

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 9, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Jokinen, Lampe, Northey, Simas

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Glass, Larrivee

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Eric Miller, Goran Sparrman, Kevin McDonald, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk provided the Commissioners with copies of a newsletter regarding the 108th Avenue NE project. He said an update on the Wilburton projects will be coming out in the next four to six weeks.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. 2011-2017 CIP Plan Recommendation

Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman commented that the Commission

typically spends several months working with staff on developing a recommendation for the transportation CIP. The Commission holds a public hearing and ultimately provides a recommendation to the City Council. Under the Budget One process, everything was organized around six adopted outcomes. For transportation projects, the primary outcome is improved mobility. A results team comprised of key department heads that have significant capital program responsibilities was appointed and tasked with prioritizing the city's limited capital resources for the next seven years. The results team thus took the step of conducting the initial prioritization, but they did so with a clear acknowledgement that the different boards and commissions would review the final product and make their own independent analysis and recommendation to the City Council.

The results team was charged with prioritizing all of the projects in the CIP regardless of outcome area. The focus was on balancing the citywide needs at the project level, and it proved to be both a challenging and an interesting exercise. Five years ago the Council created the supplemental CIP, which was in addition to the traditional CIP; the revenue source for the supplemental CIP was a property tax increase, and the funds were dedicated to specific programmatic needs, primarily with in transportation and planning. The mobility and infrastructure plan that was adopted as part of the Bel-Red subarea plan became a third capital program with a dedicated financial plan to pay for a clearly defined set of projects. As part of the CIP review process, all three of those capital programs were rolled together.

Mr. Sparrman said the results team developed criteria by which to weigh each capital project. Primary focus was given to achieving the city's mission in light of the community outcomes. The group looked at legal and required financial mandates. It also looked at financial factors, including leveraging funds and how much has already been spent on individual projects; cost avoidance; timing and urgency issues; and scaling projects. Policy mandates were not considered in prioritizing projects, nor was the level of community support for specific projects. Geographic and functional distributions were not deciding factors for the team. Projects were ranked in terms of their ability to achieve an identified outcome for the city.

The amount of funding available was insufficient to even take on the projects ranked as high priority by the team. The final recommendation includes projects listed as funded, unfunded high-priority projects, and unfunded medium-priority projects. The list does not contain any low-priority projects.

Mr. Sparrman said the team recognized the tremendous thirst in the community for all kinds of capital improvements. The group scrubbed everything in an attempt to free up resources. As a result capital ongoing programs, including the overlay program, minor walkway/bikeway projects, and maintenance of walkway/bikeway projects, were cut back by 30 percent, freeing millions of dollars that otherwise would not have been available for discreet capital projects.

The team members took seriously the notion of working together and not seeking to defend their departmental interests. Not everyone was happy with the end result. Mr. Sparrman said he personally was not pleased with how little is earmarked for alternative modes of transportation and the geographic distribution of projects.

Commissioner Northey asked if the city manager served on the results team. Mr. Sparrman said he did not. The recommendations of all the results teams have been presented to the city manager, whose legal responsibility it is to recommend a preliminary budget to the City Council for both operating and capital.

Commissioner Northey pointed out that two of the three CIPs that were rolled into one had additional revenue sources that were part of the deal struck when they were approved. The Council elected not to implement some of those revenue sources, so the projects from those CIPs have been put on equal footing with projects that did not have identified revenue sources. Mr. Sparrman said the Council recognizes the shortage of capital resources, and there have been several conversations focused on the projects that were part of the regional mobility initiative and the funding that was supposed to be attached to it. Transportation staff, however, are continuing to focus on the financial plan and will on September 13 bring to the Council a request to begin the process of forming an LID. There are certain steps the Council will have to make if they are going to stay consistent with the financial plan.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Jokinen, Mr. Sparrman said staff has been given direction from the Council regarding some key projects, including the NE 4th Street extension and the first segment of the 120th Avenue NE project. Both of those projects are associated with the proposed LID. The results team assigned the two projects the highest rating based on financial factors, including the fact that federal dollars have already been received for the projects that carry with them certain obligation dates. The projects were also identified as having the biggest system benefits, both for the downtown and outside the downtown. The NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project and additional segments on 120th Avenue NE are all subject to different drivers that set the priorities for how to approach them.

Chair Tanaka asked if additional impacts to the list can be anticipated based on budget shortfalls. Mr. Sparrman said if the specific revenues that feed the CIP continue to trend down, allocations within the CIP will have to be reduced. If the Council feels that for one reason or another it would be inappropriate to take certain revenue actions, projects will either have to be paid for through some other means or face being delayed. If more trimming is deemed necessary, the process will likely be interactive between the Council and staff.

Commissioner Northey asked how the public process has differed from previous years and how it will become known whether the citizens like the CIP project list or not. Mr. Sparrman said those who have concerns should let the Council know; in particular, they should show up for the public hearings, which is the best way for the public to make their views known. Commissioner Northey said she was concerned because those who do not know what is going on will not know what is at risk. Mr. Sparrman said when the city manager releases his preliminary budget, people should look it over carefully and react to it by letting the Councilmembers know what they think about it.

Chair Tanaka asked the Commissioners to review and wordsmith the draft transmittal memo.

Commissioner Northey said she was not comfortable with the third paragraph and said she did not hear overwhelming support on the part of the Commissioners for the LT's funding recommendations. She said she would prefer to see the entire paragraph removed, but would settle for removing the word "full" in the first sentence.

Commissioner Simas suggested replacing "fully" with "generally," and Commissioner Northey said she could support that change. Commissioner Simas said the tenor of the transmittal is that the Commission understands what is going on and recognizes there is little that can be done. In short it also says the Commission stands willing to help in any way it can. The fact is if the economy remains stagnant, many of the projects are going to delayed even more, and the

private developers will be the lead force in slowing down the process. If the number of persons trying to get in and out of Bellevue is not growing, the need for some of the projects will not be immediately apparent in the short term. That may allow dollars to be freed up for neighborhood projects in the interim.

Commissioner Lampe agreed with the neighborhood concerns, adding that he would word them as strongly as possible.

Commissioner Northey pointed out that at its August 18 meeting there was general agreement that the Commission should lay low. However, now that it is clear the department directors divorced themselves from the political and advocacy issues in reviewing the CIP projects, there is cause for the Commission to word the transmittal memo more strongly. If the Commission does not speak up, no one will.

Commissioner Simas said he would support integrating stronger language reminding the Council to remember the neighborhoods and to address their needs as soon as possible. As things stand, there are a few big projects that are sucking all the air out of the room. Every dollar that becomes available should be earmarked for neighborhood projects.

Chair Tanaka suggested rewording the first sentence of the fourth paragraph to read “We do want to note, however, that the Commission has a heightened concern that over the next seven years the city will not be able to respond to neighborhood improvement requests or to meet previous improvement commitments.” Commissioner Northey concurred and suggested the paragraph should be moved up to become the second paragraph.

There was agreement to strike the second paragraph of the draft entirely and to make the fourth paragraph the new second paragraph.

Commissioner Jokinen said he would include in the memo the comment that there is an apparent lack of balance the interests of the downtown and the neighborhoods. He said he would add that while the proposed projects will bring further economic development to the city, one of the things that makes people want to live in Bellevue is its neighborhoods, which are great because of the investments made in them.

Commissioner Northey said that sentiment could be added to the new second paragraph by including a final sentence reading “We encourage the Council to first consider reestablishing a balance between neighborhood and downtown investments as additional revenues become available.”

There was agreement to revise the first sentence of the new second paragraph to read “We are concerned that over the next seven years....”

There was also agreement to revise the penultimate paragraph to read “We understand that these are challenging economic times. We do, however, caution that significantly reducing maintenance spending in the short term, such as proposed in the Overlay Program (CIP Plan No. PW-M-1), can lead to increased infrastructure repair costs in future budget cycles. We would like to bring to the Council’s attention that there are several unfunded discrete projects listed as a “High Priority” by the city’s Leadership Team that will address identified current neighborhood needs.”

Commissioner Northey suggested the memo should in a politically correct way point out that the Council elected not to raise property taxes yet still wants to construct the same list of projects. Chair Tanaka said he would not want to include that comment given that policy decisions of that sort are not within the Commission's purview.

Commissioner Simas said he would be okay with raising the Council's hackles over the issue; he said the issue is valid given that there are big projects with big costs that the Council has chosen not to fund with other sources of revenue. He allowed, however, that the Councilmembers were elected to make the tough decisions and they made that decision. The Commission is charged with representing the citizens and as such the question should at least be raised.

Commissioner Jokinen concurred with Chair Tanaka. He said his belief was that the Commission's role is not to address the funding issue but rather to focus on how the available dollars should be spent on the list of prioritized projects.

B. 2010 Comprehensive Plan Amendments – Transportation Related

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said four Comprehensive Plan amendments specific to transportation were initiated by the City Council at the request of staff in August. They are the only Comprehensive Plan amendments moving forward in 2010. The amendments seek to make minor updates to figures in the Transportation Element, or to reconcile project description language. The role of the Transportation Commission will be to provide comment and advice to the Planning Commission, which is the steward of the Comprehensive Plan and all of its various components.

Mr. McDonald said the first amendment had to do with Figure TR-2 in the Transportation Element. He noted that the figure represents travel demand forecasts by Mobility Management Area (MMA). The current figure is out of date with regard to the forecast year and does not reflect the MMA boundary changes for the Bel-Red and Wilburton areas. The forecast year will be changed to 2020, new travel demand figures for the Bel-Red corridor will be included, and it will be made clear that there is no interlocal agreement with Redmond with regard to travel demand forecasts.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Simas, Mr. McDonald agreed the language should clarify that Figure TR-2 represents all motorized modes of travel, not all modes of travel, as the forecast does not consider non-motorized modes.

Mr. McDonald explained that the second Comprehensive Plan amendment seeks to update the description of the 120th Avenue NE corridor improvements. He said the corridor runs through both the Wilburton and the Bel-Red subareas and the improvements are described a little differently in three separate transportation facility plans. The intent is to reconcile the differences by coalescing around a single project description matching the language adopted as part of the Bel-Red subarea plan. The corridor is proposed to have a five-lane cross section with two travel lanes in each direction and a center turn lane, in addition to bicycle lanes and sidewalks on both sides. An updated project description will need to be inserted in the Bridle Trails/Bel-Red/Crossroads Transportation Facilities Plan, the Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Facilities Plan, and the East Bellevue Transportation Facilities Plan.

Commissioner Jokinen commented that the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe corridor lies fairly

close to the 120th Avenue NE corridor. There is a possibility that the rail corridor will be developed with trail and bicycle facilities. As such, it would be a shame to invest a great deal of money in the 120th Avenue NE corridor in terms of bicycle facilities if the rail corridor will have bicycle facilities. Mr. McDonald said the cross section for the corridor, as established by the Bel-Red subarea plan, is specific in detailing five lanes with bike lanes and sidewalks. He allowed that there has been some recent travel demand modeling work done that may indicate an opportunity to shrink the footprint of the roadway north of NE 15th Street to Northup Way from a five-lane cross section to a three-lane cross section. That information is preliminary, and no decision has been made to do that yet. The bike lanes issue has received a great deal of discussion; the conclusion reached is that having parallel bike lane facilities would not necessarily be duplicative given that the function of the bicycle facility would be different in each of the corridors. The rail corridor is being looked at as a regional bicycle facility that stretches from Renton to Snohomish County, and the trips on that facility have the potential to be regional in nature. Those trips will not necessarily need to access the businesses or neighborhoods to the east of the corridor. The 120th Avenue NE corridor bike lanes will provide local access to businesses and residents in the Bel-Red corridor and will provide for a north/south connection from the Wilburton area to Bel-Red and north to the SR-520 trail, which will not physically intersect the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe trail.

Mr. McDonald explained that the third amendment seeks to update the description of Bel-Red Road from NE 20th Street to NE 24th Street. He said the roadway section forms the boundary between Bellevue and Redmond, with the city limit line running down the center line. The project is described differently in four transportation facility plans and in the Redmond/Overlake Transportation Master Plan. The consensus between Bellevue and Redmond is that the roadway should have two travel lanes in each direction and a center turn lane, as well as bicycle lanes. To implement the project description, it would be necessary to add a center turn lane and bike lanes to the segment between NE 20th Street and NE 24th Street. As redevelopment of the area occurs, travel demand for all modes will increase and the need for a turning lane will increase. The Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Facilities Plan and the Bridle Trails/Bel-Red/Crossroads Transportation Facilities Plan will both need to be amended.

Mr. McDonald stated that the fourth of the Comprehensive Plan amendments seeks to amend figure TR-3, the arterial map, by adding the NE 10th Street extension and classifying it as a minor arterial.

Commissioner Northey asked if the I-405 braid will include access from NE 10th Street. Mr. McDonald said that the project currently under construction will provide access to the north but not from the north. The long-range plan includes access to NE 10th Street from the north.

There was consensus to move forward with the proposed amendments.

C. Commission Retreat Recap

Chair Tanaka thanked staff for converting the retreat recap narrative to bullet points and said it was his intention to have it available at every meeting to make it easier to keep track of those things the Commission indicated it wanted to pursue.

Chair Tanaka allowed that some of the things the Commission said at the retreat about

widening its scope would need to be tackled carefully so as not to step on the Council's regional role. It might be useful, for instance, to meet with the Redmond transportation commission to discuss issues, and the City Council might want the Commission to take that step.

Commissioner Northey said she would like to put that issue out there to see what the Council would say. Chair Tanaka said he would be happy to broach the issue in a one-on-one session with a Councilmember.

Mr. Krawczyk commented that in the past the Commission has had the advantage of being able to expand its role and provide improvements rather than having its role reduced. He offered to send to the Commissioners the discussion about the mobility initiative projects; he pointed with the exception of projects that received grants, the mobility initiative projects clearly were the driving factor in determining priorities.

Commissioner Lampe said that document would be helpful to have.

Chair Tanaka commented that the leadership team did not have much time to put together the recommended CIP project list. The final product is not perfect, and not everyone is happy with it, but that is the essence of a good compromise. In theory the Commission represents the citizens, but there are some things the Commission cannot get into and other things it should not get into. The Commission is not comprised of transportation engineers and as such must to a large degree depend on the wisdom of staff.

Commissioner Northey said the process was clearly driven from the top down with a number of pre-established parameters. What the Commission needs to know is what the priorities are and if it is carrying out its mission.

Commissioner Northey asked how the bullet points would be turned into reality. Chair Tanaka said that would be up to the Commission. A subcommittee could be formed, or the Commission as a whole could take on the task of determining how to proceed. That could entail prioritizing the items on the list.

D. 2010 – 2020 Citywide Transportation Demand Management Plan Draft – Memo Only

Commissioner Jokinen said he went online to view the Choose Your Way Bellevue webpage and was very impressed with it.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Krawczyk noted that Commissioner Glass had previously suggested the benefits of educating the public with regard to pedestrian and bicycle issues. He said while there is no budget identified to address the initiative, the thinking is that there may be some existing information that could be aired on BTV. He said he will be talking to senior transportation

planner Franz Lowenherz about it.

Mr. Krawczyk reported that the Council had not yet taken action to appoint members to the Eastgate/I-90 study CAC. The planning work continues to move forward.

Responding to a request made by Commissioner Lampe at the August 18 Commission meeting, Mr. Krawczyk said the record indicates that what the light rail best practices committee was looking for in terms of a CAC was to have a group appointed in the project development stage rather than to have a group in place to provide comment on the city's ongoing light rail activities.

- 10. NEW BUSINESS – None
- 11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. June 23, 2010 Retreat

Motion to approve the minutes as printed was made by Commissioner Northey. Second was by Commissioner Jokinen and the motion carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed its calendar and list of upcoming agenda items.

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

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date