CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:
Initiation of Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project.

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FISCAL IMPACT:
Funded through the City of Bellevue’s Capital Investment Program (CD-21), the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project will evaluate land use and transportation alternatives for the Eastgate/I-90 regional employment corridor. CD-21 identifies a total budget of $295,000 ($145,000 for land use planning and $150,000 for transportation planning) for this project.

POLICY ISSUES:
What is the City’s vision for the long-term vitality of the Eastgate/I-90 corridor?

The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan identifies the Eastgate/I-90 area as one of the City’s five major employment centers. As of March 2008 the study area had an estimated 25,500 employees (approximately 18% of the City’s total employment). Comprehensive Plan Policy ED-19 recognizes the need to “Maintain and update integrated land use and transportation plans to guide the future of the City’s major commercial areas and help them respond to change”. It further establishes as a Goal “To maintain the quality of older commercial areas, promoting redevelopment and revitalization as needed to maintain their vitality.” This may entail planning for new uses and urban forms, developing incentives and other strategies to promote re-investment, and targeting investments in public infrastructure to help support new private sector development. The Council has previously directed staff to embark on this Eastgate study. While it has been queued up behind other planning work, staff resources are now available to initiate this project.

The Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project, coordinated jointly by PCD and Transportation, will consider a 2030 planning horizon and evaluate potential land use changes for the corridor, including those that increase commercial and/or mixed use potential and that are supported by multi-modal transportation options. Staff is seeking Council direction on the project.
scope, Council principles, and public involvement process, including use of a citizen advisory committee to help guide the project.

In a complementary and parallel effort, staff intends to begin engaging the residents of the adjacent Eastgate area of unincorporated King County in discussions about future annexation. This would involve early informational meetings in 2010 and include multiple City departments. If the Council chooses to pursue annexing this area in the near term, a full-scale annexation effort could ensue in 2011-12. A full annexation campaign could occur in 2011 with the intent of having all the City’s remaining potential annexation areas annexed and within the City by 2012. See map 1b.

**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:**

- Action
- **Discussion**
- Information

- Initiate the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project and Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
- Provide direction to staff on the project scope, Council principles, and public involvement process.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

Background
Per previous Council direction, staff is preparing to embark on an evaluation of land use and transportation planning policies and regulations in the Eastgate/I-90 commercial corridor, one of the City’s major employment centers. This evaluation will result in a Plan update that will build on this gateway area’s assets of accessibility, visibility, job diversity, and stable nearby residential neighborhoods. The Plan will provide a more coherent identity for this area, improving its economic vitality and character, while ensuring the area has an adequate transportation infrastructure and services to meet changing land use and community needs.

The Eastgate area consists largely of traditional suburban office developments, often one to three stories tall and surrounded by surface parking. The Factoria Mall and other retail uses border the Eastgate area to the southwest. Several regional employers, including T-Mobile, Boeing, Quadrant, Verizon, and others are located in the study area. Most of the City’s remaining light industrial area lies in the northwest portion of the study area and is home to the King County transfer station, a Puget Sound Energy electrical substation, and a number of manufacturing, repair, and storage businesses. Bellevue College, the third largest institution of higher education in the state, is located in the north-central part of the study area. The residential area south of I-90 lies in unincorporated King County. The City anticipates studying the annexation of this area in a separate, parallel process.

**Proposed Study Area**
The major focus of this project will be the commercial office area fronting I-90. The proposed study area is generally bounded by I-405 to the west, SE 24th Street to the north, 161st Avenue SE to the east, and SE 38th Street to the south, with an eastward extension along I-90 to the Lakemont
Boulevard interchange. The study area includes portions of the Eastgate, Factoria, and Richards Valley subareas (see attached map of the primary and secondary study areas). The primary study area includes the commercial corridor on the north and south sides of I-90, east of I-405. With few exceptions, it does not include residentially-zoned property. The primary study area is where land use changes could potentially occur.

The secondary study area includes areas that might be affected by changes within the primary study area. It includes an eastward extension along I-90 to the Lakemont Boulevard interchange to include a key transportation system component that affects transportation movements to and through the corridor.

Project Need
The Council has previously directed staff to embark on this Eastgate study, which has been queued up waiting staff resources. In addition to the general Comprehensive Plan direction to maintain and update land use and transportation plans for the City’s major commercial areas, the following are specific rationales for the project moving forward at this time:

- **Need to plan holistically rather than piecemeal.** Several property owners in the study area have approached the city in recent years, expressing interest in redeveloping their properties in ways not envisioned by current land use policies and regulations. The Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project would allow the area to be studied holistically rather than in fragmented fashion.

- **Erosion of neighborhood services.** Recent market trends have seen the replacement of neighborhood-oriented services, such as the former Safeway grocery store in the Sunset Village Shopping Center, with other uses including automobile sales. The study will include an evaluation of market forces and opportunities for the future.

- **Transportation “choke points” and the need to achieve better efficiencies in the state system.** Several intersections within the study area (particularly in the west end near Factoria, and near access points with I-90) have high levels of congestion now, and are expected to have even higher levels of congestion by 2030. The project will look at ways of improving traffic flow throughout the area, including solutions linked with potential land use changes. With regard to the state system, WSDOT’s recently completed Draft I-90 Corridor Study includes I-90 eastbound and westbound auxiliary lane and arterial channelization as improvements in its Eastgate area recommendations. The City’s work will examine these proposed improvements in more detail, and we will work with WSDOT on finding ways to maximize benefits of potential I-90 corridor improvements to address City “choke points” and improve overall transportation mobility in the Eastgate area.

- **Lack of connectivity across the Eastgate corridor.** Access into the I-90 Business Park and the businesses along SE 30th and SE 32nd Streets are compromised by a “one-way in and one-way out” street design. Limited access points result in out-of direction travel and heavy vehicle traffic along roads (Richards Road and Eastgate Way) that access these locations. Unconnected streets also make it very difficult to walk and bicycle through the community and to operate efficient and direct transit services to the array of destinations in the Eastgate area. This project provides an opportunity to improve street connectivity for the benefit of all modes of transportation.

- **Mountains to Sound Greenway.** The I-90 corridor is an important and unfinished link in the Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTS) that stretches from central Washington to the Seattle
waterfront. The project provides an opportunity to integrate MTS planning with other mobility and recreational features of the corridor.

- **Need for a more coherent image.** The Eastgate corridor is a major gateway to Bellevue, yet it lacks a coherent urban design and image. This project is an opportunity to create a stronger and more attractive unifying image for the area.
- **Bellevue College evolution.** Bellevue College’s evolution toward a four-year institution will have land use and transportation implications, and could provide opportunities for shared community recreational or other civic resources.
- **Opportunity for innovation.** Land use and transportation planning is evolving to a point of being able to directly assess the climate change and public health impacts of planning choices. Staff have identified potential grant funding sources to integrate modeling of these factors into the Eastgate process, and are prepared to submit a full grant application that, if funded, will sync up well with the project schedule.

**Project Objectives**

This project has the following key objectives:

- Identify a preferred long-term land use and transportation vision for the Eastgate/I-90 corridor that:
  - Provides clear and deliberate direction for the area’s future land use and zoning.
  - Enhances the economic vitality and diversity of this area and of the city as a whole.
  - Provides for neighborhood-oriented retail and services.
  - Maintains adequate mobility and promotes alternative modes of transportation, with reduced emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

- Identify multi-modal transportation improvements for the area that:
  - Address future congestion and improve safety for all users.
  - Expand travel choices.
  - Prioritize “low cost/high impact” transportation improvements, recognizing the City’s fiscal constraints in funding expansive new transportation improvements.

- Promote a stronger identity and urban design image for this area, recognizing its prominent location on the Mountains to Sound Greenway.

- Support Bellevue College in its efforts to become a four-year institution, by planning for college-related residential growth, ensuring adequate transportation infrastructure, and pursuing opportunities for sharing community recreational or other civic resources.

**Scope of Work and Anticipated Products**

A generalized project timeline is shown in Attachment 2. The full project scope will involve the following major elements:

- **Economic and market analysis.** With the help of consultants, the existing employment and business mix in the area will be evaluated, and long-term growth prospects for the area will be analyzed for a variety of land uses.
• **Land use alternatives.** Based in part on analysis of the area's constraints and opportunities, the economic/market analysis, input from community stakeholders, and other factors, land use alternatives will be generated for additional analysis.

• **Transportation analysis.** Any revised future land use vision for the corridor will require regional access, adequate circulation within the area, and mitigation of impacts to surrounding areas. The transportation impacts of each land use alternative will be modeled and evaluated. The results of this analysis will help identify a preferred land use alternative, with an appropriate package of multi-modal transportation strategies.

• **Greenhouse gas and health impact analysis.** In accord with Washington State greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions goals, the plan will explore means to reduce GHG emissions in the study area. In addition, grant opportunities will be explored that would allow the project to assess the health impacts that could result from land use and transportation changes.

• **Selection of a preferred alternative.** Based on the evaluation of alternatives and public input, a preferred alternative will be selected. The preferred potential development patterns will be refined and illustrated. In addition to land use and urban amenities, the preferred alternative will include the transportation improvements needed to accommodate the vision, and strategies to minimize impacts to surrounding areas.

• **Integrated GMA planning and SEPA environmental review.** This concept emphasizes beginning environmental review as early in the planning process as possible so that environmental considerations can effectively inform the development and evaluation of project alternatives, and create a more efficient SEPA process.

• **Financing and implementation strategies.** A financial strategy will be prepared to guide funding of the transportation, urban amenities and other improvements needed to realize the preferred alternative.

**Draft Planning Principles**
In order to help guide the project, staff has drafted a set of “Council principles” intended to provide consistent direction over the course of the project. These draft principles are presented for Council’s consideration in Attachment 3.

**Proposed Public Participation Program**
Public participation will be a critical component of this project. The study area is large and diverse, encompassing parts of three subareas: Eastgate, Richards Valley, and Factoria. In addition, large residential neighborhoods lie just outside the study area.

Given the size and complexity of the project, staff recommends that the study be guided by a citizen advisory committee (CAC) made up of members of City Boards and Commissions, and representatives from the study area and surrounding community. The mission of this group will be to advise and make recommendations to the City Council on the project. This group’s structure and background will provide both a broader, citywide perspective and an understanding of more localized issues and concerns.

In addition to the advisory committee, an outreach program is planned to engage property owners, tenants, nearby residents, and other stakeholders. Community meetings and other outreach measures will be used to provide up-to-date information on the project and solicit feedback from citizens, including the City’s website, media relations, articles in *It’s Your City* and *Neighborhood*
News, staff and consultant meetings with both business and neighborhood stakeholders and groups, and other tools. A summary of the overall public involvement plan is included in Attachment 4.

**NEXT STEPS:**

At tonight’s meeting staff is seeking Council concurrence or refinements to:
- The draft project scope
- The draft Council Principles to guide the project
- The proposed public engagement approach, including the proposed use of an advisory committee. If the Council concurs with the concept of having an advisory committee, this group would not be seated until later this spring, when more background work has been completed and their time can be most efficiently used. The committee would be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council at a future date.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the proposed project scope, Council principles, and public involvement plan for the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project, and initiate related Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
2. Revise the proposed project scope, Council principles, and public involvement plan for the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project, and initiate related Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
3. Provide other direction to staff.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Alternative 1.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1a. Map of Primary and Secondary Study Areas
1b. Parallel Annexation Area map
2. Generalized Project Timeline
3. Proposed Council Principles
4. Public Involvement Plan
Attachment 2: Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project

Project Timeline

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<td>Develop and evaluate growth alternatives*</td>
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<td>Evaluate alternatives through SEPA*</td>
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<td>Finalize preferred alternative</td>
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<td>Prepare Comp Plan/Land Use Code Amendments</td>
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<td>Council action on CPAs/LUCAs</td>
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* SEPA process will be integrated with the development/evaluation of alternatives, as encouraged by the Washington State Growth Management Act

• Council interaction

♦ CAC involvement
1. Enhance the Eastgate corridor’s economic vitality, and ensure that it continues to contribute to the diversity of the City’s economic mix.

2. Improve linkages with Bellevue College, which may include land use and transportation strategies and recreational partnerships that benefit both the College and the City as a whole.

3. Better integrate land use and transportation across Eastgate. Changes in land use should be informed by transportation opportunities and impacts. For example, the large Eastgate park and ride facility may create an opportunity for a transit overlay district, with well integrated land use and transportation performance.

4. Continue to evolve Eastgate’s transportation infrastructure to a high performing, multimodal system, including coordinating with service providers on increased transit service to the area.

5. Increase connectivity across the Eastgate corridor, addressing the area’s numerous barriers such as its limited street and nonmotorized (both pedestrian and bicycle) network, and stand-alone developments.

6. Recognize fiscal constraints in the City’s ability to fund major new infrastructure projects. To the extent that new infrastructure is needed to support potential land use changes, costs and ability to fund these improvements must be serious and early considerations.

7. Retain and enhance neighborhood-oriented services and businesses, which are important to nearby residents of Bellevue and the adjacent Eastgate potential annexation area.

8. Model environmental sustainability in planning for Eastgate’s future, so that future plans for the area produce measurable environmental benefits.

9. Improve the Eastgate Corridor’s urban design quality and coherence, recognizing the area as a major City gateway and prominent location on the Mountain to Sound Greenway.

10. Work to improve the performance of state facilities in the area – I-90 and its access points—which today create major issues for the City’s land use and arterial system.
Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project
Draft Public Involvement Plan

Public Involvement Plan Objectives

The Eastgate I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project includes a robust public involvement plan. This plan will help fulfill the following objectives:

- Include and consider a broad range of ideas and perspectives in the development and evaluation of alternatives;
- Ensure stakeholder engagement;
- Thoroughly identify opportunities, issues, and concerns, and develop creative and meaningful responses to them;
- Instill a broad perspective in alternatives to be considered;
- Ensure participation by a wide demographic range, consistent with the diverse population of the study area and nearby neighborhoods.

Public Involvement Plan Components

To accomplish these objectives, the public involvement plan proposes a multi-layered approach, consisting of the following components:

- **Citizen Advisory Committee.** A CAC could help bring a broad and balanced perspective to this planning process. The committee would be appointed by Council and advise the Commissions and Council. The CAC is envisioned as a 9- to 12-member body, composed of representatives from City Boards/Commissions, representatives of City-wide interests, and area stakeholders. While specific composition would be determined at a later date, the CAC could include:
  - One member each from the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, and Parks Board
  - Community representatives with a broad City-wide perspective on matters such as: urban design, multi-modal transportation, environmental considerations, and economic development
  - Area stakeholders representing Bellevue College, business and property owners, and nearby neighborhoods.

  In addition, participation of non-City agencies would be sought, either as non-voting members of the CAC or to serve in another advisory capacity. This could include:
  - WSDOT
  - King County/METRO
  - Mountains to Sound Greenway

- **Community workshops/open houses.** Public workshops and/or open houses will be conducted at appropriate junctures in the planning process to increase opportunities for participation by the public at large.

- **Business and property owner panels.** Structured panels of business owners and property owners as used in the Bel-Red project were very effective at achieving two-way dialogue and ensuring that these key interests were well understood.

- **Media.** Media will be used for broad and ongoing distribution of project information. Opportunities for media communications include:
- A project website will be established and maintained, to include project information, reports, meeting summaries, and notices of upcoming events.
- News articles will be prepared and published in:
  - It's Your City
  - Neighborhood News
  - News Releases (to area newspapers and TV and radio stations)

- **Project mailings.** Mailings of project information and upcoming events will be sent to study area property owners and other stakeholders, nearby residents, and nearby neighborhood associations. A list of “interested parties” will be maintained and used for notification of project information.

- **Other measures** will be identified as the project progresses to ensure appropriate engagement and participation by affected or interested parties.