



DATE: October 5, 2011
TO: Bellevue Transportation Commission
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SUBJECT: Downtown Transportation Plan Update

INTRODUCTION

The update to the Downtown Transportation Plan will address mobility issues and challenges and support Downtown growth forecasts looking out to a new horizon year of 2030.

On October 13, Commission comments are requested to provide input to Council on a set of draft guiding principles for the plan update. In addition, staff will provide an overview of several components of the existing Downtown transportation system conditions and will also provide a summary of recent public involvement efforts.

PLAN UPDATE PRINCIPLES

On October 3, staff discussed with Council a set of draft principles to provide guidance to staff, the community and the Transportation Commission as we proceed through the plan update. Council provided comments on the draft principles and requested input from the Transportation Commission prior to finalizing and approving the principles. Attachment A is the set of planning principles presented to Council, and Attachment B is a staff summary of the Council's comments. Staff will summarize the Transportation Commission's comments and submit them to the Council for consideration as they finalize the principles.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Section II of the plan update Briefing Book contains a wealth of information on the existing land use and transportation system in Downtown Bellevue. The presentation on October 13 will highlight a subset of the transportation information available, and identify key missing pieces that we will need to gather to build the foundation for project ideas and recommendations.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A multi-faceted and robust public involvement effort is underway. A number of presentations and events have been held and are planned. The project web site is now live, and can be accessed at: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-transportation-plan-update.htm>. The web site will provide information on upcoming events, and it will also document past events so people can have access to that information.

The following sections summarize significant recent and planned public outreach:

Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA)

On September 14, staff provided an overview presentation to the (BDA) Urban Planning and Transportation Committee, and invited comments on the plan update. Key points raised by the BDA committee were related to:

- Implementation
 - Include project designs and funding strategies
 - Implement some “low hanging fruit” projects if possible to provide short-term improvements that will make a long-term difference
 - Look for opportunities for partnerships and grants to develop projects
- Land Use-Transportation Integration
 - Land use and transportation planning should be well integrated
 - *Staff Note: Downtown Transportation Plan Update will consider a 2030 land use forecast that is adjusted lower for employment to account for the slower development cycle.*
- Local (Downtown) Roadways
 - Consider general east-west mobility across Downtown
 - Identify projects that serve internal Downtown circulation and also projects that provide access to Downtown from regional facilities
- Mobility for Freight
 - Consider the demand for moving freight into and within Downtown
- Parking
 - Look at increasing the amount of on-street parking
 - Also consider off-street parking
- Pedestrians
 - Study pedestrian activity and volume at intersections – note that it sometimes is hard to turn right due to all the pedestrians crossing
 - Improving the pedestrian network is important
 - Increasing pedestrian volumes Downtown are the result of increased residential density and jobs, which is good; consistent with the vision for Downtown
- Regional Access

- Consider access to the freeways
- Integration with East Link will be important
- Trip Generation
 - The plan update should consider how people get to work and the percentage of Downtown residents who work Downtown
 - Standard trip generation formulas may overstate the actual number of motorized trips generated in a mixed-use downtown setting

Downtown Bicycle Rides

In late September – on two perfect Fall days for bicycle riding – staff hosted bicycle rides for Downtown residents and commuters. The intent was to get their input on the types of bicycle facilities that would make their Downtown neighborhoods more bicycle-friendly and make their commutes and recreation rides more comfortable. One bicycle ride, the Downtown “Secrets” Tour was a leisurely-paced ride between popular or little known destinations in and around Downtown Bellevue. The Downtown Commuter Rides studied the main routes to major regional bicycle destinations.

- Downtown “Secrets” Tour – September 24

The ride began at Top Pot Doughnuts, and followed a roughly counterclockwise loop route around Downtown. Riders were appreciative of the opportunity to discover new places that they could get to on their bicycles, such as the Elements Plaza on 111th Avenue NE, and Wildwood Park just south of Old Bellevue on 102nd Avenue NE. Their comments on the Downtown bicycle facilities ranged from the need for more bicycle parking, better connections both north-south and east-west, and support for the use of sharrow lane markings on certain streets such as 110th Avenue NE.
- Downtown Commuter Rides – September 28

Each ride began at Compass Plaza and headed to three major regional bicycle destinations. General comments on bicycle facilities focused on the need for little things that make a big difference – like wayfinding, loop detector insignias, and sharrows, to bigger things that dramatically change the bicycling environment – like adding bicycle lanes. Comments received from riders on each of the routes included the following:

 - I-90 Trail Route (to the I-90 Trail via 108th Avenue NE)
 - Speed humps such as the ones on 108th Ave SE should be designed to better accommodate bicyclists by providing a level surface.
 - Medians should be designed to allow comfortable passage of vehicles overtaking cyclists, especially on uphill segments.
 - SR 520 West Route (to Evergreen Point via Lake Washington Boulevard and NE 84th St.)
 - Try to find “bicycle boulevard” routes off of the main arterials.
 - Focus on maintenance of bicycle facilities so they are free of debris.

- SR 520 East Route (to the SR 520 Trail via 116th Ave NE/120th Ave NE and Northup Way)
 - Could the unused railroad tracks soon be removed from 120th Avenue NE?
 - Better east-west connections are needed Downtown. Improve the Pedestrian Corridor along NE 6th Street for bicyclists.

Bellevue Chamber of Commerce

On October 11, staff will provide an overview presentation of the Downtown Transportation Update, and will invite comment. Staff will summarize the key points raised by the Chamber during the October 13 presentation to the Transportation Commission.

Open House and Scoping Meeting

In the early evening of Tuesday, November 1 staff will host an open house and scoping meeting in City Hall. The objectives of this meeting are to provide information to a broad section of the community and to receive “scoping” comments regarding specific transportation issues. Following an overview presentation in the Council Chambers, those in attendance will be invited to the Concourse to join in one or more small group conversations focused on specific mobility modes such as bicycles, transit, and roadways. In this format, we hope to hear from the community about the transportation system issues that concern them and their ideas for improvements. We will encourage people to visit more than one mobility display table to engage them in the challenge of planning for a multimodal transportation system in a complex and dense urban environment. Commission members are invited to attend.

NEXT STEPS

- **November 1: Open House and Plan Update Scoping**
 - 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Bellevue City Hall – Council Chambers and Concourse**
 - 4:30 – View displays
 - 5:00 – Presentation
 - 5:30 – Discussions about different modes
- November 10: Transportation Commission
 - Best Practices
 - Measures of Effectiveness
- December 8: Transportation Commission
 - Regional Projects

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Plan Update DRAFT Principles
- B. Staff summary of the Council’s comments on draft Principles

ATTACHMENT A

DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

DRAFT PROJECT PRINCIPLES (OCTOBER 3, 2011)

1. Plan for multiple modes of travel in Downtown Bellevue

Develop a multimodal transportation strategy for Downtown that updates the existing Downtown Subarea Plan project list and considers and incorporates the emerging and anticipated needs of motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and carpools/vanpools.

2. Accommodate the anticipated travel demands from the 2030 growth forecast

Ensure that the planned transportation system will accommodate the 2030 forecast for Downtown residential and commercial growth.

3. Advance the adopted vision for Downtown Bellevue

Ensure that the Downtown transportation system advances the land use and urban design vision for Downtown Bellevue - articulated in the Downtown Subarea Plan as a vibrant, livable, accessible, and memorable mixed use Urban Center.

4. Recognize changes in the regional and local transportation environment

Incorporate local and regional projects and plans that have been approved since the Downtown Subarea Plan was adopted in 2004 – including such changes as East Link, SR 520 expansion and tolling, and the adoption of the Mobility and Infrastructure Initiative and the Bel-Red Subarea Plan.

5. Integrate City Council direction

As future Downtown transportation alternatives are established, incorporate City Council direction on regional transportation facilities, such as the Downtown alignment for the Sound Transit East Link project and the I-405 Master Plan.

6. Provide for comprehensive public involvement

Ensure that process to update the Downtown Transportation Plan includes broad and inclusive public outreach and involvement that engages the diverse Downtown commercial and residential community, nearby residential neighborhoods, and other community stakeholders.

7. Minimize traffic impacts on neighborhoods

Consider measures as needed to protect nearby residential neighborhood streets from Downtown cut-thru traffic and commuter parking spillover, and limit traffic impacts on Downtown residents.

8. Involve regional transportation partners

Coordinate planning for the Downtown Bellevue transportation system with regional partner agencies, such as the Washington State Department of Transportation, Sound

Transit, and King County Metro, and work to ensure that those partner agencies develop plans and projects to support mobility in the Downtown Bellevue regional growth center.

9. Leverage funding from outside sources to implement projects

Identify transportation system projects that effectively leverage grant funding opportunities. These types of projects will achieve multiple mobility benefits and support economic vitality and Downtown Bellevue's regional status as a Metropolitan City and Urban Center.

ATTACHMENT B

Downtown Transportation Plan Update

Council comments on Draft Principles (October 3, 2011)

- Reference the affect of bridge tolling on local Bellevue arterials.
- Include a principle pertaining to cost/benefit of projects, and how projects should be implemented based on this.
- Have a principle that states that the multimodal transportation system has to support all of the Downtown land uses, including retail shopping areas.
- Don't lose sight of the fact that Downtown Bellevue is the economic engine of the City.
- Parking is essential in support of businesses.
- Be sure to consider the broader transportation analysis area beyond the boundaries of Downtown.
- Recognize the Puget Sound Regional Council as a regional transportation partner, along with WSDOT, Sound Transit and King County Metro, for their role in transportation project prioritization and funding.
- Public outreach should be inclusive, and provide meeting information materials in several languages to enable non-English speakers to participate.
- Place emphasis on minimizing traffic impacts on neighborhoods, specifically looking at broader travel patterns and future projects and how they affect adjoining areas.
- Principles should recognize that the various modes of the transportation system support different types of land used – for instance major retail still relies on personal vehicles – and that the City should provide a high quality environment for people to get around using all modes.
- Organize principles in a way that emphasizes that the transportation system exists in support of the land use vision, and the biggest reason to build transportation facilities is to support growth and people, not for their own sake.
- Principles need to mention the transportation system's role in providing mobility for people.
- Principle 4 should be clearer that there have been changes to the land use environment as well as the transportation environment.