

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 10, 2008
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Glass, Kiel, Larrivee, Simas, Tanaka

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Northey

STAFF PRESENT: David Berg, Goran Sparman, Kevin O'Neill, Franz
Loewenherz, Eric Miller, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 p.m. by Commissioner Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Northey who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparman said the Council has identified as its highest priority mobility projects in the downtown and the Bel-Red corridor. Transportation staff has been asked to identify the key projects needed to enhance mobility in those areas. Mr. Sparman provided the Commissioners with copies of a list of high priority projects, noting that the first five on the list have been identified as the highest priority projects: extending NE 4th Street from 116th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE underneath the BNSF tracks; turning 120th Avenue NE into a principle arterial with a five-lane cross section from NE 4th Street across NE 8th Street and continuing north to roughly the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street alignment; construction of a new road connecting 124th Avenue NE west through the old Safeway warehouse area, over the BNSF tracks connecting to Bel-Red Road to the east of 116th Avenue NE; widening 124th Avenue NE from the new NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street north to Northup Way; and extending the current HOV facility eastward on NE 6th Street over I-405 connecting to the BNSF alignment and continuing east to 120th Avenue NE.

With regard to other projects on the list, Mr. Sparman explained that the city has taken action

with regard to acquiring the Lincoln Center property, which is partially driven by the need for additional right-of-way for the NE 6th Street connection.

The NE 2nd Street project is currently in design; the project will widen NE 2nd from Bellevue Way to 112th Avenue NE to five lanes. In addition to the funds set aside for the project in the CIP, an additional \$15 million is needed to secure the rest of the necessary right-of-way.

A number of ITS related activities made it onto the list, the prime one being replacement of the central traffic control computer system. There is money in some of the replacement accounts for the necessary hardware, but what is needed is additional funding for software and new system applications, including transit priority.

The Council has expressed strong support for the downtown circulator as part of the Transit Now program. The loop configuration serving the downtown would have short headways in each direction. Additional money is needed to get the line operational by 2010.

The Council set aside \$15 million to enhance the city's pedestrian and bicycle systems and to continue improving the neighborhood sidewalk systems.

Commissioner Simas asked if it would be safe to assume that the top five projects do the best job of moving traffic in and out of the downtown area. Mr. Sparrman said that is exactly the conclusion reached by staff. Once the projects are completed, the city will have completed everything in the existing plans. There are very limited opportunities for widening streets, and limited appetite on the part of the community to see major new roads constructed. He added that the Council has looked at widening Bellevue Way but has made a policy choice not to do so. The neighborhood impacts have been judged to be significant and the community has made it very clear they do not want any widening. In order to be effective it would be necessary to add a lane in each direction, and the right-of-way necessary would heavily impact surrounding land uses. Furthermore, the new capacity would only feed into a constrained regional system, so there would be little if any benefit.

Mr. Sparrman added that the top projects will also have positive benefits for trips other than those heading north and east. The majority of trips coming in and out of the downtown use I-405. One of the key concepts is that by taking the north and east trips off of the I-405 mainline, capacity for that system will be freed up for the trips that want to go north and south.

Commissioner Simas asked if there is a measurement process used to evaluate the value of putting a pedestrian or bicycle facility in a specific place. Mr. Sparrman said sidewalks are included with all new roadway projects. The top five projects will all have non-motorized elements associated with them which will improve the ability of pedestrians and bicyclists to get across I-405.

With regard to the ideas for funding the projects, Mr. Sparrman said a number of concepts have been studied and discussed. There are a number of different funding sources the city could tap

to help pay for the projects, but there are only so many and the money has to come from somewhere. More work will still need to be done to find the right mix of sources. The general concept includes taking a close look at the existing CIP, especially in the out years. About \$8 million has been identified from the general CIP, and another \$10 million from the parks side of the current CIP that could be made available for the new projects. Another concept is to reprioritize existing CIP projects to free up some funds. As the Bel-Red corridor area redevelops, some \$10 million will be brought in through new tax revenues by 2030.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. Sparrman said the parks money in the CIP that could be reallocated to transportation projects is predicated on the tentative decision of the Council to put a parks measure on the ballot in November.

Mr. Sparrman said he was asked by the Council if he could commit to delivering all of the projects and told them he could. If the funding package is approved, staff are committed to having all of the projects under construction in five years and completed in seven.

There are existing buildings on the Lincoln Center site from which the city will generate rental income. Those funds can be captured and put back into the transportation projects. Local improvement districts are a common tool cities use to pay for transportation projects, and the city could decide to go in that direction. Increased impact fees could help to raise funds for transportation projects. The staff also are confident the city will be able to secure federal and state grants, as well as contributions from King County Metro and Sound Transit. Right-of-way dedication will also contribute to funding the projects. The supplemental CIP approved by the Council two years ago could be initiated again, with the funds dedicated to the transportation projects.

Mr. Sparrman noted that the possible funding sources still leave about a \$30 million gap, thus a lot more work needs to be done.

Commissioner Simas asked if the impact fee dollars currently collected must be allocated to projects in the areas in which they are collected. Mr. Sparrman said the collected funds do not have to be spent in any particular area. There are, however, some constraints. There must be a real nexus between where the money is coming from and the associated projects; the dollars can only be spent on capacity projects. Impact fee dollars cannot be spent on a sidewalk project in a neighborhood.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Planning Implementation Manager Eric Miller said the current transportation CIP totals approximately \$150 million. Commissioner Glass asked how the \$8 million relates to the total and he was informed that the dollars are all leftover resources not allocated to a specific project.

Commissioner Glass noted from the charts shared with the Commission that the Bel-Red area will be hit up to pay for a lot of the projects. If an LID is formed, the property owners in that area could be asked to deliver \$40 million, and impact fees could take even more. Mr.

Sparrman said there are three primary stakeholders that pay for transportation projects in the city: existing businesses and residences through property taxes, and new businesses through impact fees. LIDs clearly affect existing property owners, specifically those that will benefit financially from a particular transportation project. Everyone benefits from the paying of property taxes. LIDs are primarily formed by petition. Impact fees are assessed on new development.

Commissioner Glass commented that while the five projects are highly important, there are other projects that are also very important to the community, including Northup Way and West Lake Sammamish Parkway. Mr. Sparrman said it is no secret to anyone that the city has a lot of capital needs; the city has in fact fallen behind the curve in terms of meeting the infrastructure needs generally, not just transportation infrastructure.

Commissioner Tanaka noted that the list of priority projects at least articulates what the Council wants to see done. Mr. Sparrman said there is also a lot of support on the part of the Council to improve the ped/bike system and added he would not be surprised if down the road the Council seeks to find ways to make more progress in those areas as well. The dollar figures are related to the CIP. The early numbers indicate that in the last six years of the TFP there could be an additional \$100 million. Over time, the community is going to have to determine what the top priorities are given the fact that there simply is not enough money to do all of the projects.

Mr. Sparrman said the expectation of the Council is that the Commission will prioritize the entire TFP even though the first set of projects have been clearly set aside by the Council. While the priority projects will consume most of the funding in the first six years, the relative priorities for the last six years will need to be determined, and the Commission will have a role to play in that.

Mr. Sparrman noted that the Commission also has a statutory role with regard to transportation impact fees. The direction received from the Council is that the Commission should help with the structure of the impact fee methodology, or how to calculate the fees in the city. The findings of the consultant hired to review the structure will be brought before the Commission for review and comment, though the Council will reserve the right to determine exactly what the impact fees should be.

Council and the staff clearly see the growing importance of transportation demand management. As gas prices continue to increase, there will be significant new trends playing out. The public is likely to want to see additional transportation options. Transportation demand management as a category includes a host of techniques, including flex time, transit passes, and satellite parking areas and work facilities. The city has an active TDM program and expects it to grow over time into new markets. The Council expect the Commission to help grow that program.

Mr. Miller provided the Commissioners with a handout showing the timeline for putting

together the TFP. The scenario in the timeline was predicated on a December 2008 adoption. He allowed that a lot will have to go right in order to meet that schedule, including action on the Bel-Red subarea plan. After reviewing the steps taken to date by the Commission, Mr. Miller said by August 7 it will be necessary to have a recommendation for project priorities for the roadway/intersection list. After that date staff will begin the modeling work. The recommended project list for the TFP update will need to be presented to the City Council in early September. The environmental work will be done in the fall on an accelerated schedule; November 20 will be the last date for publishing the FEIS. The schedule is extremely aggressive.

Mr. Miller clarified that the focus is on the roadway/intersection project list. There is a \$15 million placeholder for ped/bike projects for the 2009-2015 period. The Commission may choose to allocate another amount of money from the revenue projection for the 2020 time period to ped/bike projects. The fact that the focus of the initial EIS process is only on transportation roadway and intersection projects allows the Commission additional time to work on ped/bike priorities.

Mr. O'Neill said several factors are driving the schedule change. For one thing, the Commission recently engaged in a discussion focused on prioritizing bike projects, and the discussion was driven by a sense of urgency to make some decisions on ped/bike projects in time to feed them into the TFP process. The schedule change releases that pressure valve. The ped/bike projects will be populated into the TFP in the fall months after the prioritization on the roadway/intersection projects is complete.

Commissioner Larrivee proposed revising the agendas for the next few meetings to focus primarily on the roadway/intersection priorities, then put the ped/bike discussion back on the agenda. His suggestion was readily accepted.

Mr. O'Neill called attention to the memorandum from Kevin McDonald dated July 10 relating to one of the Bel-Red corridor projects. He reminded the Commissioners that in the spring there was deliberation on a number of corridor projects for the subarea plan, one of which was an expansion of 116th Avenue NE to the north of NE 12th Street adjacent to the site to be developed by Children's Hospital. In June, after a briefing on Bel-Red before the Council, the Council made the decision to put the Children's Hospital on a separate and accelerated track from the Bel-Red subarea process. On July 9 the Planning Commission recommended approval of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Code pertaining to designating the Children's Hospital site as Medical Institution District. The Planning Commission recommended included a recommendation to add the 116th Avenue NE improvement to the Comprehensive Plan ahead of the Bel-Red subarea plan so it can be part of the improvement Children's will have to fund. In order to do that, the project will need to be moved into an existing subarea plan. The proposal is to move it into the Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Facilities Plan. Ultimately, when the Bel-Red subarea plan is adopted, the project will be moved back into that document.

Mr. O'Neill also called attention to the proposed NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project. He reminded the Commission that it included no recommendation when the project was moved into the realm of the Planning Commission. On May 8 a draft subarea plan and Land Use Code was released to the public that included a description of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project and a note indicating that the Transportation Commission has not made a specific recommendation regarding the project. On May 27 the City Council held a study session discussion on the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project. The Council offered some direction, and on May 28 the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Bel-Red subarea plan package. There were some public comments regarding the project at that hearing. Over the past six weeks or so staff have gone back to develop several cross section options for the project. Those options will be considered on July 16 by the Planning Commission as part of its deliberations on the entire Bel-Red package. On July 23 the Planning Commission is expected to wrap up its work on the Bel-Red package with a final recommendation. In September the Council will receive the transmittal from the Planning Commission. The Transportation Commission will be briefed on the recommendation of the Planning Commission and will be given an opportunity to further weigh in on the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project prior to the Council making a final decision.

Commissioner Glass said his choice would have been to have the Transportation Commission comment on the various options for the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project. Mr. Sparrman said the plan is to bring the full report back to the Transportation Commission, not just what the Planning Commission recommended. The Transportation Commission will be able to see and comment on the full range of options, and will make a recommendation directly to the City Council.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass said the work of the Light Rail Best Practices committee wrapped up on July 7. The final report has been forwarded to the City Council.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Larrivee. Second was by Commissioner Glass and the motion carried unanimously.

****BREAK****

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Updated Prioritized Project List

Senior Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz briefly reviewed the work done to date and the process schedule.

Commissioner Glass asked if the reshuffling of funds will take away dollars allocated for ped/bike projects. Deputy Director Dave Berg said there is much to be determined yet with regard to the rebalancing exercise, but there is a lot of sentiment on the side of not taking anything away from existing projects. Mr. O'Neill said there is some CIP money identified for projects in the last BROTS agreement; as the work to update BROTS moves ahead, there will be questions about whether or not the money for those projects should be held or reallocated.

With regard to the north-south corridors, Mr. Loewenherz noted that there are discussions under way about getting bike lanes on 108th Avenue between Main and NE 12th Street. If that element were to be implemented, NS-1 would be very nearly completed. NS-2, the Lake Washington Loop Trail, is in place north of NE 12th Street on 112th Avenue NE; there are some sidewalk improvements that ideally are needed on the west side, and there are some issues surrounding 114th Avenue NE and widening efforts by the WSDOT. The BNSF corridor is ranked high and there is a desire from a political standpoint to keep it as a high priority. Some parts of NS-4 are largely complete, especially south of NE 8th Street; the 145th Place SE project is presently funded and slated for construction in 2009, work is progressing to get shared lane markings on 161st Avenue SE, 164th Avenue SE could easily have shared lane markings put in place, and there continues to be a lot of public support for the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project. The SR-520 trail is another regional corridor for which the city does not have primary control. EW-2 includes the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project, and along NE 12th Street the assumption is for an off-street path on the north side and a bike lane on the south side. There is a lot of public support for the Lake to Lake trail; a small portion of it has been funded and construction will begin in the spring of 2009. The Mountains to Sound Greenway is one of four missing gaps in the statewide facility; the city is not the primary agency for the project. EW-5, Coal Creek/Cougar Mountain, has large portions that are not complete.

Mr. Loewenherz said on June 26 the Commission directed staff to reshuffle the project spread sheet. The Commission also provided input with regard to the ranking, so the updated materials reflect rankings of 1, 2 or 3, with 1 being high and 3 being low. The projects were regrouped based on whether or not they realize the priority corridors. The balance of the projects were re-ranked based on the GIS exercise.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. O'Neill said he participated in the staff project screening roundtable. He noted that not all of the staff were using the same criteria. For example, some Bellevue staff chose not to give high priority status to non-city projects; others felt that funded CIP projects did not need to be ranked high because they will be done anyway. Some prioritized projects based on their importance and need alone.

Commissioner Glass asked if the Commission should indicate which of the corridors are most

important and then rank the projects accordingly. Commissioner Simas suggested that would be a good strategy. Commissioner Kiel concurred. Commissioner Larrivee also agreed but suggested prioritizing the corridors should be based on some criteria. Mr. Loewenherz suggested that any attempt to develop a model would fall short; the best criteria is common sense.

Mr. O'Neill allowed that the east/west corridors will be more challenging to complete, but even so it would be helpful to have the Commission prioritize the corridors.

It was decided the corridors should be ranked according to importance, not according to how easy it would be to complete one or another.

Commissioner Glass said his top north/south corridor preferences were NS-1, NS-4 and NS-6.

Commissioner Simas highlighted the BNSF rail line as an important corridor, but agreed it will be many years before it is developed. He said he would rank NS-1 and NS-3 the same as they both essentially serve the same area; the most doable in the shortest period of time would be NS-1.

Commissioner Kiel observed that NS-2 serves a greater distance and is largely constructed. NS-4 on the east side of Bellevue is also important.

Commissioner Larrivee said he would rank NS-2 and NS-5 as the top two north/south corridors, followed by NS-1 and NS-6.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that there is some momentum behind NS-1 currently given the overall downtown mobility discussions. There is also financial convergence happening that could potentially realize the portion between Main and NE 12th Street on 108th Avenue NE. It would send a message if the Commission were to advocate for that route.

Commissioner Tanaka said he would put NS-2 at the top, followed by NS-6 and then NS-4.

There was agreement to rank NS-2 as the highest priority north/south corridor, followed in order of importance by NS-6, NS-4, NS-1, NS-5 and NS-3.

With regard to the east/west corridor, Commissioner Glass said his top two would be EW-1 and EW-3. Commissioner Larrivee said his top would be EW-3 given the safety concerns, followed by EW-1. Commissioner Kiel put EW-3 at the top of her list. Commissioner Simas ranked EW-3 highest because it serves the Bellevue community best and serves the downtown corridor; he said he would put EW-4 and EW-1 tied for second priority. Commissioner Tanaka voiced a preference for EW-1 followed by EW-4.

Mr. O'Neill commented that EW-2, particularly the east end, is going to be implemented as part of a very expensive roadway project that will take years if not decades to build. The part

of EW-2 that would be great to have in the shorter term is the section to the west of I-405 along NE 12th Street. EW-3 is also very important to the city.

Commissioner Larrivee noted that the Commission has set as a top priority making sure there are north/south and east/west connections to the downtown. Accordingly, not indicating EW-2 or EW-3 as top priorities could signify inconsistency given that they both serve the downtown. Commissioner Tanaka concurred and shifted his priorities to reflect EW-4 as a lower priority.

Commissioner Kiel ranked EW-4 as her second highest priority corridor.

Commissioner Larrivee allowed that EW-1 and EW-4 equally provide significant east/west passage across the city. Commissioner Glass commented that EW-4 is largely a safe route, whereas EW-1 has missing links that make it less safe.

The Commission ranked the EW-3 as the highest priority east/west corridor, followed in order by EW-1, EW-4, EW-2 and EW-5.

Based on the corridor ranking exercise, the conclusion was reached that all projects related to NS-2, NS-6 and NS-4, and EW-3 and EW-1, should be given a ranking of 1, and that all others would be ranked 2.

Mr. O'Neill pointed out that for a variety of reasons projects ranked 2 may be implemented ahead of projects ranked 1. The Commissioners said they understood that.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested that a high GIS ranking should lend support for the Commission ranking the project high as well. He allowed that that could cause some shifts in globally ranking the projects based on their association with the identified corridors. The default ranking for all projects rated between 1 and 50 by GIS should be 1. For projects GIS ranked from 51 and 100 the default should be 2, and for projects GIS ranked greater than 100 the default should be 3, unless there are overriding factors.

Commissioner Glass said his preference would be to keep the focus on the corridors in ranking the individual projects. Projects not associated with the identified corridors should not be ranked high. He noted that it was necessary to go pretty deep into the project list before getting to a project ranked below 50. Commissioner Larrivee agreed that a lower number may need to be used for that reason.

Commissioner Simas noted that three projects on the list were ranked 1 by both the staff and the public and received a high GIS ranking. He suggested each of those projects should be ranked 1.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. O'Neill allowed that going just by the corridor ranking will effectively throw out the GIS exercise. He said one policy directive handed down was the desire to complete east/west and north/south corridors; another policy

directive was to prioritize the projects and included the GIS work. What is not captured in the corridor discussion but is captured in the GIS ranking are the things along the way, the social service agencies, the transit stops and the like. From that perspective, it would be better to make the cutoff number lower.

There was agreement to use 30 as the cutoff for 1, 60 as the cutoff for 2, and everything beyond 3, provided projects ranked high by both the staff and the public are considered for a higher ranking.

Commissioner Larrivee called attention to project B-328 which had a GIS ranking of 5 but a staff ranking of 3 and a public input ranking of 3. Mr. Berg suggested that going back to giving consideration to the staff ranking after the priority corridors have been determined is akin to comparing apples and oranges because the staff did not have the corridors to think about in going through their ranking exercise.

Project B-238 was deemed to be a 1. The rankings for all projects previously discussed and ranked by the Commission were retained. Projects B-07-010 and B-36.1 were kept at 3.

With regard to the trail projects, Mr. O'Neill noted that staff did not have the same policy guidance in ranking the various projects. He suggested the straight GIS rank order would work very well, with the possible exception of project L-473. He noted the low GIS ranking and suggested the reason was the fact that the GIS ranking gives weight to adjoining land use characteristics, and where a trail passes through a park there are no adjoining land use densities.

There was agreement to rank all projects with a GIS ranking of 18 or less as 1, and to rank projects with a GIS ranking of between 19 and 38 as 2, and the rest as 3.

Project L-473 was given a ranking of 1. Commissioner Glass proposed raising the ranking for Project L-470.2 to 1 and there was agreement to do so given the importance of the trail.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None
10. NEW BUSINESS – None
11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. May 8, 2008

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

13. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

B. Public Involvement Calendar

14. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 9:42 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date