

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES

May 10, 2007  
6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Community Center  
Theatre Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Yuen, Commissioners Bell, Glass, Wendle

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Northey, Holler

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Eric Miller, Kristi Oosterveen, Mike Ingram, Kris Liljeblad, Franz Loewenherz, Kurt Latt, Jen Benn, 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 Young who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Chair Yuen opened the public hearing.

There was no one present in the audience wishing to address the Commission during the public hearing.

Chair Yuen closed the public hearing.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald informed the Commission that there will be an open house on May 15 for the Meydenbauer Bay park and land use plan. He provided the

Commissioners with a matrix listing upcoming meetings, and copies of a letter from David Plummer regarding the Bel-Red corridor project.

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller reported that Commissioner Northey attended the May 7 City Council meeting to present the recommended Neighborhood Sidewalk Priority list. He said the prioritized list will be included a second time in the Council packet for the May 14 meeting as part of their continued discussion of the supplemental CIP.

With regard to the transportation impact update fee, Mr. Miller said the issue will be on the Council agenda on May 14 for continued discussion. The recommendation of the Commission will be discussed. The Council packet will include a recommendation from staff that differs from that of the Commission. The recommendation of the Commission was to go with the current practice scenario; staff is recommending Scenario A which includes counting the portion of project costs funded by non-local revenue sources.

#### 5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Balducci informed Chair Yuen the Council on May 7 unanimously appointed him to a second four-year term on the Commission.

Councilmember Balducci asked staff to explain their decision to bring to the Council a recommendation on the transportation impact fees that differs from that of the Commission. Mr. Miller said the Council is weighing a number of factors in determining a long-range financial strategy; the impact fee program is one component of many being considered. The initial recommendation of the Commission was for the highest fee increase, but the public testimony received caused the Commission to revise its recommendation to the lowest fee increase.

Councilmember Balducci said her understanding of the impact fee program is that it is based on the notion of development paying a fair share for impacts on the transportation system. She said she further understood that the recommendation of the Commission was to stick with the current practice for the short term while taking time for further review. If the Council decides to raise fees without justification, there will be repercussions.

Commissioner Glass allowed that the Commission had been faced with a timing issue. The Commission was asked to make a recommendation on the fee structure for fairly quick implementation, but the development community voiced concerns.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said a lot of work has been invested in evaluating different approaches in response to questions asked by the Council back in October 2006. Staff wanted to make sure the Council had opportunity to weigh in on the major policy question of whether or not development is paying its fair share, and how to adjust

the fees if in fact development is not paying its share. The staff memo identifies that historically new development has been generating about 16 percent of the new trips due to growth, yet its contribution to capacity project revenues has been on the order of seven percent, less than half of what it ought to be. Under the current approach, when the city is successful in securing outside dollars for capacity projects, the result is a de facto discount for local development. Regardless of who pays for each trip, the cost per trip should be same.

Commissioner Wendle said one of the reasons the Commission made the recommendation it did was that there simply was not enough time to study the issues fully. It was clear that the Chamber of Commerce and others who wanted to be involved had not had opportunity to do so, so the Commission chose to reign in its initial recommendation to allow more time for investigation. If staff has been talking with the Chamber and the development community, the issues may be resolved; if there has not been any communication, there may be some irritation that the issue will be before the Council again. Mr. Liljeblad said staff has made presentations to the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) land use forum, and noted that he and Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman had a meeting with the BDA board. A presentation was also made to the joint BDA/Chamber of Commerce transportation committee.

Commissioner Bell pointed out that at the joint meeting there was no discussion of the options. It was stated that there would be continued study of the options.

Commissioner Glass asked why the issue has not been brought before the Commission for additional study since the recommendation was formulated in October. Councilmember Balducci said it was her understanding that the approach being recommended by staff was only an interim step and that a much larger discussion would follow.

Mr. Liljeblad said part of the reason for the delay in going back to the Council with the transportation impact fee program has been an ongoing conversation between several departments and the Council about developing a long-range capital financing strategy. The conversations have involved far more than just transportation impact fees and have been focused on how to fund the growing gap between capital needs and available revenues. The position of the Department of Transportation has been to hold off on the impact fee decision until the Council could be more fully engaged in the financial strategy discussions. Staff had no expectation of coming back to the Commission to study the subject further because a recommendation had already been made.

Commissioner Bell held that the decision made by the Commission was made quickly and was made on the understanding that there would be opportunity to study the issues further and in more detail. Mr. Liljeblad said the packet for the Council meeting on May 14 includes the recommendation of the Commission to go with the status quo initially and to study the issue further.

Councilmember Balducci agreed that the issue will require additional study.

Mr. Liljeblad said the Chamber of Commerce and the BDA have been made aware that the issue is on the Council agenda for May 14.

## 6. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass said he continues to attend the Bel-Red corridor project steering committee meetings. He said the committee has worked through the preliminary alternatives and has formulated a preferred alternative to be sent forward to the Final Environmental Impact Statement process. He noted that some of the other city boards and commissions have weighed in on the various alternatives but the Transportation Commission has not. He pointed out, however, that each alternative included the same package of transportation improvements leaving little to actually comment on.

Mr. McDonald said a briefing is scheduled for the Transportation Commission on June 14.

Mr. Liljeblad said the basic package of transportation improvements varied only slightly with the different alternatives studied. The comments offered by other boards and commissions have been focused on land use issues.

Chair Yuen reported that he is serving on the Meydenbauer Bay park and land use committee. He said staff for the study have been asked to provide the Transportation Commission with an update given the possible impacts associated with connecting Downtown Park with the waterfront.

## 7. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

## 8. STUDY SESSION

### A. 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, said the public hearing conducted earlier in the meeting is mandated by the state. She noted that the Commission packet included the list and map of projects. She added that the issue is slated to be approved by the Council on June 4.

Motion to approve the Transportation Improvement Program as submitted and recommend it to the City Council was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Wendle and the motion carried unanimously.

### B. Great Streets

Senior Planner Mike Ingram said the general scope and goals of the Great Streets project are essentially as they were when the program was first outlined during a joint meeting between

the Transportation Commission and the Planning Commission about a year ago. Progress has been made in determining how to approach the project, and a consultant has been hired. A public art planning component has been added to the project scope.

Mr. Ingram said the Great Streets project is founded on the Downtown Implementation Plan (DIP). The DIP provided a beginning framework for an urban design vision for the downtown but not provide much direction with regard to implementation. The DIP focused on viability, livability and memorability. Bellevue has done very well with regard to viability and is making great progress with regard to livability; memorability is something that takes time for urban areas to accomplish and does not always happen.

The concept of signature streets was presented as part of the DIP process. The idea is that the various streets serve different functions and as such should have different identities. Bellevue Way was seen as a grand shopping street; 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE already has the characteristics of a commerce street; and 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE has the makings to become an entertainment corridor.

Mr. Ingram explained that the Great Streets project will result in the development of design guidelines pertaining to all downtown street corridors that currently lack them. For the most part, all that is in place currently are street standards that call for certain sidewalk widths and street plantings; the Old Bellevue area has more specific guidelines in place, as does the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Corridor, NE 11<sup>th</sup> Street by the library, and NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Place to the south of City Hall. A process is under way to develop a plan for NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Particular attention will be given in the Great Streets project to the signature streets of Bellevue Way, 106<sup>th</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenues NE, and the gateway corridors of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street; conceptual design plans will be developed for every block along those corridors. The toolkit to be developed as part of the process will cover all of the other streets.

The section of Bellevue Way in front of Lincoln Square has been successfully developed in a way that has increased the level of pedestrian traffic. During the holidays the street has huge drawing power. The developer put a lot of extra effort into a design acceptable to the city. The rest of Bellevue Way is being built out according to the established street standards.

Commissioner Wendle asked if consideration has been given to the unique nature of Main Street in Old Bellevue. Mr. Ingram said design guidelines are already in place for that area, so any additional build-out that occurs on Main to the west of Bellevue Way must adhere to those guidelines. Main Street to the east of Bellevue Way has been looked at and talked about a number of times through the years. The decision was made not to make that area one of the focus corridors, in part because there is a lack of consensus on how it could function. Some believe parallel parking there would be perfect, and others completely disagree.

Commissioner Glass suggested that Main Street to the east of Bellevue Way is ripe for redevelopment. It would be better to have design guidelines in place before the redevelopment

activity occurs. Mr. Liljeblad said staff believes that the Great Streets project budget and staffing level are inadequate to add Main Street; and Main Street will likely require a separate focused project. The Great Streets project is aimed at making progress on as much of the downtown street frontage as possible to make it possible to capitalize on opportunities as they come along.

Mr. Ingram said the toolkit will link to the concept of the distinct downtown subareas identified in the DIP. The street corridors serve as the primary public realm for most of the downtown, they represent the opportunity to express a distinct character for each area. Old Bellevue already has a distinct character, and the Ashwood district is beginning to develop one as well.

The key goal of the project is to make the streets greener and more attractive places to walk by achieving a higher quality of design and pedestrian amenities. There will be more coherence between the properties as they develop while allowing for flexibility through a pre-approved palette of options.

The public art planning component will look at opportunities within the street corridors and the areas adjacent to them to incorporate art. The art could be either works of art or artistic features integrated into the streetscape elements. The Arts Commission has voted to allocate additional funding to the project to cover the cost of having a planning artist involved in the project. There has not been a public art plan for the downtown, and the process will yield one.

The project will also result in an update to the street tree and landscape plans. Some of the currently specified street trees are not working out very well in practice. The parks department has some ideas for alternatives, as does Mithun Inc., the consultant hired for the project.

The Commissioners were told that the first public event related to the Great Streets project will be held on June 14, the same date as the downtown projects open house. The open house will have two sessions, one at midday and one later in the afternoon. The first Great Streets workshop will focus on Bellevue Way, and is planned beginning at 5:30 p.m. prior to the regularly scheduled Transportation Commission meeting.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Mr. Ingram said the process will include recognition of all of the existing midblock pedestrian routes. To the extent it can be anticipated where future midblock routes will occur, they will be accommodated as well. The Land Use Code already includes an element calling for east-west and north-south midblock pedestrian routes through each superblock; some are in place and others are awaiting redevelopment opportunities.

### C. Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Update

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz said direction to move forward with Walk and Roll, the

2007 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, was given by the Council on March 12. He said they want all user groups, people of all ages and all abilities, consulted with as the plan is developed.

Mr. Loewenherz said the three-phased approach to getting the community involved includes a number of activities that have already begun. A lot of messaging has been done already using standard communication tools. An online survey was conducted and a list serve is up and running with 510 email addresses. The second phase of community involvement is under way; it is focused on the various user groups, the neighborhoods and specific stakeholder groups. A number of different community events will make up the third phase of public involvement. All the boards and commissions are being consulted and will continue to be throughout the process; the Transportation Commission is serving as the CAG for the process.

The needs assessment is actively under way. The needs assessment will help to define who the users are and what their preferences are for improvements and will identify what remains to be done to complete the networks. The resulting plan will include policies, design guidelines, a prioritized list of pedestrian/bicycle facilities, cost estimation, a funding strategy, and performance monitoring.

The project could wrap up by the end of 2007, though it may roll over into the first quarter of 2008.

The online survey was only one aspect of the needs assessment. During the month of May there will be focus group discussions. Staff is at work compiling eight years of data concerning non-motorized/vehicle collisions, 273 of which involved pedestrians. The assessment will include documentation of best practices already implemented, and will identify where additional enhancements can be made. Finally, a full review of all pertinent Comprehensive Plan policies will be made.

The online survey was live between March 6 and April 10. It was widely advertised and had 919 bicyclist respondents and 405 pedestrian respondents. Most who responded were from Bellevue. Twenty-two percent of the bicyclist respondents described the roadways as either excellent or good, whereas 55 percent described the greenways and paved trails as either excellent or good. The opinions regarding conditions were generally less favorable among the respondents who described themselves as frequent users of the system. The opinions of the respondents regarding sidewalks and trails were much better. A total of 72 percent said conditions are either excellent or good.

The list of suggestions for improvements to the bicycle system was headed by a call for more designated bike lanes, followed by more trails. The suggestions for walkway enhancements began with a call for more sidewalks; more trails was fifth on that list.

Mr. Loewenherz said his initial concern in looking at the survey data was a disproportionate

share of active commuter cyclists weighing in. To correct any unintended skewing of the data, six focus groups have been formed to generate a more well-rounded perspective. The groups are differentiated both by gender and frequency of use, and each will participate in a two-hour session moderated by Northwest Research Group. The focus will be on finding out how the people use the system, what their travel experiences have been, what comes to mind when they think of great pedestrian or bicycle facilities, and what kinds of facilities are appropriate for various kinds of conditions.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Mr. Loewenherz said a map will be included in the final report showing the home and work locations for each survey respondent. He pointed out that there was a fairly broad distribution. Commissioner Wendle suggested that the perceptions of the respondents regarding city facilities will be different depending on where they live and work.

Mr. Loewenherz said the effort to document the police reports for non-motorized/vehicle collisions has been extensive. The focus has been on where the accidents occurred, the circumstances involved, and what can be gleaned from them to make enhancements. He shared with the Commission maps showing the number of bicycle/vehicle and pedestrian/vehicle collisions by Mobility Management Area and by both intersection and mid-block locations.

Nationally, about 5000 people die, and 80,000 are injured, every year while walking. That is more than all other modes of transportation combined. In Bellevue, there are typically 30 to 40 injuries per year, and there have been two fatalities in the last ten years. Not surprisingly, most pedestrian/vehicle collisions occur in areas where the concentration of vehicles is highest; for Bellevue that is the downtown. The fact that the incidents of pedestrian/vehicle collisions has remained steady in the face of increasing traffic flow can be considered a good sign. Of the 14,067 reported collisions in Bellevue in the past eight years, pedestrians were involved in 273, or 1.9 percent of the total. About half the collisions occurred in crosswalks; 161 occurred in intersections; and 112 occurred at mid-block locations. Vehicle operators were found to be at fault in 63 percent of the cases; the pedestrians were at fault in 18 percent of the cases. Nineteen percent of the collisions occurred while the vehicle was making a left turn, and 26 percent occurred during a right turn. Eighteen percent of the incidents involved hit and run. On average, 19 pedestrians are injured in Bellevue every year, and 57 percent of all collisions result in injuries. The age group most often involved in pedestrian/vehicle collisions is 25 to 44.

Mr. Loewenherz said staff has not digested the data to answer why pedestrian/vehicular accidents occur. Generally, however, pedestrians often assume drivers see them and will grant them the right-of-way. Pedestrians often disregard traffic control devices or cross between established crossings, and drivers do not always see pedestrians for a variety of reasons, or are distracted.

Commissioner Wendle said he would like to see enforcement stepped up regarding drivers turning right on a red light when the pedestrian signal is on. Ticketing jaywalkers would also be beneficial.

Mr. Loewenherz said the final report will document current best practices relative to the five E's: education, encouragement, engineering, evaluation and enforcement. The report will also highlight additional potential strategies the city may want to embrace to improve the pedestrian environment.

The first phase of the study will include a review of all relevant Comprehensive Plan policies and a report on the national trend to adopt complete the streets policies. Locally, both Seattle and Kirkland have adopted such policies, and some states have also gone in that direction.

Staff are in the process of reviewing where things stand in light of the 1999 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan project list. Time will be spent on identifying additional projects to include, most of which were highlighted in studies that have been done since 1999. The Commission will be asked to participate in determining how the non-motorized facilities projects should be prioritized. According to the State of Mobility Report, the pedestrian system is 58 percent complete, and the bicycle system is 33 percent complete.

Mr. Loewenherz said one of the tools that will be used to reach out to the public is eCityGov.net. Bellevue is already a participant in the program which is in the running to receive the Innovation in American Government Award from Harvard University. The plan is to develop a tool whereby the public can get specific data by neighborhood for each project in the pedestrian/bicycle system, and where they offer comments.

Every opportunity to get the word out to the public, and to garner their comments, will be taken. A long list of community events has been compiled which staff will attend to engage the citizens.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Bell pointed out that according to the Commission by-laws the election of officers is to occur during the month of May. The Commission in fact acted in March following the resignation of Jim Young, and that action was not in line with the by-laws.

Motion to elect Al Yuen to serve as Chair and Lise Northey to serve as Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Bell. Second was by Commissioner Glass and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Yuen took a moment to thank Commissioner Bell for his years of service on the

Commission. Commissioner Bell said he had enjoyed most of his experience and certainly had enjoyed working with the Commissioners and staff.

Mr. Liljeblad reported that ten people wishing to serve on the Commission have submitted applications. City staff will be scheduling interviews in June with the candidates. He added that the selection panel generally involves the Mayor, the Commission liaison, the department director or his designee, and one member of the Commission, usually the Chair.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Dave Elliot, 16215 SE 31<sup>st</sup> Street, added his thanks to Commissioner Bell for his service on the Commission. He also proposed adding the BDA/Chamber of Commerce joint transportation committee to the list of groups from which comments on the pedestrian/bicycle plan should be sought.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 22, 2007

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bell. Second was by Commissioner Wendle and the motion carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

B. Public Involvement Calendar

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yuen adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

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Secretary to the Transportation Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

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Date