

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 22, 2007
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Wendle

STAFF PRESENT: Eric Miller, Kristi Oosterveen, Vangie Parico, Department of Transportation; Ron Matthews, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Yuen 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

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller shared with the Commissioners copies of the letter written by staff in response to the request of the Sunset Community Association made during Petitions and Communications on April 8.

Mr. Miller distributed to the Commissioners information regarding upcoming Sound Transit briefings on the East Link project. He noted that the workshop on March 27 will be held in Bellevue at City Hall.

The Commissioners were encouraged to participate in the online pedestrian/bicycle survey.

Mr. Miller said the NE 24th Street project is well under way. Work on the median will require a short-term closure of the road.

A community meeting with breakout groups was recently held as part of the Bel-Red corridor study. On March 29 the steering committee will conduct a workshop focused on selecting a preferred alternative.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass said he visited Solvang recently and did a lot of bicycling. The roads are quiet and the hills are steep. He passed to staff a map produced to show the bike routes and trails there.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, reminded the Commission that cities are required by state mandate to update and adopt by the end of June each year their Transportation Improvement Program document. She presented the Commissioners with a proposed TIP project list that has been vetted by Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman and transportation staff.

The TIP provides the city with the opportunity to develop a six-year plan that includes projects that could be done during that time period if funding were available. The plan is not revenue constrained and the project list can include projects that are already funded, unfunded projects from the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP), ideas from studies, and regional projects in which the city might want to participate.

Ms. Oosterveen observed that the proposed TIP is color-coded to denote the four main project categories along with the new projects and those set for deletion. She indicated that the list includes eight new additions, six of which are from the adopted 2007-2013 CIP. The Neighborhood Sidewalks project, number 111 on the list, is also new and responds to the potential supplemental CIP proposed by the Council. Project 121, SR-520 between I-405 and West Lake Sammamish Parkway, is the last of the new projects; it is a regional project in which the city could choose to participate.

Ms. Oosterveen said the three projects from Section I that are marked for deletion are either no longer in the CIP or do not fit within the 2008-2013 timeframe. Eight projects are marked for deletion from Section II as a result of the 2006-2017 TFP update. One project from Section III

will be deleted because at this time it no longer requires action from the City. A total of 12 projects are highlighted in the proposed TIP in that they were moved from one section to another; most of the projects were listed in the previous TFP and became CIP projects.

The proposed TIP matrix listed both the unsecured and secured funding amounts. With regard to the latter, the matrix showed both local and other funding sources.

Commissioner Bell stressed the need to keep the funding level for the street overlay program where it will allow the city to keep up with the established pavement ratings. He said there is no need to over-fund the program unnecessarily. He said he would like to see some justification for project 9, the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program, and how it fares with other projects. A number of the projects on the list amount to a blank check the way the descriptions are written, including project 26, Downtown Investments/Downtown Implementation Plan implementation; there should be some narrowing of the scope.

Referring to project 37, the Transportation Trail Maintenance Program, Commissioner Bell asked why a maintenance project is shown as part of the transportation budget. Mr. Miller said the program can be compared in many ways to the overlay program; the trail program includes some maintenance but also manages vegetation along the trails. Commissioner Bell held that maintenance projects should be included in the maintenance budget.

Ms. Oosterveen allowed that the Trail Maintenance Program used to be a subsection of M-2, and explained that the overlay program has been specifically designed only to keep up, not fall behind or get ahead. The Neighborhood Traffic Control Program was before the Commission in 2006 for authorization of an increase in the budget. She also explained that an increased labor amount has been added to each CIP project budget.

Commissioner Northey asked staff to provide the Commission with a memo outlining how the Council-approved CIP differs from the recommendation forwarded by the Commission.

With regard to project 13, the Major Maintenance Program, Commissioner Northey expressed alarm that the city relies on outside money for maintenance projects. She stressed the importance of preserving the city's transportation assets before seeking to fund anything new, and it should be a flag to the Commission that there are maintenance needs not being funded with local dollars.

Commissioner Northey suggested that the adoption of a large TIP could diminish the priority of the projects in the CIP in that projects that are not the highest priority from the local perspective could potentially end up funded because they are attractive grant candidates. She agreed that there are many projects on the list that are broadly defined and which appear to have very little policy accountability, at least to the Commission.

Commissioner Bell said some of the projects are defined so broadly it is impossible to know

what is being approved. Mr. Miller pointed out that because staff does not know which projects will rise to the top and become excellent grant candidates, it is often necessary to write project descriptions broadly. Other projects, such as early implementation of the Bel-Red corridor study, are not defined at all and must necessarily be left open ended.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass about the difference between project 25, Early Implementation of Downtown Plan, and project 26, Downtown Investment/DIP Implementation, Mr. Miller said they are related projects. He said project 26 has been in the CIP under the Department of Planning and Community Development heading. Project 25 entails pre-design studies, whereas project 26 is more akin to a pilot project.

Ms. Oosterveen said the city must by state law conduct a public hearing for the TIP and she proposed scheduling it for May 10. She went on to explain that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 suggests that public hearings should be held off-campus and not at a government facility. The thinking is that the public would be more likely to attend a public hearing if held at a community center. Cities with populations of more than 100,000 must comply with Title VI in order to be eligible for federal funds for transportation projects. All public notices must also announce the availability of the notices in languages other than English.

Commissioner Bell asked staff to provide more in-depth descriptions of projects 7, 13, 16, 25, 26, 31 and 37 before holding the public hearing.

Commissioner Northey suggested that it will be a good year to have a lot of projects on the TIP list, given that there may be more dollars available for transportation projects. She added that the Commission does not have close oversight over which projects staff submits for grants. Mr. Miller said the City Council recently developed a short list of projects for which federal dollars may be appropriated. Mayor Degginger then traveled to Washington, D.C. and sat down with Senators Cantwell and Murray and Congressman Reichert to garner their support for funding the projects.

Commissioner Northey asked why project 119, Bellevue Community College Campus Transit Improvements, is considered a regional project. She suggested it will have local impacts and asked staff to provide more information about the project. Mr. Miller said the project is identified in the Bellevue Transit Plan. It will benefit King County Metro, but it will also benefit the city.

Commissioner Holler suggested there should be maps available at the public hearing outlining where the projects are, along with descriptions for each project, so that the public can effectively draw conclusions. Ms. Oosterveen cautioned against being too specific to avoid giving the idea that the projects will in fact come to be. She noted that the TIP public hearing has not traditionally drawn many from the public.

Commissioner Northey pointed out that holding the public hearing away from City Hall may

draw in the public. In that event, there should at the very least be a large map depicting the funded CIP projects. The non-CIP projects should be shown on another map marked "Other Grant Candidates." She also proposed holding the public hearing at Crossroads Mall rather than at Crossroads Community Center. Commissioner Bell concurred.

Chair Yuen pointed out that the Crossroads Community Center is a very busy place and would do as the place to hold the public hearing. He agreed that Crossroads Mall would be another good place, though the rooms available for meetings are very small.

Ms. Oosterveen said after the public hearing, the Commission will be asked to consider the feedback before formulating a recommendation to forward to the City Council. The Council is set to adopt the plan on June 4.

B. Neighborhood Sidewalk Prioritization Process

Mr. Miller noted that prior to adopting the budget the Council approved a two percent property tax increase and indicated its intent to repeat the action for nine consecutive years. The tax increase will generate in excess of \$50 million. General obligation bonds may be issued to get some of that money in hand in the early years. One of the program areas the Council specifically indicated the supplemental CIP dollars could go to is neighborhood sidewalks, and the figure they have identified is \$7.5 million. The Council has passed to the Transportation Commission the task of developing a recommendation for prioritization criteria and a prioritized project list.

The interdepartmental team that was formed identified 29 neighborhood sidewalk projects and developed a draft list of criteria. Each of the projects is well supported by their respective neighborhoods, but each is too large or expensive to be funded through the Neighborhood Enhancement Program and the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program. Few of the projects identified compete well as stand-alone CIP projects.

Mr. Miller provided the Commissioners with an updated version of Attachment B showing the identified projects along with cost estimates, including a cost-per-foot estimate, along with the ranking scores based on the alternate criteria. He noted that at the previous Commission meeting the issue was raised about including a scoring criteria based on opposition to projects. He said no project ever has full support, and there are always project impacts for some property owners. The city always works closely with property owners to mitigate impacts to the fullest extent possible. As such, staff is not suggesting the inclusion of a criteria based on opposition to a project.

Another issue raised by the Commission was what consideration should be given to projects that impact an alternate mode facility. Mr. Miller said in many cases, the projects on the list either have an existing shoulder or planned bicycle facility. Where possible, those are to be accommodated, especially when listed in the ped/bike plan.

Mr. Miller said in response to comments made previously by the Commission, the score for pedestrian accidents was raised from two to five, with a maximum of ten allowed.

Commissioner Bell asked if the accidents are rated based on whether they are correctable by the project. Mr. Miller said they are not. Commissioner Bell said he would like to see that change made and suggested it would not take long to determine if a project would solve the problem that caused the accident.

Mr. Miller said there was also discussion by the Commission related to volumes, specifically projects on classified arterials and bona fide neighborhood streets. The 140th Avenue NE project certainly has a connection to volume given that it has in excess of 10,000 average daily trips (ADT). The original criteria included a range of between one and five points; the alternate criteria give no points for streets with volumes of less than 5000 ADT, five points for streets between 5000 and 10,000 ADT, and ten points for streets with more than 10,000 ADT. The classification of streets as an arterial is not always based on volumes or even on street function; often the decision to designate or not to designate a street as an arterial is a political one.

No changes were made to the recommended criteria for linkage, primarily because the Comprehensive Plan policy language is very specific with regard to providing system connectivity with existing portions of the system. The team could not identify any projects that fail to connect to existing facilities on at least one end.

Commissioner Bell asked if there is a policy regarding sidewalks on city streets. Mr. Miller said the ped/bike plan outlines a system, and the intent of the city is to construct facilities consistent with that plan. There is no specific policy calling for sidewalks on every street in the city.

Mr. Miller said no changes were made to the ranking criteria related to the ped/bike plan but additional credit was given to projects in the TFP. A slight change was made to the destination network criteria by combining library with community center and community hub.

Commissioner Glass suggested that schools can be thought of as community centers and they almost always have bus stops associated with them. He asked if, accordingly, schools automatically get 15 points. Vangie Parico, NEP Project Manager, explained that schools are considered to be separate destinations and are scored accordingly.

Commissioner Bell suggested that the half-mile walking distance is not necessarily a good criteria; he suggested that a better criteria would be location on a school walking route plan. He also suggested that better than half of the pedestrians on the streets outside the downtown area are school children and as such the school category should have more than five points. There was agreement to increase the school criteria to ten for projects on a school walk route

and to lower each of the other five destination network criteria to four.

Commissioner Northey commented that \$7.5 million for sidewalks over a 20-year period is not very much. That could equate to only about seven projects over the time span, or one project every three years. Mr. Miller said the Council is discussing alternative financing strategies for the CIP that will stretch beyond the existing earmarked funds. Commissioner Northey suggested that seven projects over six years would be far more noticeable.

Mr. Miller said the weighting for the housing density criteria was altered by notching each of the three categories down by five points.

With regard to the projects that have existing facilities, Mr. Miller highlighted WLH-1 Lake Hills Boulevard and BT-2 140th Avenue NE.

The Commission asked staff to bring to the next meeting the matrix showing the rank number for each project under both the original and the alternate scoring criteria.

Commissioner Northey suggested that for some of the projects, notably Bridle Trails-1 NE 40th Street, not including bike lanes could reduce the overall cost. She said it would be helpful to know if the Council intended to have bicycle facilities included in the neighborhood sidewalk program. Mr. Miller commented that for some of the projects the scope includes little more than accommodation for bicycle facilities. Ms. Parico pointed out that the cost of bicycle facilities is included in the project costs in all instances where the road must be widened.

Mr. Miller said staff is willing to make the changes to the rating criteria and re-rank the project list accordingly.

The Commission rejected the idea proposed by Commissioner Glass to include negative points for projects that have existing facilities on the opposite side of the road, for replacing an existing facility, and where there is a high level of opposition by the property owners immediately adjacent to a sidewalk project.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Bell reiterated his desire to establish a coordination effort between the Commission and the Bellevue Downtown Association. He also suggested the Commission chair should craft a letter to the chair of the pedestrian/bicycle CAG thanking the committee for their work on behalf of the city, and outlining the official status of the group.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

12. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

Commissioner Northey highlighted the fact that the workshops slated in April and May for Downtown projects will be going forward even though there has been no participation by the Commission. She said it is not enough for the Commission to be made aware that information has been posted to a web page.

It was agreed that the staff should poll the Commissioners to determine their availability for the April 12 Commission meeting, given that the date falls in the middle of spring break for the Bellevue School District, and to change the meeting date to April 5 if necessary.

B. Public Involvement Calendar

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bell. Second was by Commissioner Glass and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Yuen adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date