

CITY OF BELLEVUE
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 9, 2006

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bell, Vice Chair Young, Commissioners Glass, Holler, Northey, Wendle, Yuen

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Kristi Oosterveen, Eric Miller, Jen Benn, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Diane Harper, King County Metro

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Bell who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Holler, who arrived at 6:34 p.m.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz informed the Commissioners that the Sound Transit presentation scheduled as item 7(B) on the agenda has been cancelled. He said the planned Sound Transit board meeting earlier in the day did not occur as a result of actions taken by the legislature before adjourning. The pressure to get something put together quickly has been postponed to at least 2007.

Mr. Loewenherz said he has rescheduled the Sound Transit presentation for April 27.

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller shared with the Commission the annual report for 2005 covering the implementation status of the BROTS agreement. He said the report was presented to the Bellevue City Council and the Redmond City Council without much fanfare; very few questions were asked. In the past, the two councils have elected to hold a joint meeting to receive the report, but owing to a lack of big issues to report on, a joint meeting was not convened. A joint subcommittee of the two councils will meet sometime during the first half of 2006 and report back to the full councils on the issues of concern to both jurisdictions.

Commissioner Young asked if there are any big issues facing both jurisdictions. Mr. Miller said the highlight of 2005 was Redmond entering into a development agreement with Microsoft; the agreement will permit Microsoft to develop some two million square feet of office, leaving Redmond only about a half million square feet of development under the targets established under the BROTS agreement. Nintendo is in the process of negotiating a development agreement with Redmond for another 400,000 square feet. Bellevue has about

770,000 square feet of development remaining under the agreement.

Commissioner Glass asked if staff has launched a study of the iron triangle area. Mr. Miller said no study has been launched but the issue is still on staff's plate. He added that the issue is one that the two councils may want to discuss.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Young reported that on March 2 he and Commissioner Wendle attended a Surrey Downs Community Club meeting at which concerns regarding transportation issues were voiced. Their primary issue is noise generated by the freeway and adjacent arterial corridors.

Commissioner Wendle said the group also mentioned cut-through traffic as something that needs to be addressed. They are aware of the different programs the city offers, such as the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program, and they have asked the city for increased traffic patrols.

Commissioner Wendle asked if the city has plans to test special pavement types that could reduce traffic noise levels. Mr. Loewenherz said it has been some ten years since silent pavement technology was tested by the city. In the initial tests, it was found that the pavement deteriorated at an accelerated pace. New materials are currently being tested by the Washington State Department of Transportation, and the city will likely wait and see how their tests turn out before taking any specific steps. Commissioner Wendle said he would like to get a formal memo or presentation on the tests done by the city in the past, the results, and the tests under way by WSDOT.

Commissioner Glass said he attended the Bel-Red Corridor Study Steering Committee meeting on March 2. He said some time was spent discussing the direction for the area and the attributes different plans might have. The committee will be getting into the meat of the study starting with the next few meetings. Several of the committee members will be traveling to Portland on March 10 to take a look at their high-capacity transit system, including the transit stations and some of the redevelopment that has occurred around them.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12817 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, thanked the Commission for its support of the Northup TIP project. He said it will provide a good non-motorized link connecting with downtown Kirkland and the new SR-520 bridge if it ever gets built.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Title VI Update – Memo Only

Chair Bell asked if the Title VI changes will affect the Commission's meetings or hearings in any way. Jen Benn, Grants Administrator, said staff will be conducting much more aggressive outreach to communities that might be affected by projects that are the subject of public

hearings. Greeters will be brought in to meet the people at open houses and public hearings in different languages as well. A voluntary demographic survey will be started in which people attending the Commission meetings will be asked to fill out a form, allowing staff to better track what groups of people are coming to the meetings. No changes in the way the Commission meetings are run are anticipated.

B. Sound Transit 2 Update

Commissioner Young said it is his understanding that the Sound Transit vote will occur in 2007 jointly with RTID. Mr. Loewenherz said that is correct and added that it will be a simple up-down vote covering both issues.

C. Central Eastside Transit Study

Diane Harper, King County Metro, said the goal of the Central Eastside Transit Study is to bring about an increase in transit ridership for both King County Metro and Sound Transit through cost-effective changes that will improve the directness of travel to popular destinations, service frequency and span, and connectivity between local and regional service. She said the process is different from processes in the past in that there is no defined budget; the budget for current service is dependent on sales tax revenues which have been up and down quite a bit over the past half dozen years. A decision was made not to wait until the King County Council has funds at its disposal to provide more service on the streets before looking at how bus services should be organized on the Eastside.

Ms. Harper said much of the bus service structure was developed some 20 years ago; some of it has been in place for 30 years. The area has grown a lot in those years and there are plans on file for future growth. The study is focused on asking the broader questions; the thinking is that a major restructuring of the bus services may be a good idea, and the study will investigate alternatives and consult with the public about them. The approach in the past has been to develop proposals and take them through the public and political processes; the current approach will develop only potential alternatives from which an actual proposal may be developed and subjected to the normal review and comment process.

King County Metro has for the past decade or so had a sounding board made up of riders with different interests, including business, schools and social services. No King County Metro staff serves on the sounding board, nor are their official representatives other than from the school districts. In the fall of 2005 a publication was mailed out to about 12,000 citizens who had indicated an interest in being informed about transit changes. From that mailing, 1200 responses were generated, most of which indicated a desire for more services and longer hours of operation. Several indicated that bus services that do not allow them to get home late in the evening are not very useful, while others pointed out the lack of weekend services. Themes were developed from the comments received, and the sounding board members were selected through an application process to address those issues.

One thing that has come out strongly for Bellevue is the need for better connections between social services and affordable housing developments. Several of those connections currently require one or more bus transfers. Representatives from United Way and Bellevue's Parks & Community Services department have addressed the sounding board about the needs.

Ms. Harper said the ideas discussed by the sounding board are being folded into a tabloid to be

broadly mailed to Eastside residents on April 10. The tabloid will announce meeting dates along with maps and details about the service issues up for discussion. A questionnaire will be included with the tabloid to generate opinions about the potential alternatives. The biggest question still unanswered is how many people who do not currently ride the bus would choose to do so if certain changes were made.

Six public meetings are scheduled on the Eastside. The Bellevue locations will include City Hall, the transit center, and Crossroads Mall. The City Hall event will be an open house, while the latter two will involve information tables with printed materials and staff on hand to answer questions.

Commissioner Wendle suggested the information table at the Bellevue Transit Center should be in place over the lunch period rather than from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Ms. Harper said she will check on the scheduled hours, noting that she thought it was slated for between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Ms. Harper said most of the changes anticipated by the potential alternatives will impact some riders negatively. The impetus for making changes, however, will be to increase ridership overall and become more efficient. Over time the peak services that focus on running buses primarily in one direction in the morning and in the opposite direction in the afternoon have ceased to meet the needs of most people; the riders want the flexibility of all-day frequent transit services. There have been, however, some upturns in the peak services over the past year or so, most likely because of the economy and fuel prices. The potential alternatives include discontinuing most of the peak routes in favor of all-day frequent services. That will involve some additional transfers for many, though most King County Metro riders indicate that transfers are acceptable provided they do not have to wait more than about five minutes.

Ms. Harper said the process has King County Metro and Sound Transit working together because there is a joint proposal to change the service between Kirkland and Redmond.

It is hoped that an amalgamated proposal can be drafted by June. The sounding board will have the responsibility of writing a report to the King County Executive. In the past, similar reports have gone almost immediately on to the King County Council for review and action; in this case it is thought there will be a delay until at least 2007, possibly until 2008 or 2009. If it takes that long, King County Metro will do a follow-up check by pulling the sounding board back together to review current data. There will be multiple public hearings once an actual proposal is on the table.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Ms. Harper said the typical measurement used to determine changes to service is rides per bus hour. She said the tabloid will spell out why certain routes are set for deletion and what alternative services might be available.

Commissioner Wendle commented that King County Metro routes can be very confusing, especially where they overlap. He agreed that the tabloid will be helpful to non-riders by showing them services that might be available to them. He suggested that having additional and more detailed information available online would be useful.

Commissioner Wendle allowed that some routes serve vibrant areas that have many different kinds of riders. He asked if considerations to drop routes include investigation into how many

being served by the routes are low-income or minority populations. Ms. Harper said King County Metro is required by Title VI to serve those populations. At the end of any given year, King County Metro must report on how any bus route changes have impacted minorities or the disadvantaged. A report is produced annually for the King County Council outlining the productivity of every route by time period.

Commissioner Northey asked Ms. Harper to be sure the Commissioners get copies of the tabloid when it is mailed out. She asked if the Regional Transportation Committee will have any role to play in developing or commenting on any possible route changes. Ms. Harper explained that the Regional Transportation Committee is charged with setting policy; any proposed route change will need to meet the policies of the six-year plan. The role for allocating funding for transit services belong to the King County Transportation Committee.

Commissioner Northey proposed that if changes result in riders having to make more transfers, King County Metro should review its policy regarding the construction of transit shelters. Ms. Harper said the current policy in Seattle requires a minimum of 50 daily boardings before a shelter can be constructed. In the outlying areas, including Bellevue, only 25 daily boardings are required.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Northey regarding services on SR-520, Ms. Harper said the tabloid will outline the proposal to take the hours and buses used for arterial services between Redmond and Kirkland and reallocate them to Route 545, improving service for that route, especially during the peak period.

Commissioner Young asked to what extent the Eastside will be getting more service hours if all the possible route changes are made. Ms. Harper said that will depend largely on revenues. The Eastside is running slightly behind in its allocation of service hours, however, so whatever new hours are brought on board will be going to the Eastside.

Commissioner Young pointed out that Downtown Bellevue is set to greatly expand its number of dwelling units and jobs in the coming years and asked if King County Metro takes demographic forecasts into account in developing services. Ms. Harper said King County Metro does pay attention to growth forecasts, but allowed that it always lags behind the demographics to some degree for funding reasons. Commissioner Young suggested the build-it-and-they-will-come approach is to be valued over waiting to see what will happen. Many do not currently use public transit because it is not there, and if it is never there they will never take it. Ms. Harper said the Eastside will get 40 percent of all new service hours according to King County Metro policy, but all new service hours will be based on available revenues.

Ms. Harper distributed to the Commissioners copies of a map illustrating alternatives for the routes connecting the Downtown, Crossroads, Overlake and Redmond. She noted that for several years two routes have traveled between the Downtown and Crossroads along NE 8th Street; one of those routes travels up 148th Avenue NE and the other travels up 156th Avenue NE before they both end up in Redmond. The current system has the residential routes feeding those routes, and the proposal is to create a more direct Bellevue-Redmond connection, or possibly a Bellevue-Overlake connection, with the residential areas feeding into Downtown Bellevue along NE 8th Street. The problem is that the major route would no longer serve Crossroads directly. The tabloid will lay out that situation in an attempt to generate public comment; it is anticipated that the current riders will have strong opinions to share one way or another. It is known that there are more people who live in the eastern part of Bellevue and

south Redmond who commute to Downtown Bellevue to work than people who live in the Crossroads and Overlake areas.

Ms. Harper said King County Metro has not previously had a route between Bellevue Community College and Redmond. The proposal includes straightening a route that currently loops around Overlake and taking it on up to Redmond.

Mr. Loewenherz said the comments from the community will be reported back to the Commission. They should be available around June.

Commissioner Wendle asked if the Bellevue TMA is participating in the study. Mr. Loewenherz said they are not participating directly. Commissioner Wendle said the advise of Downtown businesses should be sought; their view of the proposed changes will be important.

Commissioner Northey proposed adding a link on the Bellevue website to the King County Metro website.

D. Proposed 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, said the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be prepared annually as mandated by state law. The document must be the subject of a public hearing, and it must be formally approved by the City Council and submitted to the state by the end of June. The TIP is a financially unconstrained instrument and as such serves as a wish list of projects the city would fund within the time period should the funds become available.

Ms. Oosterveen provided the Commissioners with copies of the matrix listing the proposed 2007-2012 TIP projects. The color-coded matrix highlighted the 23 projects proposed to be added to the list, and the 15 projects proposed for deletion from the list; the projects to be deleted have been completed, will be completed by the end of 2006, are being implemented by outside agencies, or are no longer relevant for one reason or another.

A public hearing on the proposed TIP has been set for March 23 at the Bellevue Botanical Garden house. Following the public hearing, the Commission will be asked to consider the testimony received, make any desired revisions to the document, and forward it to the City Council with a recommendation for approval. The plan is slated to be before the City Council on April 17.

Commissioner Northey called attention to projects 104, 105, 106 and 107 and noted from the color coding that none of them are in the TFP or CIP and are proposed additions to the TIP list. She asked where project 105, NE 4th Street extension from 116th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE, and project 107, 120th Avenue NE extension and widening, came from. Ms. Oosterveen explained that both projects are part of the Wilburton study that is currently taking place. Mr. Loewenherz added that the Wilburton study will be an agenda item at the April 19 joint meeting with the Planning Commission.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Ms. Oosterveen explained that the TIP list that will be the subject of the public hearing will not show the projects to be deleted; it will include only those projects proposed to be on the list. She explained that project 99, West Lake Sammamish Parkway implementation, is proposed to be removed and replaced with project 74, a more specific project that was added in the last Transportation Facilities Plan

process. She also noted that project 15 has morphed into the more specific project 75. The Factoria Area Transportation Study, project 100, is proposed to be removed from the list, but there are projects that arose out of that process that were added to the TFP and need to be added to the TIP as well. Project 101 has become an element in the NE 10th Street project, and Project 103 is set to be removed from the list because it grew into a TFP project.

With regard to project 96, Ms. Oosterveen said it is proposed for deletion because 112th Avenue SE is a mainline that is under consideration for high-capacity transit. There is a current CIP project that will include a signal at SE 6th Street, and the effectiveness of the signal will need to be evaluated.

Motion to approve the TIP list for purposes of the public hearing was made by Commissioner Northey. Second was by Commissioner Young and the motion carried unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Chair Bell said the proposed revisions to the Transportation Commission ordinance will be delivered to the City Clerk.

Commissioner Wendle asked staff to distribute to the Commissioners an updated list of all email address.

With regard to the email sent out regarding the boardwalk along 156th Avenue NE between SE 11th Street and SE 16th Street, Commissioner Glass said it seems somewhat odd that putting down a bed of gravel would cause liability issues for the city. As it is, the path goes nowhere, and the gravel is needed at a minimum to complete the path to the edge of the street.

Commissioner Northey said the path in its current condition is an embarrassment to the city that should be corrected.

Chair Bell agreed with Commissioner Glass and said he was not satisfied with the answer provided by staff in the email; the current condition of the path presents more of a risk than adding gravel would add. Mr. Loewenherz said he will ask Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, to attend the next Commission meeting and explain in detail the position of risk management.

Chair Bell asked staff to work toward scheduling a date for the Commission retreat. Mr. Loewenherz said it would be better for Chair Bell to check directly with the City Clerk given that the Council has yet to review the mandates for all city boards and commissions. Chair Bell said he will check with Councilmember Balducci.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12817 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, commented that the City Council chose to break the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project into three pieces and to seek federal funding for the first piece. He asked the Commission to make sure that will not impact how the project is shown in the TIP.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

12. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

Mr. Loewenherz said the Council retreat is scheduled for May. Commissioner Northey said if the Council is interested in topics to discuss she would propose reforming the Department of Planning and Community Development. The department in its current configuration is losing track of the future. Everything that is happening currently was planned 20 years ago, and there needs to be a strong focus on what will happen in another 20 years. The department is focusing on incremental, short-term planning instead of on the big picture, which is a mistake.

B. Public Involvement Calendar

Commissioner Yuen said he received an email from the Cascadia Discovery Institute concerning an upcoming seminar scheduled for May 31 – June 1. He said he attended a seminar by the same group a couple of years ago and found it very educational. He asked staff to see if the city would be willing to pay the registration fee for any Commissioner wanting to attend. Mr. Loewenherz said he will look into it.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Wendle and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date