

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 27, 2006
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Holler, Wendle, Yuen

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Mike Ingram, Maria Koengeter,
Department of Transportation; Paul Inghram, Department
of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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 Holler, Wendle and Yuen, all of whom were excused. Chair Young noted that Commissioner Glass would be leaving the meeting at 7:15 p.m., and that under Robert's Rules of Order once a meeting is begun with a quorum, the quorum is assumed to continue throughout the meeting even if during the meeting the number of members present falls below what constitutes a quorum.

3. STAFF REPORTS – None

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass reported that the Bel-Red corridor steering committee at its last meeting reduced the number of alternatives down to three, plus a no action alternative. Those alternatives will be the subject of the Environmental Impact Statement that will be produced over the summer months. The transportation options for each alternative are very similar; they each include the possibility of high-capacity transit through the corridor and a new street at NE

16th; the primary difference is the location of the stations. All of the information is available on the project website.

Chair Young said he reported to the City Council on July 17 regarding the Commission's recommendations relative to the CIP.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12818 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, commented that the Crossroads Center Plan website information shows two transportation nodes, one for vehicles and one for pedestrians. He asked the Commission to ask to have included a transportation mode study for bicycles and posted on the web site. He also informed the Commission that for the last week or so the southbound traffic on Bellevue Way has been backed up almost all the way to Bellevue Square.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Sound Transit 2 Update

Andrea Tull, planner with the Sound Transit Office of Policy and Planning, informed the Commission that an updated long-range plan was adopted by the Sound Transit Board in July 2005. That plan identifies a menu of projects for a second phase of Sound Transit and directs staff to work with the various jurisdictions in evaluating the projects on the list. The plan also identifies light rail and rail-convertible bus rapid transit for the I-90 east corridor with a branch from downtown Bellevue to Overlake to Redmond.

Ms. Tull said since the long-range plan was adopted the legislature gave direction to move the public vote on Sound Transit 2 to November 2007 concurrent with the public vote on the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID). She said Sound Transit has been working closely with the RTID group on how the projects intertwine. The list of potential Sound Transit 2 projects on the Eastside originally numbered 500; Sound Transit has worked closely with the Eastside cities to pare that list down to 80, then the Board winnowed that list down to 63. Staff was then directed to prepare various scenarios based on the funding options; the scenarios included a no action plan based on having no increase in funding, and scenarios based on having 0.10, 0.30, 0.40 and 0.50 sales tax increases.

In July the Board took action to identify which scenarios to move forward with, and the ones they identified were the 0.30, 0.40 and 0.50 options. The scenario based on a 0.30 sales tax increase is focused on bus projects and some rail extensions; the 0.40 scenario has more rail extensions; and the 0.50 scenario represents a maximized rail investment. The Board identified light rail as the preferred high-capacity transit mode for the I-90 east corridor based on the research done over the last several years as well as input from the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland and Issaquah.

Ms. Tull stated that for the balance of 2006 there will be continued public outreach and consultations with RTID. The anticipation is that in late 2006 the Board will identify the preferred Sound Transit 2 plan and the route alternatives for the Eastside high-capacity transit corridor. The Board has based its decisions on a number of previous studies. The decisions relative to high-capacity transit on I-90 and the Eastside were largely based on the 1976 Memorandum of Agreement concerning I-90 that concluded the center roadway should be designed for conversion to fixed guideway transit; and an amendment to that agreement signed in 2004 that flowed from the I-90 project which identified Alternative R8-A with narrowed outer roadway lanes to allow for adding a fourth lane. Load tests have been done to make certain the bridge can accommodate rail, and the Washington State Department of Transportation has conducted a traffic study of the I-90 corridor.

Leonard McGhee, east corridor segment planner with the Link Light Rail department of Sound Transit, said the action of the Board in May 2006 to approve a contract for the east link work initiated the project-level work that is currently under way. The work involves three components: design, environmental review, and outreach. The design work includes civil design work, and the environmental review is based on the representative alignments that feed off the various funding scenarios. The outreach efforts include working with the jurisdictions of Mercer Island, Bellevue, Redmond, Washington State Department of Transportation and King County Metro, as well as with the stakeholders in each area.

Mr. McGhee said past studies have identified a range of route alternatives. Most of the identified corridors bring transit services from Seattle to Bellevue then out to Redmond. Just about every possible alignment to achieve that goal has been studied at one time or another. The city's ongoing Bel-Red corridor study contemplates an alignment through that corridor, and the city of Redmond is reviewing its plans for the Overlake Village area to incorporate high-capacity transit.

The environmental process will kick off when Sound Transit comes forward with a scoping report. The subset of projects that pose the most reasonable approach to meeting the east link corridor objectives will be shared with the public and feedback will be sought and suggestions for additional alignments will be welcomed. The public feedback process will begin in earnest in September 2006 during which there will be public meetings Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue and Redmond.

Mr. McGhee explained that the Board intends to select a number of alternatives to be studied in an Environmental Impact Statement. That document will lead to identifying projects, cost estimates and alignments that will feed into the November 2007 ballot measure.

Ms. Tull said there will be open house events focused on the Sound Transit 2 scenarios throughout the region starting in September; several of those will occur on the Eastside.

Commissioner Northey asked who is managing the segment from Mercer Island to downtown Bellevue and if there will be a stakeholders group involved. Ms. Tull said an interagency

stakeholders group has been formed for the east high-capacity transit process; Sue Coleman is the project manager for the Seattle to Bellevue segment, and Don Billin is the overall project manager.

Mr. McGhee explained that the decision regarding how to get from I-90 to downtown Bellevue will be informed by the interagency team, which includes Bellevue staff, outreach to the community generally and stakeholder groups.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Ms. Tull said it is anyone's guess how the Transit Now proposal being floated by King County will ultimately impact the Sound Transit 2 and RTID vote in the fall of 2007.

Mr. McGhee informed the Commission that the July 13 decision of the Sound Transit Board to select light rail as the preferred mode choice took convertible bus rapid transit off the table. Up until that point the two modes were both in play.

Chair Young asked that the Commission be kept fully informed with regard to specific dates for open houses and other meetings scheduled for the Eastside. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that all of the information is available online.

Answering a question asked by Chair Young, Ms. Tull explained that with a 0.30 percent sales tax increase, light rail will extend only to downtown Bellevue. With a 0.40 percent increase, the line could either be extended to Overlake with an aerial configuration, or to downtown Bellevue with a tunnel configuration. The 0.50 percent increase will allow the line to be extended to Redmond with an aerial configuration, or to the Overlake transit center using a tunnel configuration in downtown Bellevue. The Board will make the final decision by the end of the year.

B. Crossroads Center Plan

Senior Planner Paul Inghram explained that since the Commission was last updated regarding the process, a number of draft concept alternatives have been developed for the study area. He noted that the public process is still under way and that no formal recommendation from the Commission is needed yet.

The goals of the study is to reinforce the economic vitality of the area; improve the connections between Crossroads Park and the community center; and to enhance the ability for additional community gathering space. A great deal of effort has gone into reaching out to the public to gain feedback. An open house was conducted in April, at which people were asked to sign up to be part of a working group to help analyze issues with the site and identify opportunities. Three workshops were held with those who volunteered addressing parks, gathering spaces, uses and activities, and transportation. That input was used by the consultant in developing the draft alternatives, which were unveiled for the public in an open house on June 27.

Mr. Inghram said staff has been updating the city's boards and commissions. An information booth was set up twice at the Crossroads farmer's market as well. During August and September additional analysis will be done; the workgroup will meet again in September to begin the process of working toward developing an alternative plan.

The alternatives look out 20 to 30 years, though the preferred alternative once selected may result in some initial redevelopment. Each alternative seeks to make better connections with the park and an improved pedestrian environment.

Mr. Inghram said the first draft alternative, Terrace Park, has the least amount of overall development. It includes a 1.5-acre additional park area on the east side of the shopping center connecting to Crossroads Park, a flexible space that could serve as both parking and a court, a hotel use, mixed use structures, and structured parking. The alternative contemplates few changes to the northern part, some infill development on the eastern side, and the new connection to the park.

Commissioner Glass asked where parking for the theater would be located. Mr. Inghram said it could be underneath the hotel, underneath the adjacent mixed use facility. He allowed that as redevelopment occurs, all applicable parking standards will have to be met. It can be anticipated that over time some of the surface parking will be reformulated into structured parking.

Commissioner Northey asked if the study will include looking at the transportation impacts. Mr. Inghram said the impacts will be considered, but clarified that the study does not include a transportation master plan for the Crossroads subarea. When the study was first kicked off, earlier alternatives included more residential units, and the transportation impacts were modeled. The concurrency levels for the intersections in question are healthy for the most part, so while there is the perception of traffic problems in the area, the concurrency issues do not appear to be significant. Bicycle enhancements can be expected, but a specific bicycle study for the area is not planned.

Mr. Inghram explained that the second alternative, Village Green, has a stronger and wider pedestrian connection between the shopping center and the park, and to some extent out to 156th Avenue NE. The alternative includes a road extending out into the park serving the hotel use, and the alternative has a higher level of intensity and more structured parking. Some of the existing buildings in the north convert to residential uses. The visual connection with the park includes an amphitheater and water feature. The alternative has a stronger connection for pedestrians out to an improved transit connection on 156th Avenue NE.

Central Park, the third alternative, has more intensity, a more dramatic park connection, additional green space, and includes housing jutting out into the park space in the northern portion, which would require a land trade. It has a strong green connection from 156th Avenue NE to the park and the community center.

Answering a question asked by Chair Young, Mr. Inghram explained that the current zoning on the site allows for the development of office uses and a hotel use. The zoning does not, however, allow for residential development on the site, which is something that would have to be changed. There is a great demand for housing in the city currently, but there is not much of a demand for additional commercial space on the site.

Commissioner Northey asked if the Department of Planning and Community Development has offered an opinion on the alternatives yet. Mr. Inghram said they have not offered an official stance yet. They have indicated, however, that if there are to be any modifications to the park, there will need to be a net benefit for the park.

Commissioner Bell asked what the general reaction of the property owners has been. Mr. Inghram said staff has talked with all of them at different stages and most have expressed general optimism. The owners of the Top Foods site have gone on record saying they want to see no changes to their site.

Mr. Inghram said written comments regarding the draft alternatives have been received from 44 citizens to date. The range of support for the specific alternatives is widely distributed.

Commissioner Bell suggested that traffic circulation for the site will need additional study, adding that parking will also be a critical issue. Chair Young concurred.

****BREAK****

C. Mode Share Survey Report

Senior Planner Mike Ingram explained that the mode share survey is conducted every couple of years. He said the primary purpose is to determine what modes of travel are being used by those who commute to five employment centers in Bellevue. The results are used to measure how well the Comprehensive Plan targets are being met, as well as learn about community behavior patterns that can be incorporated into the transportation demand management efforts. In addition, for the most recent report, commute surveys were conducted at eight buildings in the downtown.

Mr. Ingram said the Comprehensive Plan includes specific targets for travel by specific modes other than single-occupant vehicles (SOV). The most aggressive non-SOV targets are attached to the downtown area at 40 percent, though there are targets for each of the city's five major employment centers: Eastgate, 35 percent; Crossroads and Bel-Red/Northup, 25 percent each; and Factoria, 20 percent.

The survey indicated that the Comprehensive Plan targets for two areas have been met: Bel-Red/Northup and Factoria. The targets were not met for the other three employment centers. A three-percent increase in the SOV rate for the downtown was noted, though the SOV rate in

Bel-Red/Northup and Factoria improved; the rates for Crossroads and Eastgate have fluctuated over the last three measurements. For the downtown area, there was a 3 point increase in transit mode share to 14% of commute trips, and a decrease in the vanpool/carpool mode share to 11% of commute trips, a shift that is in line with a maturing urban area; for the first time the transit mode use exceeds the vanpool/carpool mode. The transit share in Factoria also increased. The highest percentage of carpools was in Bel-Red/Northup at 18 percent; the lowest was in the downtown and Eastgate at 10 percent. Crossroads had the highest walk mode use at four percent; downtown had two percent, and the other areas were closer to one percent. Telecommuting was shown to be highest in Eastgate at seven percent; the probable reason behind the increase was the big push by Boeing to get their people into telecommuting.

Consistent with past surveys, it was found that large employers have higher non-SOV rates than small employers.

The methodology utilized for the most recent survey was much the same as has been used in the past in order to assure comparability. The primary instrument used was the Washington State Commute Trip Reduction survey form. Using that instrument has the advantage of being able to draw on the existing base of survey data collected by the state; of the 14,000 survey responses analyzed for the report, 9000 were from existing survey responses. The additional 5000 responses were collected from the five major employment MMAs.

Mr. Ingram noted that because Bellevue is a major employment center, the vast majority of workers commute into the city from outside. The average commute distance is 14 miles or more; the exception is Crossroads because it has a higher concentration of people who both live and work in Bellevue. In downtown, twenty-one percent of the commuters come from Seattle, an additional 21 percent come from the north, 14 percent come from the northeast, eight percent come from the east, and 16 percent come from the south.

Of the commuters coming into the downtown area from Seattle, 24 % use transit at least 1 day per week. Twenty percent of those coming from the north are using transit at least once a week, and 19 percent coming from the south are using transit at least once per week. The longest commutes are most likely to use vanpools and carpools. Because it takes organization to keep a vanpool going, those who commute using that mode are most likely to use the mode frequently. Transit users also are consistent, whereas those who commute by bicycle generally do so only once or twice a week.

Mr. Ingram said the survey respondents indicated a very high interest in telecommuting and compressed work weeks. The survey respondents who indicated they drive alone 80 percent or more of the time were asked about their interest level in using alternative commute modes, and they indicated a high level of interest in telecommuting and compressed work week and a lower, but significant interest in transit and carpooling.

Chair Young asked to what extent the survey results reflect increased gasoline prices. Mr. Ingram explained that the latest survey was conducted in October and November 2005, and

includes data collected over a two-year cycle. The recent increase in fuel costs is not reflected in the survey results.

Commissioner Northey commented that while the commuters themselves may be interested in telecommuting and shortened workweeks, the employers may not carry the same views. She asked to what extent city policy encourages businesses to take those approaches. Mr. Ingram said the city does not work directly with employers on those issues. One struggle being faced is the fact that there is a very large number of small employers in the city, many with fewer than 20 employees. Commissioner Northey noted that shaving a mere ten percent of the commuters from the total would have a significant impact on reducing overall congestion, and it would be a better use of tax dollars to work with businesses to encourage behavior modifications than to continue building more roads and facilities; the tool would likely have to be tax incentives.

Mr. Ingram said there are 15 buildings in the downtown that are conditioned with transportation management plan agreements which require that certain efforts be taken to reduce the overall number of commute trips. The more recently constructed buildings include a requirement to conduct periodic surveys. Accordingly, eight buildings were included in the latest survey.

At some point it will be necessary to reassess what the target levels in the Comprehensive Plan should be. Some changes to the framework to the state CTR program are in the works that could change the way the state conducts the survey process. There may also be opportunity to tie the mode share survey with a broader analysis of TDM market conditions.

D. TDM Program Briefing and CTR Update

Transportation Planner Maria Koengeter said the transportation demand management (TDM) goal in the Comprehensive Plan is to reduce the use of SOVs through a coordinated program of regulations, marketing, and the provision of travel options. TDM maximizes existing systems and takes advantage of the resulting capacity while reducing congestion, air pollution, and neighborhood cut-through traffic. Policy support is provided through the Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Implementation Plan, and the BROTS agreement. The program is funded with an annual CIP allocation of \$80,000 which is used to leverage state and federal grants.

Ms. Koengeter said the primary focus of the program is on commute trips, though there are also programs for residents and some elementary schools. The program goals are carried out using a combination of regulations, transportation management plans, education through general outreach, and individual program efforts, including incentives.

Since 2005 staff has been working to increase the ongoing level of effort for the TDM program with a focus on making it more sustainable. Effort has been put into increasing the level of outreach to employers and residents, and into the development of stronger relationships with the Bellevue Downtown Association and King County.

The project that established the framework for a more sustainable program was the Transportation Management Association (TMA) Opportunity Study. The Bellevue TMA, called TransManage, is the transportation arm of the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA). In recent years TransManage has been operating in a static mode providing basic implementation services to downtown buildings. Both the TMA and the city had concerns that the static level of operation would not be sustainable over time and was not meeting the evolving needs of the private and public partners, so the city and the BDA undertook a study to look at opportunities to grow and strengthen the TMA over time.

Key themes that flowed from the study included the need for a comprehensive local private sector TDM service provider to help meet the needs of property managers who have other things to focus on. The outcome was a three-year plan with a work plan, staffing recommendations, and a budget model.

Ms. Koengeter explained that the first step toward implementation of the plan was to put together a collection of three projects through a partnership with King County and the BDA. The objectives were to implement the study and to continue maturing the TDM market in downtown Bellevue. The first project is a TDM market analysis. While the mode share survey captures a snapshot of how people are commuting, there are environmental factors such as the price of gas that go into the decisions made by commuters and employers to invest in TDM. The market study will seek to identify the interests of commuters and employers and will inform programs that will be responsive and effective. One outcome will be a database of various market metrics and some commentary from small employers and property managers.

The second program is a building-based trip reduction program. Essentially, it takes the site-based TDM principles required for large employers and applies it to entire buildings. The approach will allow for efficiently reaching smaller employers through their property managers, and will allow for integrating parking management. An agreement has been reached with King County Metro to conduct a pilot program that will provide Flex Passes to any employer with at least five employees. The programs will have customizable elements, including Flex Pass, Flexcar, promotions, and bicycles.

Downtown Bellevue In Motion is the third element. The King County program is aimed at reaching downtown residents and incorporates some social marketing principles. Those who pledge to make at least two trips a week in a mode other than driving alone can earn rewards, such as gift cards. *Downtown Bellevue In Motion* will kick off in September.

In the fall of 2005 the city implemented *Crossroads In Motion* in which residents were engaged in trying alternative modes of travel. The focus was on households that do not speak English at home, and the program was implemented using a varied package of communications tools. There was a brochure in multiple languages, and improved bus stop signage. Residential transportation coordinators, each of which was a member of the local community who spoke a variety of different languages, were trained to provide travel information and in

teaching people how to use the bus system. A total of 290 Crossroads residents participated, and by the end of the program they reported they were driving alone 23 percent less. Favorable feedback was received, and the residential transportation coordinators are still providing assistance even though the program has wrapped up.

Ms. Koengeter said another program currently under way is called *Trips to School*. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of drop-off trips to elementary schools by encouraging students to take the bus, walk, bike and carpool to school. There were five schools that participated in 2005, and they reported an overall two to three percent reduction in drop-offs. The program received a lot of good feedback. In 2006 there are nine schools participating in the program representing 4400 students.

One upcoming initiative involves updating TDM communications, which addresses the goal of having more sustainability and providing a solid platform for educating the public about travel options. The vision is to create a coherent common identity for all of the various TDM efforts. The program contains a marketing component which will be focused on creating a TDM identity common to all of the elements. Marketing messages and strategies will also be developed for each of the audiences, including property managers, employers, employees, residents and visitors. The website will be updated to allow audiences to access the information and to make easily available some web-based tools that will make it easy both to implement and participate in some of the programs. The project will kick-off in the fall of 2006, and in the summer of 2007 the promotion campaign and new website will be launched.

Ms. Koengeter said the CTR Task Force undertook an evaluation of the CTR program during 2005. The redesign process explored a variety of CTR changes, from administrative, funding, reporting, measuring, and integration with other planning processes. The state submitted agency request information in the winter of 2005, and the House passed the CTR Efficiency Act in March 2006. The objectives of the Act are to improve the efficiency of the state highway system; integrate the CTR program into local, regional and state transportation planning efforts; and integrate CTR and TDM efforts into local land use and economic development efforts.

Fundamentally, the updated law retains the basic employer-affected programs and the primary purpose of reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and fuel consumption through reducing the overall number of commute trips. A new optional program element was added which seeks to integrate land use considerations and TDM efforts by providing opportunities for jurisdictions to develop areawide TDM efforts with different goals and program elements.

There are three significant changes to the law. Where previously counties were affected based on certain population thresholds, the CTR law affects all urban areas with highway segments experiencing 100 or more hours of person delay. Second, the new law establishes a local/regional/state CTR planning framework in order to integrate CTR with transportation, land use and growth management planning, giving regional transportation planning organizations a role in CTR planning and administration. Third, the option is established, with

tools and incentives, for local jurisdictions to develop growth and transportation efficiency centers (GTEC), which are employment or residential centers designated for more aggressive application of TDM programs and investments.

Ms. Koengeter said the city is recognized as a leader in TDM; the city's approach served as the model for the GTEC process. The state is currently developing the rules for compliance with the GTEC approach, and Bellevue staff is participating in the process. In the spring of 2007 an evaluation will take place focused on whether or not to pursue an areawide GTEC. Bellevue will need to update its CTR code in the summer of 2007.

Chair Young commented that cities with well-established transit systems generally have color-coded routes that are easy for commuters to understand. For the Puget Sound area, that is not the case; in fact, the bus routes are very confusing. He suggested that better signage is needed to help people understand where the buses run and which one they will need. Mr. Loewenherz concurred, but suggested that overcoming institutional inertia will be difficult. He allowed that the results of the specific elements of the *Crossroads In Motion* program played a significant role in helping people consider their transit options.

Councilmember Balducci said the information she has seen regarding TDM is that as a practice it has not yielded enough of an impact to be measured alongside other transportation investments. She suggested that if there were more of a return, government would probably choose to put more money into incentives and the like.

Commissioner Bell agreed that an analysis of just how cost-effective TDM programs are should be done.

Commissioner Northey said TDM programs do not pencil out particularly well in terms of cost per trip saved. She suggested that TDM will need to take some giant steps toward being more effective, and that will likely involve tax incentives.

E. State of Mobility Report

Mr. Loewenherz said the staff who authored the report were very appreciative of the comments received from the Commissioners.

Chair Young noted his appreciation for the fact that the format of the report has been standardized. He said the report is also more useful in that it has fewer words, more statistics, and excellent conclusions.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12818 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, said it appears the most expensive funding option for Sound Transit 2 does not provide for both going all the way to Redmond and serving downtown Bellevue with an underground alignment. He suggested that is a big problem.

Councilmember Balducci reported that the Council conducted its second budget workshop on July 24. She said much time was spent talking about the various expenditures that have been requested and the available revenues. The Council understands that there will not be a lot of new tax revenues available. The City Manager has been directed to develop a status quo budget and to develop a matrix of what could be purchased with the extra income that is expected from the downtown development. The Council also wants to know how the budget picture could be improved by raising taxes to some degree.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. June 8, 2006
- B. June 22, 2006

Motion to approve both sets of minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bell. Second was by Commissioner Northey 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 8:45 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date