

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 14, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Glass Jokinen, Lampe, Larrivee, Tanaka

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Cat Silva, Kevin McDonald, Mike Mattar, Department of Transportation; Patti Wilma, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Simas who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Glass who arrived at 7:05 p.m.

3. STAFF REPORTS – None

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chair Simas reported that he and Commissioner Bishop attended the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce transportation committee meeting on March 12. Representative Judy Clibborn was the guest speaker and she discussed her proposed transportation bill which has something for everyone, including allowance for municipalities the authority to tax to raise funds for transportation maintenance. He encouraged the Commissioners to look up the bill and read it over.

Commissioner Bishop reported that he is involved with the Eastside Transportation Association which will be meeting on March 20 to talk about the tolling on I-90.

Chair Simas noted that the committee would be meeting again on April 9 and Craig Stone from the state will discuss the I-90 tolling.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tanaka and it carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Bel-Red Street Names Selection

Senior planner Patti Wilma reported that about two years ago the city launched a project having to do with developing guidelines and standards for local streets in the Bel-Red corridor. The focus currently is on the arterial streets and the urban design elements that will tell the story of Bel-Red. A workshop was conducted that was focused on what the character of the Bel-Red district should be that resulted in categories of elements and sentiments such as nature, industry, the agricultural history of the area, and innovation focused on the future. There was general agreement that defining the character of an area can be bolstered through street names and park names, and the fire department indicated it wants street names that will be easily understandable when someone is saying them during an emergency call.

Two streets were determined to meet the definition of boulevard, drive or way, and naming them has been endorsed by both the fire department and the transportation department. The streets are NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street, the future arterial that will serve as the multimodal lynchpin and primary east-west corridor, and NE 14th Street and NE 18th Street, the corridors that are planned as green streets and which will utilize natural drainage systems.

Ms. Wilma laid out for the public opportunities to submit names and over 400 individual suggestions were turned in. She provided the Commissioners with copies of the list as narrowed down by staff to a manageable size. She asked each Commissioner to select their top ten choices then forward them to her. She said she would then inform the Commission which names were most commonly selected, then the Commission's recommendations will be submitted to the Council for final adoption by resolution. Once the streets are constructed they will be given the approved names.

Ms. Wilma informed the Commission that NE 14th Street Segment 1 is wholly within the Spring District and said she would like to give the Spring District an opportunity to weigh in with a choice of names. NE 18th Street is not within the Spring District and NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street is a main arterial so the city will take the responsibility for selecting the name for that roadway. In addition to the roadways, there are trail segments in need of names.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lampe, Ms. Wilma clarified that NE 14th Street Segment 1 and Segment 2 can have separate names, and in fact it is recommended that they should have separate names. Segment 1 and Segment 2 of NE 18th Street should also have different names in that they are physically separated by the west tributary stream corridor. NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street is a continuous segment and as such will have only one name.

Commissioner Bishop said it is always more confusing to have named streets instead of numbered streets, particularly to those visiting an area. He said his preference would be to name the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street arterial but leave the others as numbered streets.

The Commissioners discussed the names on the submitted list and concluded a preference for names of local interest.

B. Downtown Bicycle Parking Program

Transportation planning intern Cat Silva said the city's planning documents give evidence that Bellevue wants to be a bicycle-friendly destination. The Comprehensive Plan talks about connectivity and linkages, the downtown plan talks about creating better environments for non-motorized transportation, and the ped/bike plan talks calls for creating guidelines for bicycle racks throughout the city. She said the downtown bicycle parking program is funded through the pedestrian access improvements program in the CIP. The program allocates \$400,000 annually for small-scale pedestrian and bicycle improvements throughout the city, a small piece of which goes is used to address short-term bicycle parking access as well as longer-term bicycle racks for residences.

More than 100 bike racks have been installed to date in the downtown, though not all of them were installed through the bicycle parking program. A number of the bike racks were installed by private property owners. The most recent installations were completed in December 2012. The siting of bicycle racks is decided by staff in the transportation and planning departments with input from business owners and residents. The guidelines to follow when locating bicycle racks include making sure the racks themselves are recognizable as bicycle parking; making sure they are visible from the street; the demand for bicycle parking; avoiding the creation of an obstacle; and locating them near the entrances to buildings and public spaces.

Ms. Silva explained that the bicycle parking program began in 2005. At the time there were 42 bike racks located in the downtown, mostly along Bellevue Way and around the transit center. By 2006 an additional 26 racks had been installed around the downtown, including nine to the north of NE 8th Street and several in Old Bellevue.

Commissioner Bishop asked if there are statistics regarding bicycle rack usage. Ms. Silva said there is no definitive data. She said she has personally gone out to check conditions and found that on sunny days the bike racks are heavily used, whereas on other days there are very few. There is no ongoing monitoring program to develop actual counts.

Chair Simas asked how important proximity or convenience relative to destinations is to the use of the bike racks. He suggested that if a bike rack is located 50 feet away from a destination and it is found that riders prefer to chain their bicycles to trees that are closer to the front door, it could be concluded that the city may never been able to provide anywhere near the number of bike racks needed. Ms. Silva said she was not aware of any studies having been done to determine the convenience link, but she said as a rider herself she knows that, especially for short-term parking, riders prefer to have their bicycles within view. Those who regularly commute to and from work use facilities provided by their employers rather than short-term parking racks.

Ms. Silva said an additional 23 racks were installed in 2009, primarily on the north edge of the

downtown and near Downtown Park. Then in 2012 another 20 racks were installed, some of which were replacements for previously installed but faulty and insecure racks.

There are many issues to consider relative to bike rack styles. Of prime importance are designs that are stylish, functional and easy to maintain. Solid mounting bases are critical; racks with poorly designed mounting bases are simply bad investments. For maintenance reasons, it is better to have racks made of galvanized steel that do not have to be painted. It is also clear that the designs need to be easily recognized as bike racks. Bike racks are always produced and installed by outside contractors, but the city's street maintenance crews are primarily responsible for the upkeep. Stickers are affixed to the racks to call out the city's investment and to alert riders to a number to call in the event they come across a rack in need of repair.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if the city is taking steps to standardize the design of bicycle racks. Ms. Silva said the pedestrian, bicycle and transportation plan makes the suggestion that standardized racks should be used throughout the city, but to date there has been no formal mandate to do so.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if there will be any outreach done to businesses to let them know they can contact the city when they see a need for a rack. Ms. Silva said that has already been done by including an article in *It's Your City*. She allowed that the article did not generate any responses and agreed it would be helpful to include posts on online blogs.

Chair Simas asked if there is an official definition of short-term bicycle parking. Ms. Silva said she was not aware of any formal definition. She agreed that the racks at the transit center likely would not fall into that category; most who commute by bike to the transit center probably take their bikes with them on the bus, which is likely why the racks at the transit center are not heavily used. Riders in need of long-term parking would prefer options that are far more secure.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested long-term parking options provided at the transit center should be the responsibility of King County Metro or Sound Transit.

C. Downtown Transportation Plan Update: Transit Speed and Reliability

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald said both the Commission and the community have provided comments to staff to the effect that the progress of buses and the passengers thereon is an important part of the downtown transportation planning work. A review of the best practices of jurisdictions and transit agencies around the world is under way to determine which of them would work in downtown Bellevue.

With regard to policy factors, Mr. McDonald said the downtown transportation planning work will involve allocating the scarce resources of roadway space and green time at signals and determining what should be allocated to vehicles, to pedestrians and to transit, all while accommodating bicycles, loading zones and taxis along the curbs of the streets. If transit priority corridors are ultimately designated, it might make sense through the development review process to look at opportunities to have driveway access points on the streets that will

not have transit priority.

The best practices under study deal with moving vehicles and passengers along a corridor, how green time is allocated, and passenger, comfort access, and information.

The concept of transit lane dedication is a familiar tool. That can be accomplished through signage or striping or both, and a travel lane can be designated for transit for all or only part of a day to facilitate the movement of passengers on buses. Where there is an overlapping need to move buses and bicycles along the same corridor, the roadways can be signed to share the space.

Median transit stops is a tool that may not work in Bellevue. There are currently no median transit stops on any arterial in Bellevue. The transit center is a type of median transit stop, except that there is no auto traffic. Median transit stops can be very efficient, particularly where there are a lot of driveways and turning movements that the curb lane needs to use. The disadvantage, of course, is that pedestrians must make their way across arterial lanes to access the stop. Also, unless buses are redesigned with their passenger doors on the opposite side, the buses must travel in a contraflow direction, though it is possible to design the stops with side platforms.

Bus stop consolidation is a tool used by some jurisdictions, including Seattle. The concept involves eliminating bus stops in order to consolidate passenger access and facilitate moving buses along a bit more quickly. In some areas of Bellevue eliminating every other transit stop would still not make passenger walk distances too great.

Green time at intersections is a limited commodity which must be managed to serve the mobility needs of all intersection users. Bus transit signal priority is typically given conditionally rather than as a preemption. Light rail generally enjoys signal preemption, which means any time the train approaches an intersection it is given the green light. Bus transit signal priority involves holding a green a bit longer or turning the red to green a little bit faster; buses that are running on schedule are not usually given signal priority. Signal priority for bus transit is in place already along the Rapid Ride Line B on NE 8th Street and for all transit at the south Bellevue park and ride.

Mr. McDonald said the increasing number of pedestrians in the downtown are needing more and more of the available green time at intersections. A couple of options are available to accommodate them, including what is called leading pedestrian interval that gives pedestrians a couple of seconds of green time ahead of the green signal for vehicles. Another option is to let all the traffic movements to occur before allowing green time for the pedestrians. Both approaches remove some of the friction between vehicles and pedestrians.

Where near-side bus stops are utilized in conjunction with buses that need to turn left, a specific signal cycle can be employed for the bus allowing it to make its turn ahead of the queue of vehicles wanting to go straight. Near-side stops are not typically used in Bellevue but the option could be used where appropriate. Merge assistance or bus queue jump is another option that has not been used in Bellevue. It is used in downtown Seattle and it allows buses to

merge and get a jump on the queue of through vehicles.

Travel demand management is one of the most useful tools for reducing the amount of traffic on the roadways. With less demand for the roadways, everyone can move around a bit more smoothly and quickly. Bellevue has an aggressive travel demand management program in place.

Chair Simas asked if one-way streets are a tactic that could be part of the overall evaluation. Mr. McDonald said a one-way couplet concept was adopted as part of the downtown transportation plan in 2004. In that plan, 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE were designated as a one-way couplet, with 106th Avenue NE going north and 108th Avenue NE going south, and with a contraflow bus lane on 108th Avenue NE. The concept was subjected to some analysis but it has not been moved forward as an actual project to date. Further analysis of the couplet will be done as part of the current process to determine if it merits staying on the books. One-way couplets have been proven to be effective at moving a lot of vehicles and are even better for pedestrians and bicycles given that there are fewer turning movements.

Mr. McDonald said the speed at which passengers can get to their destinations, along with their comfort and ability to access the system, is a component of speed and reliability. Off-board fare payment is one of the most efficient forms of speed and reliability that can be done on the passenger side. Wayfinding, good bus shelters and midblock crossings all contribute positively to the mix.

The candidate corridors are those with high transit use, and the intersections along those corridors would be candidate intersections. Close scrutiny would be given to the locations where the level of service forecast indicates there will be significant congestion. The amount of delay transit passengers will experience along each corridor will be carefully studied as well.

Mr. McDonald shared with the Commissioners the 2030 traffic volume map. He said the projections represented by the map indicate where most of the transit service to be located in terms of number of buses going both directions on the arterials.

Commissioner Lampe asked if the transfer traffic that passes through the transit center destined for areas outside the city are included in the overall count and modeling work. Mr. McDonald said transit is measured in terms of on's and off's, in which case all of the transfer activity is counted and included in the 17,000 figure.

Commissioner Bishop suggested there is a disconnect on the line graph. He noted that the 2010 count is indicated at 11,000 and the 2012 at 17,000, but the 2010 figure includes only the model-generated trips destined to the downtown and does not include the transfers, which in that year were about 3000. The growth would appear to be from 14,000 to 17,000, not from 11,000 to 17,000. Mr. McDonald said he would double-check his figures.

Mr. McDonald said top priority should be given to routes that have a set number of buses per hour. He said while the breakpoint can be deliberated, the staff has initially set the number at

90 buses per hour as Priority 1, and 15-90 buses per hour as Priority 2. Using that methodology the Priority 1 corridors would include 108th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street, and the Priority 2 corridors would include Main Street and Bellevue Way. By overlaying the projected levels of service measured in terms of delay it may be possible to highlight intersections where signal prioritization could help move buses through more quickly. That information could also help inform the policy question of who should be prioritized, those riding on buses, those traveling in cars, or somehow both modes. Additionally, the character of corridors change block by block so a single type of treatment will not fit all circumstances.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the majority of trips into and out of the downtown are by car and he stressed the need to develop a balanced approach. The model is intended to estimate the number of future daily trips. While the focus is on the year 2030, it is not the year that matters but the plans drawn up to accommodate the future demand.

- 9. OLD BUSINESS - None
- 10. NEW BUSINESS - None
- 11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None
- 12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 24, 2013

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Larrivee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Glass and it carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed its calendar and list of upcoming agenda items. Mr. Krawczyk provided the Commissioners with copies of a memo from the City Manager reviewing the board and commission election rules. He also noted that on March 28 Sound Transit would be conducting an open house at the Highland Center between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to update the public regarding the East Link project.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.


Secretary to the Transportation Commission

4/11/13
Date


Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

4-11-13
Date

