

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 11, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Jokinen, Tanaka

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Mattar, Mike Ingram, Kristi Oosterveen, Franz
Loewenherz, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 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 6:39 p.m., and Commissioners Jokinen and Tanaka, both of whom were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Design Division Manager Mike Mattar informed the Commissioners that the Spring Forward Expo sponsored by the city is scheduled for April 24. He said all city departments that have capital and planning projects will be involved in the public outreach effort.

Mr. Mattar reminded the Commissioners that April 20 is Arbor Day/Earth Day and to mark it there will be a celebration at Lewis Creek Park beginning at 11:00 a.m.

Senior Transportation Planner Mike Ingram reminded the Commissioners that there were 43 projects included in the Transportation Facilities Plan. He noted that the initial phase of the environmental analysis has been completed on the list of projects. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released earlier in the day, which triggers the public comment period that will extend through May 13. A response will be made to every comment received before the final Environmental Impact Statement will be released in the first half of June. Once the environmental process is completed, the Commission will be asked to formally recommend and submit the Transportation Facilities Plan to the City Council.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lampe, Mr. Ingram said the formal solicitation for public comment on the Environmental Impact Statement was included in the weekly permit bulletin that was released earlier in the day.

Capital Programming Administrator Kristi Oosterveen gave an update on the Neighborhood Sidewalk Program. Ms. Oosterveen said the prioritizing criteria for the Neighborhood Sidewalk Program, which was started in 2007, were updated in 2012. Using the new criteria, the Commission reviewed the 40-plus candidate projects and selected the top-ranked projects of 123rd Avenue SE- SE 20th- 26th Streets and SE 16th Street- 104th Avenue SE- Bellevue Way as sidewalks to be funded. The public process has been started for the SE 16th Street project with a survey for residents on the street seeking input regarding which side of the street the sidewalk should be built on. An evaluation of what sort of public process should be undertaken for the 123rd Avenue SE project is under way.

Ms. Oosterveen said the SE 16th Street project will be designed in 2013 and could possibly be constructed by the end of the year. The design work for the 123rd Avenue SE project may begin in the fourth quarter of the year with construction anticipated for 2014.

Staff will be at the Spring Forward Expo highlighting the two projects along with the other candidate sidewalk projects. A process for soliciting for new candidate projects will be developed later this year.

Ms. Oosterveen shared with the Commissioners a map showing a portion of the annexation area and reminded them that the city created the CIP project R-180 using \$1.068 million in road tax funds given to Bellevue by King County. Staff evaluated the area and submitted project needs for consideration. The majority of the funds will build a sidewalk on the south side of Newport Way between 150th Avenue SE and 152nd Avenue SE. The project will tie in very well with the signal project at the intersection of Newport Way and 150th Avenue SE, which will leverage funds from R-180 and M-20 and will be built this Spring. The annexation area information will be highlighted at the Expo.

If there are remaining funds left, a safety project to replace the guard rail on 150th Avenue SE between SE 38th Street and Newport Way may be undertaken. In 2014 when CIP project candidates are submitted a project involving Newport Way from Somerset Blvd. to 150th Avenue SE will try to compete for CIP funding.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chair Simas noted that while the Transportation Commission will have the lead in updating the Transit Master Plan, all of the city's boards and commissions will be asked to provide input. He acknowledged the presence of and welcomed Erin Powell, Parks and Community Services Board; Jim McEachran, Human Services Commission; and Commissioner Hamlin, Planning

Commission.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bishop reported that he attended the most recent Chamber of Commerce transportation committee meeting at which the Washington State Department of Transportation made a presentation on I-90 tolling. The Chamber has grave concerns about tolling I-90, largely because of the impacts it will have on Bellevue resulting from traffic diversions.

Chair Simas said the cities of Newcastle, Mercer Island and Issaquah have all adopted specific positions relative to the tolling. He said he did not know what Bellevue's position is and suggested the issue should be discussed by the Commission at its annual retreat.

Commissioner Bishop said WSDOT has not started an analysis yet but is receiving a large amount of public feedback. Many of the comments call for a thorough EIS, which would allow for evaluation of a broader range of alternatives.

Chair Simas said it is not too late for the city to take a position. There is still a lot of public process to come.

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 Bishop and it carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. 2014-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Oosterveen said the city is required to update the TIP annually. She provided the Commissioners with a spreadsheet of the TIP project list showing some proposed project edits. She asked the Commissioners to comment on the project list and to ultimately endorse changing the TIP to a proposed 2014-2019 TIP for the public hearing that is tentatively scheduled for May 9.

Ms. Oosterveen explained that once the TIP is updated and adopted it is sent off to both the Puget Sound Regional Council and the Washington State Department of Transportation for inclusion in the regional TIP and the state TIP. Projects included on those lists are positioned to qualify for grant funding.

The current 2013-2018 TIP was approved in May of 2012. The 2014-2019 TIP must be

adopted by Council by June 30.

The TIP is divided into four sections: projects that are adopted in the current 2013-2019 CIP; projects that are proposed for the 2013-2024 Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP); other projects identified through analysis or design work; and regional or outside agency projects in which the city would participate if it had the money. The TIP is not revenue constrained; only the CIP projects are specifically funded.

Ms. Oosterveen presented to the Commissioners 14 projects proposed for addition to the TIP. She noted that ten of them are new CIP projects, three are new projects proposed for the new TFP, and one is a project identified through an alternative analysis process and involves a new subsurface arterial in the downtown. In addition to the new projects, a total of 41 projects are set to be removed from the TIP, 14 of which were not included as part of the proposed TFP, one CIP project which will be completed in 2013, one that was simply deleted from the CIP, and several that have been combined with other projects. A total of 20 projects are earmarked to be moved from one section to another, seven of which are set to move from the TFP into the CIP, one which is set to move from the funded CIP to the unfunded TFP, three unfunded local projects that will be moved into the CIP, and eight unfunded local projects that will move into the TFP.

Commissioner Lampe asked for more information about the one project to be removed from the CIP to the TFP. Ms. Oosterveen said implementation funding has not been secured for the project. It will remain on the list but not in the CIP.

The Commission authorized Ms. Oosterveen to make the proposed changes to the project list and to bring the revised list back for a public hearing on May 9.

B. Bellevue Transit Master Plan

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz said transit enhances the overall appeal of communities as desirable places to live, work and play by offering options to people. Livability has traditionally been, and continues to be, a big part of why corporations choose to locate in Bellevue, and transit plays a pivotal role in determining livability.

In launching the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) update, the Council approved the scope of work containing three elements: service, capital and policy. The service element identifies the city's priorities and responds to different financial scenarios and different time horizons. The capital element will define the connections that need to be made in Bellevue to support the anticipated growth, and the policy element will house the action strategies for how to work with the region.

The Council also provided six principles upon which to base the TMP update, including the engagement of stakeholders in setting priorities. To that end staff have been actively working

with corporate interests, agencies, institutions, riders, people who used to use transit in Bellevue, and also non-riders. The outreach efforts have included numerous opportunities for exchanging information informally with the cities various boards and commissions.

Mr. Loewenherz said one recurring message from residents and corporations alike have been that Bellevue contributes to their economic vitality and overall livability. The Council recognizes that fact and in reaching toward the future wants to make sure that all of the planned and projected growth and development is accommodated with a bold vision. Residential growth on the order of 28,000 new residents and 54,000 new jobs is expected by 2030. Much of the growth will be accommodated in the downtown, in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor, and in the Bel-Red corridor. Transit is expected to succeed in the areas of targeted growth.

The current number of daily person trips to, from and inside Bellevue is expected to increase from the current 1.2 million to 1.75 million by 2030. The Council wants to make certain that transit will help to address the anticipated growth in travel. Between the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2012 transit use in Bellevue increased by 111 percent, and the Council wants to make sure the positive trend will continue. Total usage has been shown by the models to increase from the current 46,000 to 136,000 by 2030.

Commissioner Bishop asked if the total usage figures include transfers alone with the number of boardings and alightings. Mr. Loewenherz said they do so far as every transfer involves getting on another bus, but the figures do not take into account the number of through travelers. Of the 136,000 boardings, about 20 percent will be at the six East Link light rail stations; the vast majority of the usage is projected to be on the bus network.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Loewenherz said the numbers regarding transit use in Bellevue are intentionally conservative. They are lower than the Sound Transit East Link numbers because Bellevue is assuming a lower land use. The numbers also do not include tolling on I-90, and the fact is there was a significant uptick in transit usage following the initiation of tolling on SR-520.

With regard to the capital element, Mr. Loewenherz said the question is where to go in determining where and how transit investments will have the greatest positive impact on mobility and access. The task is challenging in the face of all the financial uncertainty and the goal is to position Bellevue to be responsive. Nine different bus service visions will be developed for the city predicated on growing resources, stable funding and reduced funding scenarios played against a near, mid and long term. The near-term scenario will certainly take into account the potential King County Metro reduction of 16 percent that may start in the fall of 2014. The Sound Transit 2012 financial plan currently assumes that when East Link comes online the 550 and other routes that use I-90 will go away from bus and be transferred to light rail. Staff will be back before the Council in either June or July to talk about strategies. In the reduced funding scenario, it is possible that in 2030 there will be 16 percent less service than that in place currently; in the growing scenario, the service levels could increase by 40 percent;

and in the mid scenario the focus will be on East Link construction period during which the south Bellevue park and ride will be closed, there is the potential for tolling, and the D2 roadway closure could have a significant impact on transit operations. The long-term scenario will focus on how to make the network work once East Link is up and running.

Mr. Loewenherz said success in the future will come down to funding. All of the modeling numbers assume a significant investment in transit, and if the funding does not come to fruition all of the numbers will need to be revisited. Accordingly, the Council principle to consider partnerships is very important.

Mr. Loewenherz said a lot of work has been done to date to better understand the network, and much of that information can be found on the project webpage. There is a general understanding of the service types in place, how well they perform, and the attitudes and preferences that drive traveler choices. Study has been given to which travel markets transit services should compete for in the future.

The current focus is on which market-driven strategies can best seize the opportunities. Representatives from the Transportation Commission and other boards and commissions, as well as from Kirkland, Redmond, Puget Sound Regional Council, the Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, Children's Hospital, and area Chambers of Commerce were brought together to engage in an interactive discussion about competing priorities. All resource allocation decisions come down to tradeoffs, and during the exercise the participants were afforded the opportunity to identify which corridors they believed should see transit services and at what frequency. At the conclusion of the exercise the group members were invited to talk through the tradeoffs. The majority recognized the need to serve the peak-hour network but concluded that the more efficient approach is to operate in both directions serving concentrated nodes that provide all-day markets.

Transfers were more difficult for the group to buy off on. They all recognized that the great transit systems internationally emphasize transfers because providing one-seat rides simply results in duplication of services. That said, those fortunate enough to have one-seat rides love them and do not want to see them eliminated. The fact is a hub-and-spoke system is far less efficient than a trunk-feeder network.

There was general agreement among the participants that abundant service is preferred to premium services. By that they meant that having people stand in buses is preferable to adding new buses, and that it is not a bad thing if people have to walk further to access transit provided there are decent sidewalks. That finding underscores why it is not prudent to operate a circulator in the downtown. The fact is the downtown is walkable and it is not necessary to spend millions of dollars on a circulator.

The group was asked what percentage of the population would it be alright not to serve by public transportation. Currently the data shows that about 70 percent of all Bellevue residents

live within a quarter mile of bus services with 30-minute headways. While routes with 30-minute headways do not appeal to choice riders, serving lower-density areas is very costly, and the group generally recognized that fact and agreed that resources must be concentrated in areas where they will provide the biggest bang for the buck.

Recognizing all of the tradeoffs, the group concluded that the target should be abundant access as defined by convenience, frequency, ease of use and all-day service, even though not everyone will benefit. Services should be designed to be useful to the broadest spectrum of people, situations and trip purposes. Connections should be made as easy as possible; people will have to transfer, especially after East Link comes online.

Mr. Loewenherz said staff will brief the Council again on May 6 where the focus will be on three different service networks. If the Council approves them, the work will move on to the capital element.

Commissioner Bishop said Bellevue with a population of 120,000 or so has one of the best bus systems in the nation already. He said it appeared to him the idea will be to take that system and tripling its size. Mr. Loewenherz said while the system will need to grow, the primary focus will be on making it a lot more efficient.

Chair Simas added that as the population changes more people will turn to using transit. He said it will take a bold leap of faith to get the system to where it will need to be in the future, which is far beyond where things need to be currently.

Commissioner Lampe asked if there is a simple answer to the question of what will drive people to switch over to transit. Mr. Loewenherz said there are a number of factors that contribute to transit performance, including cost and convenience. Bellevue has a lot at stake in making sure the transit system is successful, and the strategies and policies put into place will certainly play a big role.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if there will be opportunity to discuss with the community alternative resources. Mr. Loewenherz said the emphasis with the TMP update is on the bus network. He said there is a lot of work underway relative to identifying alternative service delivery methods, especially in areas where high-performance transit services are not expected. Some alternative approaches have been tested in Bellevue but have not been shown to be cost-saving strategies. Commissioner Larrivee said the private market may see a niche and seek to fill it, but the city could also intervene more proactively in encouraging the private market to take up the slack.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS -- None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 14, 2013

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

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commissioners reviewed the calendar of upcoming agenda items.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date