway. Ms. LaCombe said there is sufficient room to be able to fit the alternative without significant modification.

Chair Bell asked what treatment will be given to the buffer area. Ms. LaCombe said the Parks Department wants to see low-growing, low-maintenance vegetation used. Some locations could receive a color spot if local residents want to take care of it.

Commissioner Elliott said a prime concern voiced by the lakeside residents is that improvements which will encourage bicyclists could create a safety problem where steep driveways are encountered. Ms. LaCombe said the bulk of the recreational riders will use the 10-foot strip on the west side of the roadway. The local residents are willing to accept the four-foot strip on the east side provided it is not signed as a bike lane; it will look like a widened shoulder, similar to what already exists in many sections of the roadway.

Chair Bell indicated support for the proposed alternative. The project is a good one and hopefully it will find funding. It would be too bad to put it all on hold for several years and then have to go back and do the work all over again.

#### C. Bel-Red Road/NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street Signal

By way of background, Project Manager Steve Costa explained that Bel-Red Road was widened in 1990. A study of the accidents that occurred between 1990 and 1995 culminated in an accident reduction project which included some rechannelization at the intersection of Bel-Red Road and NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street. The signal project PW-I-70 was added to the CIP to continue to provide a safe and efficient intersection for vehicles and pedestrians. The most recent warrant analysis for the intersection was conducted in 2003, and the determination was made that the signal is warranted, primarily because of traffic volumes, speed of traffic on Bel-Red Road, and pedestrian crossing needs. In 2004 the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program installed some experimental speed cushions along NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street; the devices doubled as traffic calming measures. Very recently the Department of Transportation conducted an origin-destination study of the traffic coming off of southbound Bel-Red Road onto NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street and found that two-thirds of this traffic in the PM peak cut through to Northup Way and 164<sup>th</sup>, bypassing the iron triangle area.

A number of requests have been made by local residents for a crossing to get to the other side of Bel-Red Road for pedestrians and bicyclists. A traffic signal at Bel-Red Road and NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street is the only practical way identified to provide such a crossing.

The Commissioners were informed that Microsoft has been negotiating with the city of Redmond for development of a new portion of the Microsoft campus. In December 2002 Redmond granted to Microsoft access to Bel-Red Road. Both Bellevue and Redmond have Comprehensive Plan policies that prohibit any through traffic from Microsoft entering into the neighborhoods. A development agreement is being finalized and will be before the Redmond

City Council on March 1 for approval.

Traffic Engineering Manager Mark Poch said the development agreement in part is intended to specify the exact location where access from the Microsoft campus onto Bel-Red Road will be located. The first proposal from Microsoft had the access point offset from NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposal, however, made it difficult to implement the Comprehensive Plan policy aimed at restricting traffic flow between the neighborhood and the Microsoft campus.

Mr. Poch said Bellevue staff weighed in with a proposal to locate the access point at the intersection of Bel-Red Road and NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposal allows for better control of the cut-through traffic between the neighborhood and the Microsoft campus; consolidates the number of access points on the major arterial street; and allows for safe accommodation of the bicyclists and pedestrians that are increasingly using the area as the Microsoft campus continues to develop. Once the access location has been established, the actual details of the intersection design will be open to a public process with the neighborhood.

Continuing, Mr. Poch said one of the alternatives developed restricts through traffic between the neighborhood and the Microsoft campus access point through the use of a raised traffic island in the center of the intersection; it would physically block the ability of a vehicle to get back and forth between the campus and the neighborhood. The shape of the island is such that left turns from Bel-Red Road into the neighborhood, and left turns from Bel-Red Road to the Microsoft campus driveway would be restricted.

A second alternative is similar in that it restricts through traffic, but it rearranges the traffic island to allow turning movements onto NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street and into the Microsoft campus. As the Microsoft campus continues to develop and generate more trips, allowing left turns from Bel-Red Road to the campus will reduce congestion at 156<sup>th</sup> and Bel-Red Road. Allowing the left turn movement does not negatively affect the neighborhood in that the trips are coming from the arterial system and going to the campus, not into the neighborhood.

Mr. Poch said aspects of the two alternatives could be mixed and matched into a hybrid alternative.

Mr. Costa said a public involvement process with the neighborhood has been started. A newsletter will be going out in about a week. Included in the newsletter will be a survey for residents to fill out to determine if there is a preference for one of the two alternatives. An online survey will also be made available as a means of getting feedback. The newsletter will include an invitation to attend an open house event on March 16 at Ardmore Elementary School from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. where residents will be able to see the drawings and voice their opinions for what should be done at the intersection.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Northey, Mr. Poch said the Redmond Comprehensive Plan language is very blunt in stating that there will be no through traffic between the campus and the neighborhood. The Crossroads subarea plan includes a number of

different statements ranging from a call to improve the intersection to restricting through traffic from the access point from going through the neighborhood. The sole right to grant access from Bel-Red Road to the Microsoft campus lies with Redmond.

Chair Bell asked staff to keep the Commission informed by memo as things progress.

#### D. Crossroads Area Transit Program

Mr. Loewenherz reminded the Commissioners that one of the recommendations of the Transit Plan is to improve information to the public with regard to transit options. The Comprehensive Plan speaks to the same issue, as well as improving communications with non-native English speakers. The Crossroads project addresses both. The project costs will be shared by Bellevue, Redmond, King County Metro and federal grant dollars.

The census data shows a sizable population of non-native English speakers in the Crossroads area, making it a good target community for the initiative. The project has three primary elements, the first of which is improved bus stop signage. Many of the stops simply indicate route numbers on their signs. Some have information about where buses are at various times, but not specific to the bus stop location. Customers who are not familiar with the direction buses travel and what their options are find the signs to be of little help.

The second element of the program is the development of a bus guide. Modeled after work that has been done in neighborhoods in Seattle, the guide will illustrate how to get around the region by bus from the Crossroads area. The guide will be mailed to residents along the corridor along with a cover letter in five key languages, and a few free ride tickets.

The third element of the program is the residential transportation coordinator. A similar program was initiated in the New Holly development in Seattle in cooperation with King County Metro. Those who receive training under the program serve as contacts for their local community in getting the word out about traveling by transit. The program coordinator will work with non-profit organizations such as Hopelink to identify people who are multilingual and who would be willing to be referenced in the cover letter and serve as a point of contact.

Mr. Loewenherz said the program will have a good public relations factor. The project carries a total price tag of \$72,500, of which Bellevue is responsible for only \$13,350.

Commissioner Northey said she hopes the program will have fallout beyond merely increasing transit ridership. In part the program will serve an important human service function.

Chair Bell suggested having information about the program available at the Crossroads mini City Hall and at the library. He added that including free passes is an excellent way to get people to try riding transit for the first time.

#### 8. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Loewenherz shared with the Commission the response of staff relative to the request made by David Plummer regarding the NE 14<sup>th</sup> Street/140<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection. The same issue was raised by Mr. Plummer in 2003 and again in 2004. In each instance the request has been denied for a number of valid reasons.

9. NEW BUSINESS

The City of Bellevue and the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) are conducting a Transportation Management Association (TMA) Opportunities Study to assess and evaluate potential opportunities for an increased TMA role in Bellevue, and develop an implementation plan to carry forward recommendations of the Study. The objective of the TMA Opportunities Study is to develop a Strategic Implementation Plan to strengthen and sustain the Bellevue TMA, TransManage, in order to advance Bellevue's mobility goals and better serve the market for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) services in Bellevue. The Study began in February 2005, and a Final Strategic Implementation Plan will be completed by the end of April 2005. Commissioners Elliott and Northey volunteered for this effort.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bill Serr, 1412 153<sup>rd</sup> Place SE, suggested that the Crossroads program should include an outreach to disabled adults. With regard to the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project, he proposed that instead of a four-foot shoulder there should be a five-foot shoulder the full length of the roadway. The necessary right-of-way belongs to the city, not to the adjacent property owners and does not exist for their personal use for parking vehicles. There should be a bike lane on both sides of the roadway.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 8:08 p.m.

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Secretary to the Transportation Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

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Date