

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 25, 2006
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Holler, Wendle

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Kris Liljeblad, Eric Miller, Kristi Oosterveen, Kevin McDonald, Jen Benn, Karen Gonzalez, Hillary Stibbard-Terrell, Mark Poch, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

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 Commissioners Holler and Wendle, both of whom were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller informed the Commission that the Council at its May 15 meeting took action to award a contract for the NE 24th Street walkway/bikeway project. The bids came in high, but the Council moved savings from several other projects to the budget to fully fund the project.

Mr. Miller told the Commissioners that the Council acted that same night to award a contract for the 140th Avenue NE pathway project in Bridle Trails.

The Council discussed the option of using surplus funds to finish the Lake Hills Boulevard project. Mr. Miller said the issue will be back for formal action in June, but the Council approved in concept the idea of filling the gap between an intersection project at 148th Avenue NE and Lake Hills Boulevard and the Neighborhood Investment Strategy project focused on the sidewalk, planters and trees to the east of that point to about 150th Avenue NE.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Northey informed the Commissioners that the next Women's Transportation Seminar meeting will be held on June 6. The focus will be on transportation funding and governance for Central Puget Sound.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lloyd Jacobs, 2004 128th Avenue SE, commented that the city has spent a lot of time and money to get east/west traffic out of the Downtown area. What the Wilburton area sorely needs is north/south circulation improvements. Among other things, 124th Avenue NE needs to be connected south to the Lake Hills Connector. If SR-520 could be connected to 124th as well, there would be an excellent north/south route through the eastern part of the city, taking a lot of pressure off the intersection at 148th Avenue NE and SR-520. The roadway should be below grade beginning north of Bel-Red Road and running all the way to the south of Wilburton Hill. Such a configuration would allow for accommodating all existing roadways and traffic. The new roadway should be at least four lanes wide, and in the industrial area of Bel-Red the at-grade portion should be five lanes with a center turn lane.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2007-2013 Capital Investment Program Update Process

Mr. Miller presented to the Commission the staff's preliminary recommendation and said the Commission will be asked on June 8 to begin developing its recommendation. A final recommendation from the Commission will need to be approved on June 22.

Mr. Miller explained that the 12-year unfunded Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) project list forms the basis for the CIP candidate project list. He explained the process of re-costing the projects on the current CIP, noting that the process does not contemplate any scheduling revisions. One key issue using up some of the available revenues is the continuation of ongoing programs, most of which have set annual allocations without a built-in inflation factor.

For the overall CIP, the projected revenue stream 2007-2013 is some \$65 million. For the 2009-2011 time period, the \$30 million in available resources is programmed by program area, not to specific projects. In the two new years of the CIP, the projection is there will be in the neighborhood of \$35 million in revenues. Over the years, transportation projects have received 55.8 percent of the total; that percentage would yield \$36.3 million available for transportation improvements.

The Commission acted at its last meeting to add the NE 4th Street extension project to the TFP project list. Staff is recommending also enhancing some existing programs and has identified some potential new ongoing programs to address emerging needs. The Bel-Red corridor study that is ongoing will have project recommendations attached to it, so an early implementation fund should be established in the CIP.

Commissioner Young asked to what extent there has been re-costing of the ongoing programs. Mr. Miller explained that the overlay program is taking a significant hit because of the increase in oil prices. He said the program was set up in 1996 with an allocation of \$3 million, inflated annually; the program is aimed at keeping the pavement ratings at a consistent level. The base amount included for 2007 is \$4.4 million. The steep cost escalations of the past year are not

covered by the set inflation rate used; the preliminary indication is that costs have increased by some 32 percent per lane mile and that will have to be taken into consideration.

Answering a question asked by Chair Bell, Mr. Miller said the overlay program numbers are based on what is needed to maintain current pavement ratings. He said it was necessary for the city to obtain a line of credit for cash flow within the 2003-2009 CIP. The overlay budget for 2006 was shrunk to about \$2.5 million, and the savings were pushed into 2008 and 2009. The increased oil costs have run up project costs, and to cover them funds have had to be moved forward from the out years.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, pointed out the annual programs that operate with a fixed allocation have not been grown substantially over the years. The list of those programs includes minor capital improvements, traffic safety, and the pedestrian/bicycle program.

Commissioner Northey noted that when the 150th Avenue NE project at Eastgate was awarded, the scope was reduced to fit within the budget. She asked if there is interest in building the rest of the project by adding funds to the CIP. Mr. Miller said the biggest challenge with the project is the political boundary between Bellevue and unincorporated King County and whether or not the city can make investments in areas outside its jurisdiction.

Chair Bell said he would hesitate to recommend any additional funding for the program or project scope changes until the annexation issues are resolved. Mr. Liljeblad allowed that while there was an agreement in place between the city and the county for the project, King County could only fund its portion of the previous cost estimate. Although the project costs escalated, the King County contribution remains the same, and that is why the project scope was ultimately cut back.

Traffic Engineering Manager Mark Poch explained that the M2 program is ongoing by nature. It receives a relatively small funding allocation that has not been increased since the mid-1980s. The program allows staff to bridge the gap between projects that are too big for the operating budget but too small for the CIP. There are three separate aspects of the program, one serving electrical/traffic signal systems, one serving non-electrical issues such as signing, striping and safety improvements, and one focused on pedestrian/bicycle opportunities. The three focus areas are quite different in functionality and have different project managers, so it might make sense to split M2 into its component parts with specific funding for each.

Commissioner Young asked if M2 is used for maintenance of the signal system. Mr. Poch said expansion and maintenance generally comes out of capital funds, though often grant funds are leveraged using the M2 dollars. For instance, the project to put more fiber optic lines in the ground and more traffic cameras in place was done using a Homeland Security grant that was leveraged using \$90,000 in M2 funds.

Traffic Engineering Manager Hillary Stibbard-Terrell said the \$90,000 leveraged into about \$500,000. However, the intersection upgrade portion of M2 only receives \$75,000 per year, so it was necessary to borrow against future years. The channelization and signage portion of M2 also receives an annual allocation of \$75,000, while the pedestrian/bicycle portion receives \$25,000. The number of requests for crosswalks, crosswalk upgrades and pedestrian facilities in the last couple of years has skyrocketed, far exceeding the ability of the ped/bike portion of M2 to address. A bid opening recently occurred for a crosswalk upgrade on a multilane road

where there have been a number of pedestrian accidents came in at \$60,000; that will require saving up two and a half years to do the one project.

Ms. Stibbard-Terrell noted that over the past few years the channelization/signage and ped/bike sub-programs ebb and flow against each other. It may be prudent to combine the two, but in any event each should be awarded a larger annual allocation to better address the evident needs.

With regard to the traffic computer system upgrade and ITS implementation program, Mr. Poch explained that in 2004 the transportation department initiated an ITS master planning process. Since then a number of the high-priority projects from the plan have been implemented, including upgrading the traffic management center, laying fiber optic cable, and installing new traffic cameras. The city has also developed what amounts to the first real-time arterial traffic map in the state. There are still other high-priority elements on the to do list, and what is needed is dedicated funding. Replacement of the traffic computer system is the most important uncompleted task; the project includes complete replacement of the hardware and software, and upgrading the field communication system. The project will require a senior engineer to design and implement the system. One challenge facing the city is the fact that the number of shop staff tasked with maintaining the system has not increased since 1991 even though the number of items to maintain has significantly increased since then.

Commissioner Northey asked about the cost difference for repairing versus replacing, and said she would like information explaining the cost effectiveness of upgrading the system. Bellevue has the best operating system in the state, and while there are constrained resources may not be the best time to try making a good system better. Mr. Poch said the existing system was upgraded in 2000. There are two different parts to the overall system, the traffic computer hardware and software, and a field communications system. The existing traffic computer system is not Window-based, it is on a server the IT department cannot even support, and the way it is set up limits the ability to communicate effectively with the intersections. The field communication system is a 1200 baud system, which is slower than a dial-up internet connection. The proposal is to leverage some of the fiber optic cables in the field to create an ethernet ring, allowing for more ability to control the system quickly.

Mr. Liljeblad pointed out the upgrade will allow for more opportunities to deal with signal priority for transit vehicles. The current system does not readily allow for that. Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz added that there have been a number of missed opportunities to leverage funds with King County Metro to install transit priority systems at different intersections, but because the current system would not allow for control of such devices, Metro chose not to invest.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Young, Mr. Poch said there will be both one-time costs and ongoing costs associated with the project. He said the city's IT department has taken over some of the ownership of the field communication system. They manage much of the system and sell some of the excess capacity to other companies. The fire and police departments would benefit from the possibility of a wireless system.

Mr. Poch said ITS will not solve congestion problems, but it will help the city manage it. It can also be used to provide the public with information about the transportation system.

Commissioner Northey asked if Redmond has an ITS system and if it can be linked with

Bellevue's in a subregional approach to managing traffic. Mr. Poch said Redmond is working to develop an ITS system and a traffic management center. The Bellevue system will link with the Redmond system when it is up and running.

Mr. Loewenherz said Metro has estimated that the ITS system installed at the South Bellevue park and ride lot saves \$25,000 annually in operating costs because of the time savings in getting into and out of the facility. A number of other high-priority corridors have been identified, and Metro and Sound Transit will help pay for the ITS facilities, but the Bellevue system will need to be upgraded first.

Turning to the major maintenance program, Mr. Poch said there are specific systems in the city, such as rockeries, that are deteriorating at a rate that is outpacing the city's ability to keep up using the operating budget. The current thinking of staff is that instead of having separate programs for rockeries, guard rails and streetlights, the better approach would be to have one overarching major maintenance program. The city has generally good street lighting systems, but some are not bonded, which means the energy source comes directly from a Puget Sound Energy feed without any breakers. The streetlights along 148th date back to 1972 and it is no longer possible to maintain them as parts cannot be found.

Chair Bell asked if there are any immediate liability concerns. Mr. Poch allowed that there are, noting that the street lighting issues offer potential liabilities. There are also rockeries that could fall down, guardrails with sharp edges, and handrails that need to be replaced.

Commissioner Northey suggested the city should always seek to maintain what it has and questioned whether maintenance should be funded from the capital budget or the operating budget. Mr. Miller said when the city constructs a CIP facility, capital maintenance and operations dollars are set aside. Those funds then move into the operating budget. The problem is there is a backlog of items that have not been addressed, and that is eating away at the available resources.

Neighborhood Services Manager Karen Gonzalez said the program has been around for 21 years. She said it has seen periodic increases to its annual budget over time. However, in 1998 the City Council directed changes in the program that focus more on area-wide traffic calming plans. The program has moved away from only installing measures such as speed humps toward a comprehensive approach that includes medians, entries, curb extensions, and other such measures that cost more to design and build. The program is responsible for education, the Residential Permit Parking Zone Program, and some aspects of pedestrian and traffic safety.

Ms. Gonzalez said the program receives an annual allocation of \$375,000 without an inflationary adjustment. An additional \$75,000 would help offset some of the programs that are falling short. Along with general increases in project costs, the number of project requests from the community is steadily increasing. Throughout the year, the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program partners with other programs, including M2, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program and the Pedestrian Access Improvements Program.

Commissioner Northey asked if consideration has been given to outsourcing the Residential Permit Parking Zone Program as a way of expanding the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. She said the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program is wonderful, and the city owes the citizens more such programs. Mr. Liljebld said there have been discussions focused on

increasing the Residential Permit Parking Zone Program fees to generate more revenue. Ms. Gonzalez said there is currently no permit fee for the program at all. Most cities charge between \$15 and \$20 per year. The program is not overly resource intensive. Commissioner Northey suggested the program would be right for the Bellevue TMA.

Commissioner Young asked if increasing the annual allocation by \$75,000 will be sufficient to address the need. Ms. Gonzalez said she is limited to some degree by staffing concerns. The proposed increase will help to reduce the backlog.

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said he manages the Pedestrian Access Improvement Program. He said the focus of the program is the construction of sidewalks in partnership with other city programs and outside entities such as Sound Transit. The program is currently funded at \$325,000 per year, and the proposal is to increase the allocation by \$75,000, which is about the amount of money needed to build one block of sidewalk. The project allows the flexibility needed to respond to citizen requests. The criteria used to prioritize the projects are based on the goals and objectives of the ped/bike plan. Short connections that fill gaps can make a big difference in the walkability of neighborhoods.

Chair Bell asked if there has been any discussion of constructing missing sidewalk segments using an LID. Mr. McDonald said the Pedestrian Access Improvement Program has never partnered with an LID, but that is not to say funding projects with an LID is inappropriate. He added that the program primarily funds sidewalks along arterials, which are not necessarily internal to a neighborhood and may not be suitable for an LID.

Mr. Liljeblad said the stairway project just to the west of the South Bellevue park and ride lot, the 107th Street hill climb from Bellevue Way towards Enatai Park and elementary school, and several linkages associated with Neighborhood Enhancement Program projects, have been built in cooperation with the Pedestrian Access Improvement Program.

Commissioner Northey noted her support for the program, noting that it is nice to be able to say yes to citizens every now and then.

Mr. McDonald said the program has branched out to assist with bicycle facilities in the Downtown. During 2005 the program installed 30 bike racks on Downtown sidewalks; an additional 20 racks are planned for installation in 2006.

Turning to the preliminary staff CIP funding recommendation, Mr. Miller said the top project on the list, 145th Place SE from SE 8th Street to SE 24th Street, and SE 22nd Street from 145th Place to 156th Place SE, is an Neighborhood Investment Strategy project; it was the number one recommendation of the West Lake Hills NIS process. The project was initially given a placeholder in the amount of \$3.1 million. As the final design stage is approached, it appears the placeholder funding amount will fund the 145th Place improvements between SE 8th Street and Kamber Road, which is about half of the corridor. The proposed allocation of \$5.125 million will complete the corridor.

Mr. Miller said the West Lake Sammamish Parkway north city limit to I-90 project is consistent with the TFP recommendation. The \$5 million is a placeholder only for the much larger project; the investment will complete a preliminary design for the entire five-mile corridor and work with the community in identifying a meaningful segment to be built. Grants are being sought for the project, and it is possible that the city could seek a Public Works Trust

Fund loan.

Grant applications are also pending for the NE 8th Street project between 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE. The project will be closely coordinated with the Wasatch development on the north side of the block. The project will also support other Downtown Implementation Plan recommendations, including the one-way couplet.

Mr. Miller said \$1 million has been included for early implementation of the Bel-Red corridor plan. There will be recommendations for transportation projects that could have significant costs, and the early implementation funds could be used for pre-design work or for working with Redmond to update the BROTS agreement.

The NE 4th Street extension project is on the staff recommended list with a placeholder of \$1 million. The funds may be used to help secure the necessary right-of-way alignment.

Chair Bell suggested that the intersection improvements at NE 8th Street/120th Avenue NE should be constructed first. Commissioner Northey concurred. She asked staff to bring to the next meeting a cost estimate for the project so the Commission can consider adding it to the list.

Mr. Miller said one of the things staff was asked to do by the Finance Department and the City Manager to prepare for the recent Council retreat focused on the budget was to come up with a list of high-priority projects. Staff had difficulty complying since there had as yet not been a process undertaken to develop a project list but eventually developed and submitted the draft staff project list presented tonight. The Council also asked staff to come up with a list of needed projects that cannot be funded; on that list was the balance of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project and the realignment of 120th Avenue NE.

Mr. Liljeblad allowed that 120th Avenue NE is an important north/south route relative to the Bel-Red study. He suggested that it likely will end up quite high on the list as a result of that study. The Wilburton neighborhood is also anxious to see the roadway improved across NE 8th Street. He added that it is becoming increasingly clear that the Washington State Department of Transportation braided project connecting I-405 with SR-520 will extend from NE 8th Street up to the vicinity of 124th Avenue NE. The intersection of SR-520 and 124th Avenue NE appears to be the logical place to improve an interchange allowing movements both to and from the east and the west. Under that scenario, 124th Avenue NE becomes the obvious north/south route tying into SR-520, and some continuity for that route tying south into the Downtown should be considered, probably using 120th Avenue NE. The possibility of extending 124th Avenue NE south to the Lake Hills Connector was discussed during the Downtown Implementation Plan process, but the Wilburton neighborhood came out strongly against the notion. From a functional standpoint, the model did not show the roadway attracting that much traffic on the southern end.

Mr. Miller said the 108th Avenue SE from Bellevue Way to I-90 project includes bike lanes on both sides and a sidewalk on one side. The route serves a school and sees heavy pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, explained that the SE 60th Street project between Lake Washington Boulevard and Coal Creek Parkway is in the Newport Hills area where there have been small segments of sidewalk constructed over time using the Neighborhood Enhancement

Program. The proposed project would design and construct the missing sidewalks and bike lanes along the corridor. A first phase, for which funding is proposed, would construct missing sidewalk and bike lanes on the south side between Lake Washington Blvd. and 119th Avenue SE and construct the facilities on the north side of the roadway between 119th and 129th Avenues SE. Future funding would have to be used to construct the second phase of the project, which would complete the south side from 119th to Coal Creek Parkway, and the north side between Lake Washington Blvd and 119th Avenue SE.

Commissioner Glass questioned the usefulness of facilities along the steep section of the roadway; he said there is nowhere for pedestrians to go on Coal Creek Parkway, and there are a lot of other bicycle routes in the area cyclists would choose to avoid the hill.

Mr. Miller said the project on NE 8th Street from Lake Washington Boulevard to 96th Avenue NE would finish the sidewalk on the north side. The 152nd Avenue SE and SE 45th Street project from SE 46th Street to Newport Way was the Commission's top project for the use of the available resource allocation from the mid-biennium process in 2005. Part of the shoulder and lane is sloughing off and needs to be addressed; some geotechnical work is under way to determine what needs to be done. The roadway serves a grade school.

The project on SE 34th Street between 162nd Place SE and West Lake Sammamish Parkway involves the design and construction of a sidewalk on the north side and widened curb lanes for bicycles. The project on NE 40th Street from 140th Avenue NE to 148th Avenue NE is intended to provide a separated pathway on the north side of the roadway and wide curb lanes for bicycles.

Mr. Miller explained that the NE 2nd Street project between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE is a placeholder component of a much larger DIP-recommended project. Much of the corridor improvements will need to be constructed in coordination with new development.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Northey, Mr. Liljeblad explained that in the 2020 horizon year, NE 2nd Street and NE 10th Street are predicted to be carrying about as much volume as NE 4th Street currently. The difficulty with NE 2nd Street is that for much of its length there is a two-lane profile with parking on both sides; for the long range, the anticipation is that the roadway will need to be widened to five lanes, and there is presently no consistent design for the entire roadway. Absent a plan, the city will have a hard time getting development to pay for part of the new frontage.

Commissioner Northey suggested that if the funding line gets moved up, the NE 2nd placeholder figure could be trimmed somewhat and the savings put toward neighborhood traffic calming or other programs.

Commissioner Young pointed out that eventually there will be an additional interchange on I-405 at NE 2nd Street with ramps to and from the south. The design for the rest of the roadway needs to take that into account.

Chair Bell referred to the TFP project list and noted that the one, seven, eight and eleven priority projects are not included in the staff recommendation. Mr. Miller explained that in the minds of staff the Lakemont Boulevard project between Cougar Mountain Way and Lewis Creek, and from 164th Avenue SE to 171st Avenue SE will not have much benefit for the city as a whole. The city has invested a great deal of money in the vicinity in the recent past.

Commissioner Northey suggested the signal portion of the project is very important. Chair Bell agreed that a temporary signal operation could be one way to approach the issue until the full project can be constructed. Mr. Liljeblad said the traffic concerns are focused primarily on the peak periods. Staff would prefer to address long-standing issues or those which have more of an ongoing demand.

Mr. Miller said staff did not include the Northup Way project from Bellevue Way to NE 24th Street because a CIP-funded pre-design process is funded to start in 2007 and should be allowed to run its course to see how the overall project could be phased. Any future widening of SR-520 could impact Northup Way. There are minimal shoulders and few facilities for walking and biking, so the project is very important and should be addressed during the next funding cycle.

Chair Bell proposed including a placeholder for the project. Commissioner Glass agreed and suggested there may be some interim fixes that could make the route more passable. Mr. Miller said the alternative analysis should provide an answer to that question. There are drainage issues involved and they will drive up the project costs. Mr. Liljeblad agreed that staff could explore whether there may be an inexpensive temporary fix that could improve things for the short term.

Mr. Miller said staff will take the input received from the Commission and the public during the open house and come back with an updated preliminary recommendation for consideration.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass regarding the NE 10th Street extension, Mr. Miller explained that the Council has approved a cost sharing agreement with the state. Under the agreement, the city will transfer lead agency status over to the state, and the state will pay the city for most of the local revenues put into the project. That could free up some local dollars that have been earmarked for the project.

Commissioner Yuen asked if each of the program enhancement requests could be rolled into a single ask for forwarding to the Council. Ms. Oosterveen explained that the existing programs will have to be shown individually on cost/benefit forms. She allowed that the recommendation of the Commission could elect to show the individual program increases together as a single line item, but in going forward to the Council each program will be shown on a separate cost/benefit form because of the way the system works.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12817 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, thanked the Commission for considering the pedestrian and bicycle needs along Northup Way. He said it would be good to have something done to improve safety even if only on a temporary basis.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

12. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion to nominate Commissioner Young to serve as Chair was made by Commissioner Yuen. Second was by Commissioner Northey and the motion carried unanimously.

There were no other nominations offered.

The motion to elect Commissioner Young as Chair carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Yuen to serve as Vice Chair was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Glass and the motion carried unanimously.

There were no other nominations offered.

The motion to elect Commissioner Yuen as Vice Chair carried unanimously.

The gavel was passed to Commissioner Young and he thanked Chair Bell for his two years of leadership.

13. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

B. Public Involvement Calendar

14. ADJOURNMENT

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

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date