

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 22, 2006
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Young, Vice Chair Yuen, Commissioners Holler, Wendle

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Bell, Glass, Northey

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Nancy LaCombe, Kristi Oosterveen, Kris Liljeblad, Jen Benn, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Young who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Bell, Glass and Northey, all of whom were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS – None

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Wendle reported that he spent a week in New York at a rail conference and saw many examples of projects from around the country. He said it was very educational.

Chair Young took a moment to thank Commissioner Bell for his two years of service to the Commission as Chair.

Chair Young announced that on June 26 beginning at 6:00 p.m. there will be a public hearing on high-capacity transit options. He said the two types of technology under consideration are dedicated bus across I-90 and light rail.

Commissioner Wendle said he intends to attend the public hearing and provide his input. He said in his presentation he will stress that he is speaking on his own behalf and not on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Yuen said he attended the June 21 open house on Mercer Island focused on the

SR-520 bridge project. He said it appears that when reconstructed the bridge will become a toll road with a cost of about \$3.00 each way.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12817 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, pointed out that NE 2nd Street is listed as a primary bicycle route in the 1999 ped/bike plan. He also commented that at the SR-520 executive meeting there was discussion of having the various cities pass ordinances recommending their preferred plan.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. NE 2nd Street Pre-Design

Project Manager Nancy LaCombe said pre-design is under way for the NE 2nd Street project between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE. She said the project is focused on widening the roadway from three lanes with on-street parking to five lanes. The design will accommodate left-turn movements with a center turn lane where needed; dedicated right-turn pockets may be included at some intersections. The new roadway will be designed to arterial standards with curb, gutter and sidewalk. The needs and opportunities for on-street parking will be evaluated along with opportunities for implementing pedestrian facilities and urban design treatments outside the curb lane in accord with the great streets theme. The need for the project was identified as part of the preferred alternative for the Downtown Implementation Plan.

Ms. LaCombe noted that there is currently a lot of on-street parking along NE 2nd Street, and that is proving to be one of the challenges. She shared with the Commissioners a map of the area depicting which properties are likely and unlikely to redevelop in the near future, along with those properties that are currently under construction. NE 2nd Street is shown in the ped/bike plan as a primary route, but through the Downtown Implementation Plan it was determined that Main Street should in fact serve as the primary bicycle route, with NE 2nd Street serving as a secondary bicycle route; there is currently, and will continue to be into the future, less traffic on Main Street.

Ms. LaCombe said input from the public regarding the project has been sought, including from the Bellevue Downtown Association. The pre-design work should wrap up by January 2007.

Chair Young asked what the alignment will be where NE 2nd Street intersects with 114th Avenue NE. Ms. LaCombe said there will be an overpass crossing I-405 and a half-diamond interchange to the south of NE 2nd Street. There will be no conflict between the new overcrossing and NE 2nd Street.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Ms. LaCombe said one of the challenges for the design phase will be how to avoid constructing a concrete arterial through an area that needs some green space and more of a multimodal face. The study is needed in order to put in place guidelines to be followed when properties along NE 2nd Street redevelop.

B. Forest Drive – Phase 1 & 2

Ms. LaCombe said the original project limits involved Forest Drive between Coal Creek Parkway and SE 63rd Street. The objectives were focused on motor vehicle, bicycle and

pedestrian safety, and reducing the number of accidents on the approach to Coal Creek Parkway where the grade is about 14 percent. Some operational changes were made in 1999; they included the addition of a flashing light to warn motorists of the steep grade and signal ahead. In a six-year period there were 44 accidents: 21 were the approach to Coal Creek Parkway; four involved rollovers; and eight have occurred since the new sign was installed.

On the upper part of Forest Drive, the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour, but actual vehicle speeds average much higher. The roadway did not originally have bicycle lanes, and the existing sidewalks were not in very good shape.

The original project scope included regrading the entire hillside with an eight percent slope, and adding curb, gutter and sidewalk all the way. Because within the corridor there are 23 areas classified as wetlands, a significant amount of permitting would have been required, and a significant amount of environmental work would have had to be done. In addition, there is the issue of the Puget Sound Energy transmission line and the Olympic pipeline that crosses the roadway. In the original plan, it was determined that the pipeline would have to be lowered with a bore of about 50 feet.

Ms. LaCombe said at the 50 percent design phase the project cost stood at \$18,750,000. The budget for the project in the CIP was only \$8,413,000, leaving a shortfall of \$10,337,000. Accordingly, the project went through a value engineering process to identify possible project modifications that can optimize funds without sacrificing project objectives. The recommendation of the project evaluation team for Phase 1 was to restripe the entire corridor for bicycle lanes and left-turn pockets; add a soft-surface trail on the south side of the roadway; modify the existing signing near Coal Creek Parkway; add traction enhancing surface on the slope nearing Coal Creek Parkway; and consider the installation of a radar speed sign near the approach to Coal Creek Parkway. For Phase 2, the recommendation was to re-grade the lower section to allow for the creation of a right-turn lane onto Coal Creek Parkway.

The re-scoped project when costed out in 2003 came to \$6,060,000, which yielded a balance of savings to the CIP in the amount of \$2,353,000.

Ms. LaCombe said the Phase 1 improvements have been completed. The width of the vehicle lanes was reduced to about 10 feet to allow for bicycle lanes and a permeable asphalt trail along the south side of the roadway. Left-turn pockets were installed at some intersections, signage was improved, and a radar sign was installed. In addition, a traction improving pavement was installed on the slope approaching Coal Creek Parkway which is still being evaluated. It has worked very well overall, and since the improvements were made there has been only one accident on the approach, and it was due to brake failure.

The Phase 2 plans are at the 50 percent stage. The design work has been halted pending environmental permitting, both State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA).

There remain some outstanding elements associated with the project. When the temperature reaches the upper 70's there is a distinct odor that emanates from the improved traction surface. The department is working with both risk and legal to determine how best to resolve the issues. There has also been some water seepage come through the seams in the pavement which can be addressed by installing a drain interceptor. There have also been continued issues with vehicle speeds on the upper portion of the roadway; speeds on the lower portion

have improved where the radar sign has been installed. Staff is recommending the installation of two more speed signs and increased enforcement.

Ms. LaCombe said the Phase 1 improvements have met the initial project objectives of reducing accidents and completing an important link in the city's pedestrian and bicycle network. Continued evaluation of the enhanced traction surface is warranted. Staff believes the Phase 2 improvements should be rescoped to focus only on outstanding concerns. The right-turn regrade can be revisited at a later date if necessary. The leftover funds in the amount of \$2,556,417 should be reallocated to other projects.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Ms. LaCombe said staff has been disappointed that restriping the lanes and adding bicycle lanes on the upper portion of the roadway has not significantly reduced vehicle speeds.

Motion to accept the recommendations of the interdepartmental project team was made by Commissioner Wendle. Second was by Commissioner Yuen and the motion carried unanimously.

C. State of Mobility Report

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, reminded the Commissioners that in the past the State of Mobility Report has been written to cover a two-year period. Last year, conversations with the Commission, staff, and those who rely on the report, the conclusion was reached that the report should become an annual report. Accordingly, efforts are under way to produce a report for 2005.

Ms. Oosterveen said the proposal of staff is to retain the format and layout of the document. In order to save time for staff, a template has been developed which assists in keeping the data current.

Jen Benn, Grants Coordinator, allowed that the report is in draft form and asked the Commissioners to comment on the content and the manner in which the content is presented.

Chair Young asked if basic changes are planned to any of the charts. Ms. Benn said there will be no changes to the charts. Ms. Oosterveen pointed out that program plans are updated on a two-year cycle, so some of the charts and tables will have the same information included as in the last State of Mobility Report. The TFP information in the 2005 report will not be the same as that approved by the Commission in December 2005; when the TFP is updated again in 2006, it will appear in the 2006 State of Mobility Report. That information will be noted in the report.

Ms. Benn noted that overall the 2005 report will show the good transit information. It will show a slight increase in the number of accidents in the city, something the safety team will be addressing in the coming year.

Ms. Oosterveen said the first chapter will again be an executive summary of the report. She asked the Commission to read through the draft and to provide comments and suggestions to staff by July 7. It was agreed that the Commissioners would mail in their comments and proposed revisions via hard copy so the finished report can be available at the July 27 Commission meeting.

Chair Young commented that having a consistent format year to year will make it easier to make comparisons.

Commissioner Wendle asked if any other city produces a similar report. Ms. Oosterveen said she has not heard of any.

Chair Young asked how many copies of the report are printed each year. Ms. Oosterveen said the report is available online, and some 100 to 150 copies are printed and distributed annually.

****BREAK****

D. Downtown Implementation Plan Status Report

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said the city recently received an award from the American Planning Association for "Realizing the Residential Vision in Downtown Bellevue." He said the level of current growth in the downtown is unprecedented and some have questioned whether or not the city has sufficient capacity to handle the growth. The downtown plan was framed for a 20-year timeframe from a year 2000 baseline. More recently 2030 information has been generated as the timeline has been moved further out. The forecasts provide the basis for all transportation modeling and environmental decisions.

In 2000, there were around 35,000 jobs in the downtown, and the 2020 forecast was for an increase of 44,000 to a total of 79,000 jobs. Before the downtown plan was finished, however, there was an economic downturn and vacancy rates were climbing, so the forecast was revised downward to a growth of 28,000 jobs and a total of 63,000 jobs. The 28,000 new jobs have been broken down into approximations of square footage by category as follows: office, 7.2 million square feet; retail, 1.5 million; hotel, 1589 new rooms; and other, 456,000 square feet.

On the residential side, there were around 2000 units in the downtown in 2000, and the downtown population stood at about 3000. In 2005 there were some 4500 residents, which means the population increased by 50% in only five years. The 2020 forecast is for 14,000 residents in the downtown in 11,100 units.

Mr. Liljeblad said a number of projects are in the pipeline and under construction. Included are 4.65 million square feet of office; 1874 housing units; and 650,000 square feet of retail; and a performing arts center.

Over the past 20 years, office growth in the downtown has been averaging some 230,000 square feet annually; some 1.1 million square feet has been constructed just within the last five years. Office growth has historically occurred in cycles. In 2000 there was about 5.8 million square feet of office total. Between 2000 and 2005 another five percent was added. If everything that currently is in the pipeline gets built, the 2010 office forecast will be exceeded but the total will be short of the 2020 forecast by 21 percent. There are questions about how long the current boom will last and how much time will be needed to fill up the spaces being created; it is generally accepted that not all of the projects in the pipeline will actually get constructed.

Mr. Liljeblad reviewed with the Commissioners the office projects that are currently under construction and those in the pipeline.

The Commissioners were shown a map of the downtown indicating the distribution of existing housing units and were informed that the 20-year forecast for the downtown plan included an average of about 430 new units per year. The housing market did better than any other sector during the recent economic downturn; it continued to grow while the other sectors slowed. The market is strong for both condominiums and townhouse units. There has been a 21 percent increase in the number of housing units in the downtown since 2000. There are some 1500 units currently under construction, and there are some 2000 units in the pipeline. If everything in the pipeline gets constructed, the 2010 forecast will be surpassed, but there will still be some 40 percent unallocated from the 2020 forecast. From a transportation perspective, more residential units rather than less is better because downtown residents are more likely to use transit and alternative modes of travel.

Mr. Liljeblad reviewed with the Commissioners the residential projects that are currently under construction and those in the pipeline.

Chair Young commented that as the number of residential units and the jobs in the downtown grows, there will be more pedestrians. He asked if changes to the light cycles giving the pedestrians more time to cross the streets are planned. Mr. Liljeblad allowed that at many intersections in the downtown pedestrians are not given a walk sign unless they push the button. There are a number of things like that that could be changed relatively easily. As more time is given to pedestrians, less time is given to vehicles, so there is always a tradeoff to be considered.

Mr. Liljeblad said a new pedestrian overcrossing between Lincoln Square and Bellevue Place is in the permitting phase. He said there are criteria that have been adopted for the downtown that limit where pedestrian overcrossings will be allowed, largely because such structures have been shown in some Midwestern cities to kill street-level activity. Where there are underground parking garages, it makes some sense to create below-grade street crossings. However, people are less inclined to use underground facilities where there are alternate choices.

Commissioner Wendle asked if cities of a similar scale to Bellevue are experiencing similar types of growth. Mr. Liljeblad said the region is experiencing economic vitality. Downtown Seattle and South Lake Union are growing very rapidly, and Belltown and many of the more urban neighborhoods are growing rapidly; even single family neighborhoods in Bellevue are rapidly filling up the remaining vacant lots. The 63,000 jobs forecast for the downtown, however, represents a level of growth far exceeding other jurisdictions in the region.

Mr. Liljeblad said while the primary focus of growth in the city is in the downtown, the Bel-Red corridor has a great deal of potential as well.

Mr. Liljeblad shared with the Commissioners information about the number of trips to the downtown currently, and compared that against the forecasted 2030 trip patterns. He pointed out that the most dramatic growth in daily trips will be to the north and northeast. Mr. Loewenherz added that although trips from Snohomish County will account for twice the number of daily trips coming from across the lake, but the projections for travel by transit are almost equal, which is why the focus will continue to be on rapid transit solutions across the lake. Mr. Liljeblad said the same percentages apply to the peak hour figures, though the number of trips across the lake will not grow as fast, due in large part to the fact that the

capacity is mostly maxed out. Between 2020 and 2030, the number of daily trips to and from the downtown are expected to grow by 126 percent.

The difficulties of managing congestion within the downtown were faced by the Downtown Implementation Plan Citizen Advisory Committee. They recognized that the street pattern is immature and that there are both underutilized and overutilized streets. The superblock grid in the downtown yields only half the public right-of-way of a downtown like Portland's. A number of improvements were discussed and analyzed, including widening Bellevue Way in both directions; adding new connections to the north at 112th Avenue NE and 116th Avenue NE; widening 120th Avenue NE and adding a connection to SR-520, and extending it to serve the downtown; improving SE 8th Street and 112th Avenue NE; and extending 124th Avenue NE through the Wilburton Park to connect to the Lake Hills Connector. A multimodal package for the downtown was also considered, with serious attention paid to transit expansion and doing more with non-auto modes. The environmental review done for the Downtown Implementation Plan was intended to help facilitate subsequent development by looking at what fits within the plan. The planning effort folded in nicely with the work being done on the I-405 and I-90 corridors, making it possible to get the NE 10th Street and NE 2nd Street overcrossings included in the I-405 Corridor plan.

One of the most significant issues is the importance of commute modeshare in accomplishing the circulation objectives for the downtown plan. Carpool percentages are expected to remain flat, but the drive-alone percentages are projected to fall from 80 percent to 45 percent by 2030; that will only be achievable if the transit mode share is increased from 10 percent today to 44 percent in 2030.

Answering a question asked by Chair Young, Mr. Loewenherz said voters will be asked in November 2007 to approve an additional tax of one-tenth of one percent to help pay for transit services and facilities. The forecasts, however, assume a higher capacity option than what King County Metro is offering. Mr. Liljeblad added that the steering committee in developing the downtown plan assumed a 40 percent growth in transit, owing in large part to the level of unused capacity; the committee recognized that transit ridership could be doubled without adding any new service. However, in order to make transit really attractive, it will take a doubling of the frequency of service, more coverage and new routes. The transit model currently in use was not available at the time the downtown plan was developed; high-capacity transit is an assumed part of the 2030 forecast, along with growth in the feeder services.

Progress has been made toward implementing the recommendations of the Downtown Implementation Plan, including working with Washington State Department of Transportation on potential new connections to SR-520 at 108th Avenue NE, the NE 10th Street extension, the addition of the rider services building at the transit center, approval of the off-street layover plan utilizing the Coco's site, creation of the 105th Avenue NE alley to serve the interior of the Lincoln Square block, and new bus shelters along 106th Avenue in the downtown. Regionally, projects of interest to the downtown include the work being done on the I-90 corridor and the Alaskan Way viaduct.

Bellevue continues to partner with King County Metro and the Bellevue Downtown Association on transportation demand management. Efforts are under way to promote rideshare services and flex passes to buildings rather than just to major employers. By engaging building managers, it will be easier to access the smaller employers.

Work is progressing to optimize the key arterials in the downtown. Mr. Liljeblad said it will be very important as new developments come online to close off the uncontrolled left-turns from driveways, to optimize signal operations, and to actively manage special events.

The modeling and forecasting group has developed a chart showing that total delay within the downtown street grid system will grow by about 250 percent by 2020, and doubling again by 2030. The average travel speed in the downtown currently is around ten miles per hour; by 2020 the average will drop to about seven miles per hour, and by 2030 it will be closer to four miles per hour. Because walking by 2030 will be faster than traveling by car, park once options will be very important. The city has not been successful in getting property owners to share their supply of parking.

Commissioner Wendle asked if the city has the ability to legislate charging for parking to reduce the amount of free parking available. Mr. Liljeblad said the city does not have that ability. The focus has largely been on the commuters who are most likely to park for six to nine hours at a time in spaces that could otherwise be available for short-term parking. Individual property owners have the right to charge for parking.

Mr. Liljeblad commented that Sound Transit is beginning to ramp up its Phase 2 work; they are busy screening alternatives. The city will continue to work with King County Metro to get increases in service hours. There is a preliminary indication that Bellevue will be receiving \$2 million from federal government (through the Puget Sound Regional Council) for the project to widen NE 8th Street between 106th and 108th Avenues.

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. CIP Funding Recommendation

Ms. Oosterveen referred to the last part of the first paragraph on Page 1 of the transmittal memo and proposed changing "...presented for the Council's consideration in advance of your July 10, 2006 budget retreat..." to read "...for your consideration." She noted that the date for the Council retreat keeps getting changed. She also called attention to the penultimate paragraph on Page 2 and proposed changing "...2007-2013 revenue projections increase, we recommend that any portion..." to read "...2007-2013 revenue projections increase, any portion...."

Chair Young agreed with the proposed revisions and said the memo does a good job of summarizing the different aspects of the CIP and the key criteria.

Commissioner Wendle concurred, but suggested the memo is written perhaps too politely in that there is no sense of urgency to provide more funding for transportation projects. The memo should be clear in noting that the proposed dollar amount will cover only a relatively small portion of the total projected needs over the next 12 years. He proposed expanding the third paragraph on Page 1 to include a reference to the total cost of the projects identified on the CIP project list and to stress the importance of developing a strategy for meeting the unfunded project needs.

There was consensus to make the revision proposed by Commissioner Wendle and to approve the memo as revised.

- 9. NEW BUSINESS – None
- 10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. May 11, 2006

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Wendle. Second was by Commissioner Yuen and the motion carried unanimously.

- 12. REVIEW CALENDAR
 - A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

- B. Public Involvement Calendar

- 13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Young adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission	Date
Chairperson of the Transportation Commission	Date