

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 14, 2005
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Tricia Thompson, Kevin McDonald, Eric Miller, Kristi Oosterveen, Jen Benn, Mike Mattar, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair Bell who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Northey who arrived at 6:36 p.m.

3. STAFF REPORTS – None

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Yuen reported that he and Commissioner Wendle attended the SR-520 bridge inspection.

Commissioner Wendle said he also attended the SR-520 open house that was focused on some of the alternatives under consideration. He said the event was very well attended and there was a great deal of information available.

Commissioner Young said he attended the NE 29th Street opening.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. NE 24th Street Project Update

Project Manager Tricia Thompson shared with the Commission the preferred alternative that was decided on by the public in March 2004. She noted that the west segment runs between 124th Street to Northup, and the east segment runs from the SR-520 bike trail to 130th Avenue NE. For the east segment there is a six-foot sidewalk on the north side of the road for the entire length, with landscaping where there are no large retaining walls. On the south side of the road there will be a trail from 126th Avenue NE to 130th Avenue NE. Between 126th and 127th there are medians. The design includes one bike lane on the uphill side of the roadway.

Commissioner Young was reminded that concerns were raised early in the process concerning the intersection at 126th where kids are dropped off from the school bus. Ms. Thompson said the preferred alternative provides sufficient space to address the issue.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Ms. Thompson said there is a bike lane only on the uphill side of the roadway in accord with what the community asked for. Because the roadway traverses a crest in the hill, the plan calls for a bike lane on the north side of the roadway between 130th and 127th, and on the south side coming up the hill from Northup.

Commissioner Northey asked if the engineering standards address the issue of having bike lanes only on the uphill portions of a roadway. Ms. Thompson said she would have to look that up. Chair Bell added that there will need to be signs advising riders that the lane ends at the crest of the hill.

Ms. Thompson said the city has received a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant in the amount of \$1 million for the project and has applied for a Public Works Trust Fund loan in the amount of \$750,000 for construction. The 2005-2011 CIP has \$1.489 million in PW-W/B-69, and \$8000 in PW-W/B-56 for the project, bringing the total to \$3.247 million. The anticipated construction costs are \$3.3 million, including some contingencies for right-of-way and construction.

Jen Benn, Grants Coordinator, explained that the project qualified for the CMAQ grant because it is a non-motorized project on what will become a major corridor as Bellevue continues to grow.

The Commissioners were informed that because there are federal funds attached to the project, the requirements of the new Department of Ecology manual will have to be met. The

community asked to have the overhead utilities undergrounded and that is being investigated with Puget Sound Energy, Verizon and Comcast to see if that can be accomplished. There are also several property owner issues still unresolved. The environmental process has been started. The design should be at the 90 percent phase in August; by that time the environmental process will be wrapping up, there should be agreements with the utility companies, and the work to design the structural wall will be nearing completion. Pre-negotiations for the necessary right-of-way has begun and the work of conducting appraisals will begin very soon with offer letters to be sent out in September. The necessary property rights will need to be acquired by February 2006 in accord with the requirements of the CMAQ grant.

Mr. Mattar clarified that no promises have been made to the public with regard to undergrounding utilities other than to investigate the possibilities.

Ms. Thompson said the environmental review will wrap up in September or October, and the design work will be done in December. The schedule calls for advertising for bids in March 2006.

B. Ped/Bike Citizen Advisory Group Options

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald explained that the Council has charged the Commission with considering ways to restructure the Pedestrian/Bicycle Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). A number of different options were explored by the Commission in June as the way other jurisdictions operate.

Mr. McDonald said the Council is particularly interested in ensuring a broader representation on the CAG. He noted that other jurisdictions with ped/bike committees stipulate that certain positions be made available for those representing specific interests, including pedestrians, bicyclists, youth and the elderly, those focused on accessibility issues, the community at large, and those who are focused on healthy communities. Mr. McDonald added that in the past the CAG has enjoyed some very good participation by non-Bellevue residents who use the non-motorized transportation system in Bellevue, and their contributions have been important. The Transportation Commission has also participated in the CAG process, something that should continue once the group is restructured.

Mr. McDonald placed on the table for discussion a recommendation to have a wide variety of non-motorized transportation interests represented by the members of the restructured CAG. At least one person should be recruited from each of the designated interest groups. The CAG should have a membership of between seven and nine voting members, not including the Transportation Commission liaison. He said staff is willing to assist in recruiting CAG members citywide. Term limits should be established with staggered terms to allow for continuity as turnover of the membership occurs. Following each CAG meeting, the Transportation Commission should be given a briefing.

Chair Bell recognized the importance of non-residents in developing and implementing the non-motorized transportation system in Bellevue, but suggested that voting privileges should rest only with Bellevue residents. He supported the notion of having the Commission develop a recommendation for appointments to the CAG and forwarding it the Council for approval. He agreed that the CAG chair should attend the first Commission meeting following a CAG meeting to provide a report. The CAG should be tasked with giving advice regarding projects and with assisting in the development of the new ped/bike transportation plan. The CAG could also be directed to provide input with regard to identifying and prioritizing ped/bike projects in the CIP.

Mr. McDonald said the City Council is tentatively scheduled to take up the matter of restructuring the CAG on September 6.

Commissioner Young suggested that some of the categories highlighted are broad and amorphous. He proposed targeting specifically pedestrians, bicycles, accessibility, and then having a member at-large. He agreed that only Bellevue residents should be allowed to vote, though everyone should be able to attend and have their voices heard. The CAG should have a regular meeting schedule.

Commissioner Holler asked how much staff time will be required to support the CAG and what the projected costs are. Mr. McDonald said he currently staffs the CAG. If the group were to continue to meet quarterly, the staff commitment would not be increased. There is very little budget associated with supporting the CAG beyond what it takes to pay for a professional minutes taker. There would only be an increased amount of staff time necessary during the recruitment process.

Commissioner Northey suggested that if the restructured CAG is to report to the Commission, the Commission should have a say in establishing its roles and responsibilities. That should be done before any appointments to the group are made. She voiced serious concerns with the idea of having the CAG involved in reviewing CIP projects; taking that approach would simply add another layer of committee review to the process. The group has historically provided excellent input on various projects, and that role should be continued. She agreed with Commissioner Young with regard to some of the categories mentioned being overly broad. If non-residents are allowed to serve on the committee, even if they are not given a vote, they should be limited to those who at least work in the city; such people will have more of a vested interest. Some consideration should also be given to where the recommendations from the CAG will go: to staff or directly to the Commission.

Commissioner Wendle concurred. He said the restructuring effort should result in meaningful change. The group will need to be given specific tasks and reporting responsibilities. It will be important to formalize the group; that will help in the process of recruiting members.

Chair Bell held that the CAG should meet at least quarterly, but allowed that additional meetings may be needed as warranted, such as during the process to update the ped/bike plan. With regard to having the CAG involved in reviewing and prioritizing CIP projects, he said the advice offered by the group should be in regard to non-motorized projects only that are under consideration, not the entire CIP. If the CAG has projects they believe are worthy, they should be allowed to submit them to the Commission for consideration.

Commissioner Glass asked what role the CAG currently plays. Mr. McDonald said the roles and responsibilities include reviewing those transportation projects that have a non-motorized component. The CAG was recently involved in working with staff in recommending changes to wayfinding signage along certain ped/bike routes. The CAG has traditionally also been involved in providing advice on policy level work, such as the ped/bike plan. The roles and responsibilities of the committee are not proposed to be changed with restructuring.

Chair Bell suggested that the Commission will not be ready to develop a recommendation to the Council until the issues of membership and responsibilities are further clarified. He felt that could be accomplished by the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Young concurred and suggested another action that needs to take place is to clean up some of the categories, reiterating his desire to see the focus on pedestrians, bicyclists, accessibility, and citizens at-large.

Commissioner Northey suggested that family should be considered as a category. She explained that too often those who offer advice on ped/bike facilities do not have the needs of children in mind; children need buffers more than adults do. Mr. McDonald said the recruitment process could certainly encourage families, the elderly and the youth to apply.

Commissioner Wendle held that the community at-large representatives could bring that focus to the table. He agreed that too often the focus is on the bigger, system-wide picture when what is needed is a focus on much smaller links. He noted that the city recently started a transportation demand management program focused on a couple of schools that is getting a lot of people with a family bent involved.

Chair Bell recommended the Commission should be charged with screening applicants and making a recommendation to the Council with regard to who should be appointed to the CAG. Mr. McDonald said the Council would likely welcome that approach but would retain the right to make the actual appointments.

Staff was directed to craft a document in line with the suggestions made by the Commission, and to bring it to the next meeting for review and approval. There was also agreement to recommend limiting the size of the group to between five and seven members.

C. Mid-Biennium CIP Update

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller reminded the Commission that a list of project funding priorities developed by the Commission was forwarded to the Council in July 2004. The Council acted in December to approve the CIP and included very few new projects. The Council elected to parcel out most of the available revenue to major program areas instead of to specific projects; \$16.1 million was set aside for the four major transportation program areas. No process has been specified to date to actually program the funds to projects. The Commission has expressed concerns about the approach.

Mr. Miller informed the Commissioners that a meeting was held earlier in the week that involved the City Manager's Office and the Finance Department; the meeting was on the topic of programming the available resources to specific projects in the out years of the CIP, 2009-2011. An agreement was reached to raise the issue with the City Council during its retreat scheduled for July 22 (actually July 20). No department staff will be attending the retreat, so there is no way to say how the issue will be characterized. The Parks Department is also wanting to see their program area allocation of \$6.6 million assigned to specific projects so that if the decision is made to float another bond levy they will not have to explain why there are unallocated funds that could be used for the same purpose.

Chair Bell said he sent a memo to Councilmember Balducci outlining the position of the Commission relative to getting the funds assigned to specific projects. He said she appears ready to argue the Commission's position before the Council at the retreat.

Commissioner Young called attention to Project 7 on Attachment C1, NE 24th Street between Northup Way and 130th Avenue NE, and the fact that the west segment remains unfunded. Mr. Miller said the east and west segments of the project meet at the entrance to the SR-520 trail; the west segment runs from there to Northup Way and is the part that remains unfunded. The project calls for a separated pathway along the south side of NE 24th Street on the west segment, with landscaping; the project will also filling in a missing gap of sidewalk on the north side. Project 6 on Attachment C2 includes \$1.7 million for the project.

Mr. Miller reminded the Commission that the NE 10th Street overcrossing of I-405 was funded by the state as part of the new gas tax increase. He reported, however, that the supporters of I-912 appear to have received sufficient signatures to get the initiative to repeal the gas tax on the ballot in November. Whether WSDOT intends to proceed with some of the projects in the meantime remains an unknown. The Commission's list from 2004 included a couple of projects associated with NE 10th Street, including Phase I, the stub road into the hospital campus from 116th Avenue NE.

Mr. Miller explained that the \$6.8 million shown on page 2 of Attachment C1 will fund all of the design for Phase I and purchase all of the necessary right-of-way, and will fund some of the design for Phase II, which brings the stub over to the I-405 right-of-way. Of the \$6.8 million, approximately \$3.8 million is local funds. The amount needed for construction of Phase I,

along with mitigation, is an additional \$4.4 million. The \$1 million price tag for Project 2 on Attachment C1 was covered by a federal grant.

Chair Bell allowed that Phase I of the project is the responsibility of the city. Mr. Miller said it was the original intent to have the project fully funded under the gas tax package as part of the overall NE 10th Street overpass. The city is proceeding with local funds currently; some of the right-of-way was just purchased at a cost of \$3.3 million on the hope that the city will be reimbursed later.

Mr. Miller said the projects shown as shaded on Attachment C1 have been taken care of and do not appear on Attachment C2, the new high-priority list. In addition, three projects from Attachment C1 are not included on Attachment C2, the first of which is 119th Avenue SE between SE 60th Street and Lake Heights Street. The needed funds decreased from approximately \$600,000 to \$300,000 and the intention is to build the project using savings from CIP projects.

The second project is the 116th Avenue NE/NE 12th Street intersection improvements. Mr. Miller said the state funded the NE 10th Street overcrossing as well as the new braided ramps from northbound I-405 to eastbound SR-520, and the intent of the city is to have the state fund the intersection project as well as mitigation. The third project is the Northup Way corridor improvements; the project was included on the old list as a placeholder, and the CIP has an alternative analysis funded starting in 2007. The new gas tax package indicates some funding for SR-520, and Northup Way acts essentially as a frontage road to SR-520. The funding in the CIP for the pre-design work has been retained, but the rest of the project should be pulled until the state figures out what to do with SR-520 between I-405 and the lake.

Mr. Miller said one project was added to the new list, 145th Place SE from SE 8th Street to SE 24th Street and SE 22nd Street to 145th Place SE to 156th Avenue SE. The project came out of the Neighborhood Investment Strategy and was in the 2003-2009 CIP for the first time at \$3.1 million. The preliminary design is just being wrapped up with the existing funds, and there will be some \$2.5 million available to implement Phase I. The amount shown in Attachment C2 is what is needed to implement the rest of the project.

Commissioner Wendle suggested that it would be helpful to include in the matrix for each project what the priority was in prior documents, and show which projects have been dropped on new list and why. It would also be good to have an indication how long some of the projects have been waiting to be funded.

Mr. Miller noted that Project 1 on the new list, 152nd Avenue SE and SE 45th Street and SE 45th Place to Newport Way, was Project 5 on the old list. The project was put at the top of the list because of the recent NEP vote to fund a segment of the project, specifically \$150,000 worth of sidewalk on 152nd Avenue SE.

The second project on the new list, West Lake Sammamish Parkway from I-90 to the north city limit, has been revised in scope because the alternative analysis made significant advances, including the acceptance by the Council of a preferred alternative. The dollar amount represents a placeholder only. The Council has directed staff to come back with funding options to advance the project in the short term; those options could include short-term borrowing.

Mr. Miller pointed out that the new list has only one new project. No projects associated with implementation of the Downtown plan are on the list, nor are there projects from the Factoria Area Transportation Study that was just completed. The list could change should the opportunity come to go through a full citywide project evaluation and reprioritization exercise.

Commissioner Northey asked why the Lakemont Boulevard project was moved up so high on the list. Mr. Miller explained that Project 6 on Attachment C1, 119th Avenue SE from SE 60th to Lake Heights Street, was pulled from the list because the funding needed was greatly reduced. Also, the NE 24th Street west segment project was moved down on the list because it was the east segment that was always a high priority. Those changes caused the Lakemont Boulevard project to move up on the list.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Mr. Miller said Project 11 on Attachment C1, 116th Avenue NE at NE 12th Street, was identified as potential mitigation for the 10th Street overcrossing. The city believes the state should pay for that project as part of the larger project.

Commissioner Northey allowed that while the list contains what amounts to placeholders for some projects, she said she could support the list as it is. Commissioner Young agreed, noting that the list could be refined in the future.

Commissioner Yuen stressed the need to have the \$16.1 million allocated to specific projects. If that is not done, the Council will find some other uses for the money. Chair Bell agreed with the need to have something definite on paper.

Commissioner Wendle commented that Northup Way as a corridor has many issues that need to be addressed. Because the corridor project is tied to SR-520, it could be many years into the future before anything gets done. As such, it would be important to show the corridor project on the list of priorities for the out years of the CIP. The project has already had a study done in conjunction with it, while other projects on the list are really only placeholders for studies. Mr. Miller agreed that Projects 7, 9 and 10 on Attachment C2 are studies. He added that there is a study in the current CIP funded for 2007-2008 that will determine a project scope and develop a preferred alternative for the Northup corridor. The \$1.7 million shown for the project on Attachment C1 is a placeholder for implementation of the analysis findings.

Motion to accept the Attachment C2 list as a recommendation for the allocation of funds for

2009-2011 was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Yuen.

Commissioner Young said the Attachment C2 list is a set of high-priority projects that have been identified by the Commission with the help of staff that should be funded with the \$16.1 million earmarked for the out years of the current CIP. He allowed that the list will always be subject to change in the future.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Miller said he will craft a transmittal memo and have it ready for the Council meeting on July 18. Commissioner Young agreed to make the presentation to the Council.

****BREAK****

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of Commission Meeting Recording Options

Mr. Loewenherz said the need to clarify the record as recently highlighted by Mr. Jim Hunt has led staff to investigate methods for ensuring an accurate record and the broadest possible dissemination of information to the public. He proposed the idea of videotaping all Commission meetings. The city has an ongoing contract with Bellevue Community College to use students to videotape and air the City Council meetings on BTV. Those recordings are also archived on the city's server and available online for anyone to view. The cost per meeting is around \$200. A video tape assures a complete public record and obviates the need to retain the services of a professional to produce a verbatim account in cases where there are discrepancies.

Having the Commission meetings taped and available online could serve to increase the visibility of the Commission in the community, which could lead to making it easier to recruit new members. The video tape could also serve as a tool to help staff with their communications skills. With the ASL signing, the non-hearing community could also be provided access to the information.

Mr. Loewenherz explained that if the Commission meetings were videotaped, it would not be necessary to pay a professional minutes writer to attend the meetings. A tape of the meeting, either audio or video, could be sent to the minutes writer who would use it to produce the minutes. The cost of having the minutes writer present at each meeting is close to what it would cost per meeting to produce the videotape recording. A number of jurisdictions are moving in that direction.

Mr. Loewenherz said if the Commission recommends it, staff will pitch the idea to management. He said the final decision will be up to management and added that he could

offer no guarantees the idea will be accepted.

Commissioner Holler said she likes the idea of using students and giving them opportunity to grow and develop. She also supported the notion of having the video online in a format the ASL community can benefit from, though that would take some additional consideration in figuring out how the camera could accurately reflect the ASL interpreter.

Chair Bell suggested that if the Commission meetings are broadcast there will need to be a greater emphasis placed on making sure what is said and presented is clear and distinct.

Commissioner Northey agreed that being able to provide every home in Bellevue the opportunity to see the proceedings of the Transportation Commission is a good idea. Not everyone will want to tune in, but the potential would be there. Government is supposed to be open and accessible, and its decision making processes should be as transparent as possible.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Mr. Loewenherz said written minutes of each meeting would continue to be produced as required by law.

Commissioner Young said the minute taking for the Commission is excellent; the one incident in question stands out as an exception. At the Commission level, verbatim minute taking is simply not required or necessary.

Chair Bell concurred. He also agreed that videotaping the meetings and posting them to the web would have additional value for not much more additional expense. He proposed trying it for four to six months and reevaluating it then.

Commissioner Glass said he finds the idea of being on television somewhat awkward and asked if the videos could be streamed on the internet but not shown on BTV. Mr. Loewenherz said that approach could be taken.

There was consensus to pursue the notion and to put together a proposal for management.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None
10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. May 12, 2005

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

It was noted that there are no upcoming public involvement opportunities.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 9:01 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date