

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES

March 24, 2005  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bell, Vice Chair Young, Commissioners Elliott  
Matthew, Northey, Yuen

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Wendle

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Nancy LaCombe, Dave Berg, Kris  
Liljeblad, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Colleen Gantz, Eric O'Brien, Washington State Department of  
Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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 Wendle who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz noted that agenda item 7(C) will be rescheduled to a later date.

Mr. Loewenherz provided the Commissioners with copies of an email from an International High School senior who is interested in making a presentation to the Commission on cell phone usage and its impact on auto driving.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Young reported that he attended the West Lake Sammamish Parkway open house event on March 19. He said he participated in the bus tour. The turnout was excellent and staff did a very good job.

Commissioner Matthew said he and Commissioner Elliott attended the event as well.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

Motion to allow add to the agenda an additional opportunity for petitions and communications during the discussion of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Elliott and the motion carried unanimously.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. I-405 CSS/Nickel Project Briefing

Colleen Gantz, Washington State Department of Transportation public information officer for the I-405 project, introduced design engineer Eric O'Brien. She noted that the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process seeks to incorporate safety and community values into highway projects. The process has been underway for about a year focused on the I-405 corridor. A number of people from the Bellevue area have been engaged to serve on an advisory committee, including Chair Bell, Commissioner Young and Mr. Loewenherz. The Bellevue advisory committee is part of a network of committees that are helping to guide the CSS process. One member from each of the local advisory committees sits on the overall committee focused on the entire corridor. There is also a technical committee established to review all of the information from the advisory committees to make sure the recommended features are feasible.

Ms. Gantz said an Environmental Impact Statement was completed for the entire corridor. Some of the Bellevue nickel projects could see CSS treatments, including the Wilburton Tunnel project.

The Bellevue advisory committee has worked to develop a checklist of preferences for overpass, underpass and pedestrian bridge linkages; abutment wall treatments; open spaces and plantings, including a tree theme for each community along the corridor, with Bellevue represented by the sequoia; and other corridor elements such as icon identifiers, lighting and wall textures. The advisory committees, working hand-in-hand with the aesthetics committee, developed themes common to the entire corridor; the themes included nature, modern-progressive, and Northwest culture. In the end, the nature theme took precedence. Accordingly, the color and shape of all features in the corridor will carry a similar green theme. For the back side of noise walls the committees selected the Ashlar finish and plantings wherever possible.

Ms. Gantz said the first project out of the chute will be the Kirkland nickel projects. Some of the features will be brought into play for the 116<sup>th</sup> Street interchange and noise wall. The Kirkland project will include some original art, which is part of the Sound Transit project.

Chair Bell asked where the public can go to get general information about the project. Ms. Gantz said information is available on the WSDOT website at [www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov).

Commissioner Northey said the corridor project breaks new ground and will over time make a very large difference.

## B. West Lake Sammamish Parkway Update

Dave Berg, Assistant Director Transportation Capital Projects, thanked Project Manager Nancy LaCombe for her work on the project over the past two years. He said it has been her dedication and persistence that has made the process open and transparent and very inclusive. From the start it was evident that there are differing stakeholder opinions and competing needs in the West Lake Sammamish Parkway corridor; there is no single perfect solution and the final alternative will need to represent a compromise position that best meets the needs of the whole corridor.

Mr. Berg said four primary objectives were developed at the initial public meeting in July 2003: 1) traffic concerns, including speeds, volumes, and driveway access; 2) pedestrian safety; 3) bicycle safety; and 4) neighborhood character, especially the rural character of the Parkway. In putting together alternatives, those four objectives have been paramount. The proposed preferred alternative meets all of the objectives, though it is not a perfect solution satisfying the desires of all residents along the Parkway.

Ms. LaCombe said the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project is far more than just a transportation project; it is a community project. There are many identified needs in the corridor, some of which are competing. There are also many challenges. The initial public meeting in July 2003 was followed by a series of workshops and a public forum; the final workshop was conducted in June 2004. Several open house events were held as well to present the project recommendation. Through the process comments were received from some 450 different people. Each workshop was well attended, and 250 people showed up for the public forum, of which 150 had not attended any of the workshops. Some 200 people attended the open house events. A field tour was held on March 19, prior to which 4300 newsletters were mailed out to residents. The four main themes rang out clearly in all of the public comments received.

Ms. LaCombe shared with the Commissioners an outline of the roadway cross section in the various alternatives, including the preferred alternative. She explained that the final alternative was developed because no single alternative had support from all interest groups. The biking community highlighted the difficulties associated with riding northbound for various reasons.

The residential community was ready to accept a four-foot shoulder provided it is not striped as an official bike lane. The preferred alternative includes: a four-foot shoulder from I-90 to the Redmond city limits; a 10.5-foot northbound lane and a 10-foot southbound lane; buffers ranging from two feet wide to five feet wide where there is room; and retaining walls only where necessary. Where the buffers are narrower, drivers will be given the sense that the roadway is narrower, which will make them slow down. The community wants to see a signal installed at the intersection with SE 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Some pedestrian crossing locations have sufficient room to include a pedestrian refuge island in the center.

With regard to the preliminary cost estimates developed for the project, Ms. LaCombe noted that construction alone is nearly \$12 million. To survey the entire Parkway would cost some \$300,000 and could take anywhere from six to nine months. It would cost about \$3.5 million to purchase the required drainage easements. Not included in the preliminary cost estimates is undergrounding the overhead utilities, which carries an estimated price tag of \$7 million to \$9 million, on top of which each property owner would be responsible for the costs of getting the utilities from the street to their homes at \$5000 to \$10,000 per connection. Adding streetlights to the corridor would add another \$1 million.

Ms. LaCombe said 4300 newsletters outlining the preferred alternative were sent out. To date about 85 comment forms have been returned, of which half are completely in favor of the project, a quarter are opposed to the project, and a quarter do not specifically indicate a preference one way or another. About 65 comments have been sent directly to the City Council; of those about 20 are in favor and 40 are against the project. Some of the information that was put out was not completely accurate, which resulted in some confusion. The bicycle community continues to favor having bike lanes on both sides of the roadway for its entire length. Some have said four feet of the multiuse path should be used to provide space for a bike lane; the concern with that is that the trail would cease to become a multiuse trail and would become just a pedestrian pathway.

Some comments have called for doing just what Redmond did in its section of the Parkway. Ms. LaCombe explained that Redmond terminated its project at NE 24<sup>th</sup> Street because it is a logical place to make a transition, and because the area north of that intersection has a much different character topographically.

Across the nation jurisdictions have tried various ways to deal with bike lanes and pedestrian facilities to assure safety and satisfy specific constraints. West Lake Sammamish Parkway is not a highway, though it is often treated as one. There are a number of constraints to address, including steep driveways, which could not be dealt with properly by simply widening the roadway through the entire corridor. While some have claimed that the Parkway is the most dangerous road in King County, the statistics say otherwise. Over the last seven years there have been eight accidents, seven involving bicycles and one involving a pedestrian. Of the bicycle accidents, five involved bikes traveling southbound in the multiuse path and a left-turning vehicle was, and two involved bikes traveling northbound in the multiuse path.

Residents along the Parkway have voiced concerns about vehicle speeds and have indicated a desire to see the speed limit lowered. Staff believes, however, that simply changing the speed limit signs will not change the behavior of the drivers in the corridor. Changing the roadway environment, however, could have an impact.

The claim has been made that on-street parking will be lost if the shoulder is widened on the east side. In fact there are only a couple of locations where that would be the case.

Ms. LaCombe said the challenges that remain include determining which project should go forward; how to fund the project once one is chosen; the need to survey the entire corridor; acquiring the necessary drainage easements and determining how the runoff is to be handled; signal configuration and design for the intersection with SE 34<sup>th</sup> Street; problems associated with construction disruptions; and slope stability.

A segment has been filmed for BTV and it will be aired in April. It outlines the process to date and includes interviews with a lot of people with various views. The project will be going before the City Council on April 11. Pending Council action, funding opportunities will need to be identified.

Commissioner Young voiced concerns regarding sight distances for people pulling out of driveways and not seeing northbound bicyclists. Ms. LaCombe said for the most part having the four-foot shoulder would not be a significant change from what currently exists. The shoulder area would be open to use by both bicyclists and pedestrians but not to parking. Generally residents are not using the four-foot area for parking currently; the areas being used for parking are generally wider. Until a full survey is completed, however, it will be difficult to say for sure what all the impacts will be.

Commissioner Young asked if any center left-turn lanes are included in the preferred alternative. Ms. LaCombe said the only place there would be a left-turn pocket would be at SE 34<sup>th</sup> Street at the signal. To include left-turn pockets anywhere else along the corridor would require additional widening, to which the residents are firmly opposed.

Chair Bell opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. Marty Nizlek, 312 NE West Lake Sammamish Parkway, representing the West Lake Sammamish Association, said he is a retired transportation engineer with an extensive background and a ten-year resident of the Parkway. In making a decision about the preferred alternative, the Commission should consider the different types of users. In addition to high-speed bicyclists, the corridor is used by recreational cyclists, joggers and walkers. RCW 36.81.122 indicates that no provisions need be made for bicycles, bicycle paths, lanes, routes or roadways where the cost of establishing them would be disproportionate to the need or probable use. The volume of bicycle use on the Parkway does not warrant bike lanes. The

Parkway is residential in character and has more driveways per mile than 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 140<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. He said the proposed alternative meets the requests of the 550 residents who signed a petition in 2001.

Mr. Chris Monger, 304 West Lake Sammamish Parkway NE, said the process of developing a project for the Parkway has been excellent with a good deal of public input. The preferred alternative retains the residential character of the Parkway and as such should be accepted.

Mr. Mark Schurr, 2044 West Lake Sammamish Parkway NE, disagreed with the findings of staff relative to parking. He noted that on sunny summer afternoons when local residents are entertaining guests a number of cars get parked right on the white line, because that is all there is. Taking that away would prove to be a hardship for many, especially since there already is no parking allowed on the west side of the street. There should be no bike lane on the east side of the road.

Mr. David Hiller, 801 First Avenue North, Seattle, spoke on behalf of the Cascade Bicycle Club. He indicated opposition to the project as configured, which leaves 44 percent of the corridor without a buffer. Property owners seem to be doing nothing to limit the size of the houses being built, so widening the roadway should not be a concern as it relates to preserving the rural character of the area. Some 500 Bellevue residents have indicated a preference for Alternative 4 which has designated bike lanes. The Parkway belongs to everyone in the city, not just those who live along it.

Mr. Tom Schaefer, address not given, said his family has been on the Parkway since 1926. He said he regularly cycles along the roadway. The process of developing a project alternative included ample opportunity for residents to have a say. The proposed alternative answers most of the concerns of the residents and is a good package. The problems highlighted by the bicycle enthusiasts are just not occurring and will not occur under the proposal. All that is needed is the multiuse lane that has worked well for a very long time; it needs to be upgraded but it does not need to be turned into a striped bike lane.

Mr. John Duggin, 36 Orcas Key, spoke as an avid cyclist. He said the Parkway is very dangerous from the point of view of bicyclists. It is safer to ride the shoulder of I-90 than it is to ride on West Lake Sammamish Parkway, in large part because the freeway offers a wide shoulder to ride on and no oncoming traffic. The multiuse lane will not work adequately, especially in those areas where it is exposed to traffic; there will be accidents and people will get hurt. The corridor needs a dedicated northbound bike lane.

Mr. Joe Anderson, 16765 NE 33<sup>rd</sup> Place, said he regularly rides his bicycle in the corridor. The project as proposed does not highly regard the safety needs of bicyclists. The alternative includes a one-and-a-half-foot shoulder in the southbound lane in most areas; the elite cyclists will use that space. Most bicyclists hug the inside edge of bike lanes, which is the area outside the zone where there is typically a lot of broken glass. A full four feet is not really needed for

a bike lane because the full width will not get used anyway; a three-foot bike lane would be sufficient, which could be created with very little impact. The proposal on the table should not be accepted by the Commission unless it is modified.

Mr. David Nelson, 132 West Lake Sammamish Parkway SE, indicated his support for the staff-recommended alternative. He said he is both a cyclist and a walker along the Parkway. The proposed alternative with a shared multiuse pathway answers the needs of the residents. The buffer areas will not hinder cyclists or pedestrians in any way. The entire corridor will be vastly improved if the proposed alternative gets constructed.

Mr. David Marks, 376 Northup Way, said he has been involved with the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project since 1996 when the focus was entirely on pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The original project plan failed because of the need to address more than just pedestrian and bicycle concerns. In July 1996 Councilmember Lee wanted to know how speed, volume, and road maintenance problems were translated into a pedestrian and bicycle project. Councilmember Smith cautioned against putting any money into the Parkway unless stormwater control, erosion, traffic flow, speeds and neighborhood impacts are also addressed. The Transportation Commission in 1996 concluded that a marked bike lane on the east side of the roadway should not be added. The Commission made a number of thoughtful suggestions that started the ball rolling to convert from a pedestrian and bicycle project to a neighborhood road improvement project, which is what the staff recommendation portrays. The project as outlined in fact contains significant pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The bicycle clubs have an exclusive interest in seeing bike lanes created for their particular use, but residents who live along the Parkway have a need to use the roadway to meet their needs as well. It will be an uphill battle to get the project funded, and the Commission's approval of the staff recommendation will go a long way toward bringing the project to fruition. It has not been an easy task to get the buy-off of the neighborhood, but it has happened through the concerted efforts of staff and the local residents. The bicycle clubs participated as well. No stone was left unturned. The Commission should not be tempted to change one or two features of the proposed compromise; any modification could throw the works into a tailspin and destroy the balance staff has achieved, causing the project to fail.

Mr. Lamar Bass, 12840 SE 40<sup>th</sup> Court, said his history with the Parkway extends back 37 years and involves driving, walking and biking. He said he has been a member of the pedestrian/bicycle CAG from its inception in 1993. The primary focus in designing the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project should be safety. The CAG in January formally voted to reject the staff recommendation, and voted unanimously in favor of having bike facilities both northbound and southbound along the corridor in order to separate faster cyclists from children, pedestrians, dogs and slower cyclists using the multiuse pathway. The current proposal leaves the southbound cyclists without adequate protections. The staff did not present its proposed recommendation to the CAG before finalizing it and releasing it. The proposed project will maximize motor vehicle and bicycle conflicts, and cause conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists, especially on the southbound side. Northbound cyclists need

facilities as well; absent them they will ride in the vehicle lane and cause conflicts. Cut-through traffic on 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE can be expected as the Parkway becomes more congested, making that roadway less desirable.

William Moritz, 16901 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Bothell, said his work as a bicycle transportation researcher is extensive in the areas of facilities design and conflict avoidance. He emphasized the necessity of reading pages 33 through 35 of the National Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities where the data clearly points out why the staff proposal is not a safe solution.

Ms. Claire Petersky, 1418 175<sup>th</sup> Place NE, spoke as chair of the Pedestrian/Bicycle CAG. She praised staff for the openness of the process implemented to develop the project, adding that staff went above and beyond in seeking the opinion of everyone involved, including the cycling community. There will be pedestrian/bicycle conflicts, with each other and with vehicles, resulting from the southbound multiuse path. Separating the bike traffic from the pedestrian traffic is the solution. The depth of concern shown by the CAG should be acknowledged by staff and the Commission.

Mr. Mark Sussman, president of the Sammamish Homeowners Association at 3110 West Lake Sammamish Parkway SE, said the organization participated in the 18-month process of developing an alternative and is appreciative of the efforts of staff. He voiced support for the staff-recommended plan that represents a carefully crafted compromise for all users. To make any modifications to the recommendation will only negate the extensive work accomplished to date. He offered suggestions which he said are not contingent on accepting the plan as outlined: 1) reduce the speed limit for the corridor to 30 miles per hour; 2) include in the project the undergrounding of all overhead utilities; and 3) allow for width flexibility of the northbound shoulder where appropriate.

Ms. Margaret Elsworth, 16765 NE 33<sup>rd</sup> Place, said she has heard the Sammamish Valley Trail compared to the proposed multiuse path to be created along West Lake Sammamish Parkway. The fact is, that trail is quite dangerous because of the conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists. A multiuse trail that is intended for pedestrians and bicyclists is not necessarily a positive idea for the Parkway. To promote bicycling in Bellevue, true bike lanes on both sides of the roadway should be created.

Ms. Sherry Hogsett, 3251 West Lake Sammamish Parkway SE, thanked the staff for the work done in developing the proposal, which for the most part is very good. She said there is a need for the four-foot lane for cyclists on the northbound side. People who live on the west side must watch for cyclists going both ways when accessing the Parkway. The Parkway is a community resource, very important to those who live on it, but also important to all who use it.

There were no other members of the public wishing to address the Commission.

Chair Bell thanked everyone for their comments.

Commissioner Young asked if the four-foot multiuse shoulder on the east side will be open to bicycles. Ms. LaCombe allowed that they will be, though it is not a dedicated bike lane. No parking will be allowed on that shoulder

Commissioner Northey said her greatest concern is mixing pedestrians with bicyclists. She asked why staff is not recommending shaving a couple of feet off the mixed-use pathway and using it to create a three- or four-foot shoulder for use by southbound bicyclists. Ms. LaCombe said the primary reason is traffic. The width of the overall pavement has a lot to do with how fast cars drive. Where it feels narrower, they tend to slow down, and where it feels wider they drive faster. Putting bike lanes on both sides along with a buffer would serve to widen the actual pavement area, speeding traffic. In seeking a compromise for all of the competing interests along the Parkway, staff concluded that there should be a northbound shoulder and the existing multiuse trail should be retained.

Commissioner Matthew congratulated staff on pulling together a very good project, something the community acknowledged through their comments. He said he was ready to recommend adoption of the proposal for a number of reasons. The project goes an extraordinary distance toward reaching a consensus position, something that has not existed historically. There will remain some pedestrian and bicycle concerns in the corridor; the concerns are well founded, but the project takes those concerns into consideration and weighs them against other factors, such as the needs of the local community, the topography of the area, and cost. The project represents the best shot the city has for finally getting something done for the Parkway; it should be moved forward as quickly as possible. The issues of speed and undergrounding utilities are important but should not be considered barriers to moving the project forward.

Motion to recommend to the Council adoption of the staff proposal was made by Commissioner Matthew. Second was by Commissioner Young.

Commissioner Elliott commented that the issue of parking along the corridor was studied as far back as 1991 as part of the East Bellevue Transportation Study. It was studied again in 1996, even though by then the area was not yet part of the city. Annexation of the area was completed in 2001. He agreed that the project represents the best possible opportunity to move something forward for the Parkway. The project carefully balances all concerns and represents a compromise that is acceptable to the local community.

Commissioner Yuen said he is a daily user of the Parkway. Years ago the roadway was never congested, but as the area has continued to develop the number of vehicles using the road has increased substantially. Clearly something needs to be done to improve the roadway for all who use it. There is no one solution that everyone in every interest group will be able to accept. It is time to move ahead, and the project as outlined should be adopted.

Motion to amend the motion to add direction to staff to study alternative north-south bicycle routes was made by Commissioner Northey. Second was by Commissioner Matthew.

Commissioner Matthew said further study may determine that 164<sup>th</sup> is not the best alternative route, but agreed that additional study would be beneficial.

Commissioner Yuen suggested that 164<sup>th</sup> is not a good alternative for bicycles, noting that it does not even go all the way through.

Chair Bell said he holds the same concerns. Commissioner Matthew said the amendment as proposed simply calls for additional study.

The motion to amend the main motion carried unanimously.

The main motion as amended carried unanimously.

C. Downtown Bellevue Layover

This item was rescheduled to a future meeting.

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

D. Commission Retreat Recap

Chair Bell called attention to the third item on the second page of the retreat summary and suggested that the Commission should give some thought as to how to present to the Council the issue of balancing the neighborhoods and the Downtown when developing the CIP.

Commissioner Matthew suggested that it would be helpful to be presented with census information and other data to help determine what should be asked of Council. He proposed deferring the discussion to a later meeting where a more detailed dialog will be possible. Chair Bell agreed that would be the appropriate path to take.

There was agreement that it would be appropriate to verbally outline for the Council what the Commission discussed at its retreat and what decisions were made. Chair Bell volunteered to make the presentation.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Northey asked how recruitment for new Commissioners is going. Mr. Loewenherz said he has been contacted by one individual specifically interested in the Commission. The deadline for submitting applications for all boards and commissions is March 31.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, commented that personal recruitment on the part of Commissioners is always a helpful approach to generating applications. He said he would follow up with the City Clerk's office to see if additional advertising can be done.

Commissioner Matthew suggested that if necessary a request should be made to extend the application deadline as has been done before.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioners Elliott and Northey indicated that they will not be present for the April 14 Commission meeting.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bill Serr, 1412 153<sup>rd</sup> Place SE, said he was very impressed with the presentation made by staff regarding West Lake Sammamish Parkway. He allowed, however, that safety should never be made the subject of a vote: a project is either safe or it is unsafe. There should be a northbound bike facility. The plan for the Parkway should meet all current city lighting standards. With regard to balancing the CIP between the Downtown and the neighborhoods, he suggested that most citizens really do not know where their tax dollars are being spent.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

12. REVIEW CALENDAR

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 8:58 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