CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 27, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Jokinen, Lampe, Larrivee, Tanaka, Zahn
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	None
STAFF PRESENT:	Kevin McDonald, Franz Loewenherz, Andreas Piller, Department of Transportation
OTHERS PRESENT:	None
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Simas who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald provided the Commissioners with maps of the Mobility Management Areas, the subareas, and the zoning areas. They also were provided with a screenshot of the NE 4th Street extension between 116th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Zahn reported that she attended the town hall meeting on February 23. She said one of the questions asked was around transportation. Representative Clibborn provided quite a lot of information about what has been creating the gridlock at the legislative level. She pointed out that there are differences of opinion around some fundamental values regarding issues such as state funding for trail. While everyone agrees that transportation funding is needed, when it comes down to the grassroots level, getting state funding may be difficult.

Commissioner Bishop said he attended the 48th District meeting with Senator Tom and Representative Cyrus Habib. He said they spent some 30 minutes addressing transportation

issues. They also talked about the issue of state funding for local projects. There has been talk at the legislative level about enabling local jurisdictions to enact their own tax increases to fund transit as opposed to funding transit directly using state transportation dollars. The King County Executive has put in motion to put the $60 car tab and a one-tenth of a percent sales tax increase.

Commissioner Larrivee said it would be helpful for the Commission to receive a briefing on what is included in the county's transportation package that will be sent to the public for a vote. He allowed that the county's action results from inaction on the part of the state.

Chair Simas said the Chamber of Commerce transportation committee will be meeting on March 11. County Councilmember Jane Hague will be there to make a presentation on the county tax vote.

Commissioner Zahn said she attended the Nourishing Network monthly meeting on February 26 where the topic of transit cuts were discussed. The organization is working toward ending hunger in the community and is concerned that the cuts will make it very difficult for those in need to get to the places that provide food for them. It was suggested that a map showing the transit corridors should have overlaid on it the various human service organizations and feeding programs as a means of helping the various organizations advocate for themselves. Mr. McDonald said such a map could easily be distributed both in printed and electronic form. He said he was sure the Human Services Commission would like to have the map.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Larrivee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bishop and it carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Transit Master Plan: Speed and Reliability

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz took a moment to review the project timeline noting that the intent is to return in about a month with the project list merged with other reports. A final version of the will be brought forward in May. On May 19 a draft of the Transit Master Plan will be brought to the Council; it will reference all of the documentation completed to date and will serve as the main reference document. Release of the draft report will trigger the initiation of a SEPA process. A public hearing is scheduled for June 12, and a proposal from the Commission will be forwarded to the Council on July 7.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Loewenherz said the Draft Transit

Master Plan Report will in turn inform the work of defining a transportation vision for the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Loewenherz said the Transit Capital Vision Report will include the speed and reliability project information as well as recommendations related to bus shelters, layover facilities, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and commuter parking facilities.

Chair Tanaka asked who is responsible for providing bus layover spaces. Mr. Loewenherz answered that the city has a big hand in determining where they are allowed.

Turning to the Speed and Reliability Report, Mr. Loewenherz noted that the Commission had already seen the first 50 pages. He called attention to page 55 of the report and the tables reflecting where things stand in terms of the total number of projects identified by type and showing preliminary costs. He noted that there are 107 projects in all, 44 of which are transit signal priority projects. Projects no longer under consideration were shown in red on pages 57 through 60. He noted that the analysis beginning on page 80 looks at what happens to the signalized intersections in the city following implementation of the projects. He stressed that the travel demand model was not sensitive to the queue jumps or the signal priority benefits. The data showed that the transit improvements are beneficial to the transit riding public and indeed all intersections in the city.

Commissioner Bishop called attention to the information regarding the intersection at 112th Avenue NE and NE 8th Street and noted that the LOS goes from E to F with the BAT and HOV lanes. The downtown update indicated that only intersection, 112th Avenue NE and NE 4th Street, in the downtown would be at F. Mr. Loewenherz said he would need to go back to see if some of the intersections were on the threshold beforehand. Mr. McDonald added that running two Dynamec models with the exact same assumptions will often return different results.

Commissioner Bishop said he was surprised to see that 112th Avenue NE and NE 8th Street showed an average delay of 71 seconds without the HOV BAT lanes but goes to 91 seconds with them.

Mr. Loewenherz observed that taken together there is an overall transportation performance improvement at intersection along the frequent transit network. The improvement can be seen in the total delay in hours.

Mr. Loewenherz called attention to project A-143 and noted that it includes more detail regarding project L-27 that includes improvements to the 142nd Place SE bridge crossing and Snoqualmie River Road on the west side of the Bellevue College campus. He noted that time was spent in developing ideas for how the west side of the campus might be restructured to improve transit operations and to address a concern raised during the Eastgate/I-90 corridor study, namely the potential reduction in the availability of parking stalls. However, by

restructuring several of the existing lots, the college can actually gain 86 additional stalls. A meeting with the college president has been scheduled to determine their receptivity with moving forward with design and engineering the project. The project will be important to the Frequent Transit Network as well as to the all-day transit market.

Commissioner Bishop suggested that of all the projects, L-27 will save the most time for King County Metro. Mr. Loewenherz agreed it will have a significant benefit. He said there remains the issue of consultation with the condos to the west. The project is in the TFP and the Commission's input in terms of ranking will be important.

Commissioner Zahn asked if consideration has been given to a roundabout. Mr. Loewenherz said any time an intersection is restructured consideration is given to a roundabout. The location is challenging, however, given the topography and other considerations, not the least of which is the amount of right-of-way needed to accommodate a roundabout.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that a number of projects had been removed from consideration. The Lake Hills Connector was removed because of the environmental impact to the nearby wetland and the limited amount of bus volume. The intersection of 108th Avenue NE and Northup Way was also removed given the constrained environment and the fire access lane for the condos on the northeast quadrant.

B. Transit Master Plan: Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Transit

Assistant Transportation Planner Andreas Piller said he did not yet have a physical Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Report but would present the analysis completed to date on the subject . He clarified that access is defined here as the ability to reach transit destinations. There are essentially two separate networks, the transit network and the access network of ped/bike facilities. The interface between the two are the stops and the stations.

At some point all transit riders are pedestrians. Accessible bus stops increase ridership, and good access is crucial to the provision of efficient fixed-route services.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. Loewenherz said Access paratransit services cost more than $40 per boarding, whereas fixed-route bus service runs about $4 per boarding. Accordingly, King County Metro has a vested interest in migrating its Access paratransit clients to the fixed route services, but they cannot do so without an accessible pedestrian facility.

Mr. Piller said input from the community gathered in early 2012 indicated that for current transit riders accessibility is not their top concern; improving speed and reliability took that spot. Access was not, however, insignificant in that seven percent of all respondents suggested the need to invest in bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Even more tellingly, when non-riders were asked what would make them consider using the bus, the single most significant response

was having stops close to their homes and destinations. Of course facilities that get people to the bus stops more easily can translate into the equivalent of having stops close by. The vast majority of transit riders in Bellevue do not gain access via car at a park and ride lot.

Policy TR-79 in the current Comprehensive Plan calls for assigning high priority to ped/bike projects that provide accessible linkages to transit. Policy TR-80 calls for encouraging transit use by improving ped/bike linkages to existing and future transit. The reduced funding scenarios under which coverage routes will be lost will have a significant impact on accessibility by taking services away from some areas.

Mr. Piller said as the transit network moves toward attracting people who are using it by choice, it will be necessary to provide facilities that will help them access the services they want.

Mr. Piller said the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan Report is the principle planning document for non-motorized facilities; it includes the goals and policies, as well as the project list. The plan provides a variety of non-motorized facility typologies, bike lanes, shoulders, off-street paths and trails and describes what each is. It identifies 11 primary bicycle corridors in the city, and identifies the existing ped/bike facilities. In 2009 there were 300 miles of sidewalk, 138 miles of bicycle facilities, 109 miles of trail facilities, and 11.5 miles of off-street paths in Bellevue. Since 2009 an annual report has been compiled that outlines all new ped/bike projects implemented.

The Commissioners were shown a map locating all of the ped/bike projects and their relation to transit stops. There are 335 projects that lie within a quarter mile of a transit facilities, of which 153 are sidewalk projects. Mr. Piller said the preliminary transit priority ped/bike project list was created by removing from the 2009 ped/bike project list all projects outside a quarter mile radius of a transit facility. He suggested the Commission may want to consider prioritizing the transit priority project list, and some additional analysis is likely warranted.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Piller said access to transit was a consideration when the ped/bike project list was originally prioritized, but it was not the focus of the exercise. An additional analysis is under way that will broaden the accessibility side and will add network connectivity. The goal is to quantify the degree of connectivity between bus stops. At some level ADA access will be a factor as well. The analysis will also look at access to jobs and public services, and how good access to transit is for different land use types and certain demographic groups. All of that work will help inform a prioritization process.

Mr. Piller said the initial screening simply considered the ¼ mile circle area around each bus stop, and if a facility passed through the circle it was included in the screening. The more complex ongoing analysis is based on a network approach so the areas within the walkshed of a bus stop look a lot different because the distances are based on route directness rather than the distance as the crow flies.

C. Transit Master Plan: Benefits of Transit

Mr. Loewenherz said the benefits section remains a work in progress relative to identifying the ways in which transit positively relates to the four overarching categories of economic, environmental, individual and community benefits. When completed the document will provide a comprehensive summary of the available literature addressing how transit contributes to each category. The final version of the document should be ready on March 27.

Commissioner Bishop stressed the importance of being intellectually honest. He noted that the report states it takes twice as long on most arterial routes to take the bus over driving alone and that transit saves money and he asked if the statement can be backed up with local data or if it just reflects specific national studies that have the desired outcome. Mr. Loewenherz said the national literature, including that from the Texas Transportation Institute is clear that transit saves time and therefore money.

Commissioner Larrivee agreed with the statement in the document. The fact is transit may take more time, but it costs less, particularly over car ownership, and allows riders to be productive while commuting.

Commissioner Lampe said his neighborhood has been actively involved in the light rail debate because it will be directly impacted. One of the concerns is crime given the studies done that show an increase in crime around light rail stations. As complete a picture as possible should be portrayed.

Mr. Loewenherz allowed that the Transit Master Plan is clearly oriented toward transit and is intended to respond to the direction of the Council to create a developable vision. Mayor Balducci has requested from staff additional information regarding the economic benefits of transit, so that documentation is being put together. The literature review and documentation is directly responsive to direction from the Council.

Commissioner Bishop said he viewed the document as a puff piece aimed at saying how wonderful transit is. He said as such it is not intellectually honest.

Commissioner Zahn disagreed. She commented that there are both direct and indirect benefits to transit. Those who use the Frequent Transit Network will see the most benefit, but the list of indirect benefits will include fewer cars on the road as the number of transit riders increases.

Chair Simas said nothing in the report can be considered 100 percent accurate 100 percent of the time. He stressed, however, that that is not the purpose of the report. The statement that transit saves time is certainly true of a large number of people, but it may not be true for others. The Commission has been directed by the Council to focus on how to make transit work, not on how not to make it work. He said staff would welcome suggestions for how the document

should read, but to just say no is not an answer for how to move forward.

Commissioner Jokinen said for the most part everyone he knows drives their own vehicle to work. He said he has personally used transit on occasion and in doing so has seen the benefit of transit. Microsoft, one of the most powerful companies in the world, clearly sees a huge benefit to transit and has invested heavily in its own system.

Chair Tanaka said he is a supporter of transit. He allowed that while there may be concerns, in terms of the policy direction the document clearly outlines the benefits that can be achieved by transit. Some of the dissatisfactions associated with transit can be explained by the fact that the system is not extensive enough; a more developed system could show more favorability. The fact that Microsoft has chosen to spend millions of dollars creating its own system could be read as a comment that the public system is not good enough, but clearly it demonstrates the company's belief in the benefits to be derived from transit.

Commissioner Jokinen allowed that he does not live along a Frequent Transit Network corridor and is not in fact well served by transit at all.

Commissioner Zahn said she rides transit because within a mile of her home she can access a bus that will take her to her desired destinations and bring her back home. She said when she does have to drive she gets frustrated and feels like she is wasting her time. Transit certainly is beneficial to those who do not own a car.

Commissioner Bishop said he is a strong supporter of bus transit and is thrilled that the city is working to create a concept of a transit system that will serve Bellevue as it has never been served before. The city has never before attempted such an undertaking. There never has been a full recognition by the region that Bellevue is the number three employment center and what is being done by the city will be very important for the support of the citizens of Bellevue and those who work in the city. It should be kept in mind, however, that transit carries only about four percent of all daily trips, a percentage that has stayed level for many years, and yet millions of dollars are poured into the system without moving the needle.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that the report is not intended to address the efficiency of the current transit system. Rather, it is a statement of what effective transit can do for the city and the kind of benefits that can be expected from a fully functioning system.

Commissioner Larrivee agreed but suggested that rather than a general overall discussion of the benefits of transit, the document should be more focused on Bellevue specifically, why the exercise is being undertaken and why it is so important.

Mr. Loewenherz said once the Transit is completed, the focus will be turned to completing the Transit Master Plan Report. The intent is to have it be a limited and descriptive document. The graphic in question is likely to end up in that report aimed at identifying why all the work

was undertaken in the first place. The Council directed staff to engage with the Transportation Commission and all the other boards and commissions because of the broad benefit transit brings to a number of city objectives. The report will also outline the vision, goals and strategies, and will briefly summarize the service vision and the capital vision.

Chair Simas said he had no problem with the graphic but said he would come down on the side of leaving it out if it is only something nice to look at and is overly controversial. If it truly adds clarity to the discussion, it should be used.

Commissioner Zahn suggested the graphic may be less controversial if sliced less granularly into the four pieces. She allowed that the graphic is qualified by the statement "Efficient, useful, well-utilized public transit provides these benefits." It is not necessarily talking about the current transit system. If the qualifiers are accepted, the graphic works, but if the qualifier is missed, the graphic could prove to be controversial.

Commissioner Bishop said another way to look at the issue is by remembering that there are two primary types of transit users: commuters and the transit dependent. The elements outlined in the graphic are not necessarily related to both of those dominant user groups. He asked if the graphic could somehow be more specific relative to the benefits for each group.

Commissioner Larrivee said he did not necessarily agree with that characterization, particularly in regard to the Frequent Transit Network. Transit is becoming attractive to far more of a mix of riders.

Chair Tanaka said the graphic should be read as nothing more than a list. He said he was perfectly fine with the graphic as it is. Commissioner Jokinen agreed.

Asked to be specific regarding his concerns about the graphic, Commissioner Bishop said he absolutely agrees that transit empowers individuals, revitalizes downtown areas, and increases tourism. He said he fully disagreed with the notion that transit mitigations emissions, saves energy, reduces dependency on foreign oil, increases customer bases for sales, mitigates travel congestion, improves roadway efficiencies, or saves money.

Mr. Loewenherz said the Commission would have another shot at the document on March 27.

A motion to approve the Speed and Reliability Report was made by Chair Tanaka and was seconded by Commissioner Zahn.

Commissioner Zahn called attention to page 57 and asked if a different bullet could be used to depict the three dollar value types. Mr. Loewenherz said that could easily be done and he agreed it would help to visually indicate priorities.

The motion carried unanimously.

The Commission conducted a brief discussion relative to how to proceed with the study session on Marcy 27.

D. Downtown Transportation Plan

Mr. McDonald sought from the Commission some closure on the downtown subarea plan project list. He said the spreadsheet in his memo had been revised in accord with the Commission's previous conversation. He said the projects in the subarea plan will be moved to a transportation master plan, but their downtown context will be retained in terms of implementation. A strategy needs to be identified for implementing the projects given the scarce resources, but that will be the focus of a subsequent discussion.

A motion to accept the project list as proposed was made by Commissioner Larrivee and was seconded by Chair Tanaka.

Commissioner Bishop observed that there is only one project on the list slated for beyond 2030, the NE 2nd Street freeway overpass. He suggested adding the Bellevue Way grade separation and the NE 6th Street subsurface arterial projects to Project B, the downtown corridors studies. Mr. McDonald said the representation of both of those projects is embedded in the downtown subarea plan policies. If the Commission wants them to live in the project list as well, it would be better to show them separately as Projects C and D. Commissioner Bishop said he would be okay with that.

Commissioner Bishop called attention to project 308, Bellevue Way between SE 30th Street and I-90, and suggested the project description should actually be 112th Avenue SE to I-90. Mr. McDonald said as it reads the matrix shows the current project description and title. The project disposition column, however, calls for changing the description to reflect the current planning.

As the maker of the motion, Commissioner Larrivee agreed to accept as a friendly amendment adding Projects C and D, and revising the project 308 description. Chair Tanaka also agreed to include the friendly amendment.

The motion carried unanimously.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 23, 2014

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Larrivee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zahn and it carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commissioners reviewed their calendar of upcoming events and agenda items.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission	Date
Kevin M McDonald	April 10, 2014
Chairperson of the Transportation Commission	Date
Ernest V Simas	4-10-14