

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 26, 2008
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Northey, Commissioners Glass, Larrivee, Simas,
Van Valkenburg

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Tanaka, Kiel

STAFF PRESENT: David Cieri, Franz Loewenherz, Paul Krawczyk,
Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Northey who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. STAFF REPORTS

Transportation CIP Construction Manager Dave Cieri briefly reviewed the materials in the Commission desk packets.

Mr. Cieri took a moment to thank Commissioner Van Valkenburg for her service to the city. The Commissioners passed on their warm regards.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass said the last Light Rail Best Practices Committee meeting was held on June 17. The committee voted to support the final report which will be presented to the City Council on July 7.

Chair Northey said she and Commissioner Tanaka met recently with Councilmember Balducci, Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman, Department of Transportation Deputy Director Dave Berg, and Capital Programming Implementation Manager Eric Miller to talk about how the Commission should handle listing the CIP and TFP capital projects while the Council is undergoing a debate regarding long-term budget considerations and priorities. She said the intent of the meeting was to clarify the role of the Commission in the process and to make sure no work is duplicated. She said staff has an interest in having the Commission continue with at least the TFP prioritization because that document serves as the basis for establishing impact fees; in order to adopt new impact fees by the end of the year it will be necessary to have a completed Environmental Impact Statement, which means the Council will need to adopt the TFP by September.

Chair Northey said the Council will be conducting an additional budget retreat on July 14, after which Councilmember Balducci will visit with the Commission to provide some more clarity with regard to the role the Commission should play in the unusual budget process. In determining project priorities, the meat of the Commission discussions takes place once it is known where the funding line is. Where that line will be drawn remains an unknown. The Commission should, however, be able to develop a “business as usual” funding line and a more aggressive one and include placeholders pending determination of the actual funding line .

A review of the formula by which impact fees are calculated is one role the Commission traditionally plays in the process of setting new impact fees. Chair Northey said in the meeting Councilmember Balducci indicated she would like the Commission to look at the nuts and bolts of that. The Council will be keeping for themselves the responsibility of determining just what the impact fees should be.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Norm Hanson, 3851 136th Avenue NE, said the Bridle Trails community very much appreciated having Commissioner Tanaka visit the area. He said the Bridle Trails areas, including the 140th Avenue NE corridor, is marked as a low-priority grid. He asked the Commission to carefully consider the information included in his email dated June 20.

Ms. Alexia Montelano, a resident on NE 64th Place in Bridle Trails, said she and her husband are big supporters of Bridle Trails State Park and are avid cyclists. She noted that there is a need for bicycle trails in the Bridle Trails community. While 140th Avenue NE may be a low-priority destination, it is a commuter route for bicyclists and is the appropriate location for a bike lane. The route is not currently safe, and bike lanes would make the neighborhood even better.

Mr. James Binder, 3010 142nd Place NE, asked the Commission to keep in mind the concerns of the Bridle Trails neighborhood. He said the neighborhood is concerned about its tree canopy and preserving the rural and equestrian nature of the area. He reminded the

Commissioners that there is an existing six-foot path along 140th Avenue NE between NE 24th Street and the city limit.

Ms. Al Vascas, 3763 112th Avenue NE, highlighted the need for a sidewalk to the south of the Bellevue Service Center. The area is used by pedestrians but because of a curve in the roadway it is not safe. A proposal was submitted as part of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, but staff for that program suggested the request be made directly to the Transportation Commission.

Chair Northey said the Commission is working toward adoption of the ped/bike plan and would be talking about the pedestrian elements on July 10. She said she would ask staff to come back with additional information about the proposal.

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda as published was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Van Valkenburg and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Northup Way Corridor Project Update

Project Manager Paul Krawczyk reminded the Commissioners that a pre-design study for Northup Way was done to help determine how to proceed. He said there generally are no sidewalk facilities to the east of 33rd Place NW. The study found that the ideal configuration would be bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street. The roadway fits with the regional bicycle system, connecting both with the SR-520 trail and the BNSF corridor, and provides a critical east/west link.

Mr. Krawczyk outlined for the Commissioners the public involvement process which included a newsletter and an open house. Universal support for the project was voiced throughout the process; the area is primarily commercial so there were no nimby concerns. The bicycle groups are clearly supportive, and safety would be improved by having continuous sidewalks along the roadway. The proposed two-way left-turn lane also has benefits for the roadway that sees in excess of 13,000 vehicles per day. The public pointed out the need to coordinate with WSDOT.

WSDOT is looking at extensive changes to Bellevue Way and 108th Avenue NW because they want to drastically revise the ramp configuration. That makes dividing the project into two phases practical. The WSDOT design work is not yet done, but the section of Northup Way going east is far more clear cut; it has not walking facilities and could definitely use a center turn lane. As envisioned, Phase I will cover the area from the east of 33rd Place to NE 24th Street, while Phase II will start at Bellevue Way and extend through 108th Avenue NE and 33rd Avenue NE.

The study found no easy and cheap fixes. To fully fund the improvements in Phase I alone will cost about \$9 million, which is \$8 million more than what is left for the project in the CIP. Phase II is a shorter segment but involves waterway issues and retaining walls and could cost anywhere from \$7 million to \$11 million.

Commissioner Glass asked if the state would pay for any of the Phase II improvements. Mr. Krawczyk said the state will certainly be liable for any impacts they create, and there will have to be some negotiations between the city and the state.

Mr. Berg added that the state will be required to conduct a traffic analysis showing operations before and after their planned improvements and will have to mitigate to preserve the baseline level of service.

Chair Northey voiced the opinion that WSDOT should at the very least be responsible for constructing the bike lanes just as they did on the north side of SR-520 from Marymoor Park to NE 24th Street. The overall project is not something the city will be able to afford on its own.

Commissioner Van Valkenburg asked if any transit facilities are being proposed to assist in accessing SR-520 faster. Mr. Krawczyk said his understanding is that one key reason for the changes to the interchange at 108th Avenue NE is to permit a direct access HOV center lane.

Commissioner Glass asked if the Northup Way project is considered a capacity project. Mr. Krawczyk said the intent is to focus on sidewalk and bikeway continuity. The project adds capacity because of the center turn lane, but it is not primarily a capacity project.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Simas, Mr. Krawczyk said during the morning peak the traffic flow is essentially balanced east and west, while in the evening peak the flow is predominantly west.

Chair Northey noted that the issue will be before the Commission again during the discussions regarding the ped/bike projects.

B. Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Update Prioritized Project List

Senior Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz explained that the ped/bike plan is a component of the Comprehensive Plan and is one of a number of different facilities plans that ultimately feed into the discussions concerning the CIP and TFP. He stressed that in developing the plans focus must be given to the long-range overall plan as well as to the shorter-range CIP and TFP.

Mr. Loewenherz briefly outlined the work done to date over the past year relative to the ped/bike plan. He said in the first phase of work the focus was on identifying the location of projects. The second phase involved screening and better defining projects, and during the

third phase the projects are ranked.

The first phase work relied extensively on the 1999 plan and involved a broad public process. The work fed into the September 2007 draft network plan that was the subject of the screening and scoping exercise under the second phase; the outcome, coupled with additional public comments and field assessments, was a finalized project list.

The Commission action on April 10 was to approve a project list that ultimately will build out 90 miles of sidewalk facility, 143 miles of bicycle facilities, and 21 miles of trail facilities. On April 24 the Commission approved the weighting to be given to each of the eleven indicators.

Mr. Loewenherz shared with the Commissioners a map indicating which areas of the city bicyclists are likely to want to ride based on proximity to transit services, social services, and other factors. One shortcoming of the map is that areas such as Bel-Red that are undergoing change are underrepresented. More importantly, the map does not factor in the public input perspective. Because there can be numerous ranked projects in any given area, the result may be areas on the map that appear to be more pronounced than they really are.

Mr. Loewenherz said the map represents the various projects numerically. Another approach would be to simply show the projects ranked high, medium or low. He said the GIS ranking of the projects can be considered useful but should not be the only process utilized in prioritizing the projects.

Mr. Loewenherz explained that the staff ranking is the result of a number of technical staff meetings. Those involved in the NEP process and who are focused on engineering and safety issues know where the priorities are brought their expertise to an assessment of where the highest emphasis areas should be. Public input was also relied on.

Mr. Loewenherz explained that the spreadsheets have the projects sorted by the staff ranking, by public comment, and by the GIS ranking. On the staff spreadsheet there are 22 projects ranked high, 40 ranked medium, and 80 ranked low. He said the staff ranking relied heavily on the opinion of the professionals who daily work with the various corridors; staff also put a lot of emphasis on the east/west and north/south corridor connections.

Commissioner Larrivee asked what criteria were used by staff and asked if the staff were second guessing the GIS process produced.

Commissioner Van Valkenburg pointed out that the GIS ranking takes into account many of the factors voted on by the Commission. As such the GIS results cannot be discounted. Mr. Loewenherz agreed. He reminded the Commissioners that the discussion on April 24 focused in part on how the east/west and north/south corridor factor should play into the equation; at the time the criteria already totaled 100 points and the suggestion was made to add 50 points for the directional corridors, but the suggestion was not adopted. Ultimately the conclusion was reached that the GIS ranking should be done in the manner outlined but that it should not

represent the final determining factor. The GIS exercise is very useful, but it is just one of a number of factors.

Commissioner Glass allowed that the policy objective to create east/west and north/south routes is very important. The fact is it will take a lot of projects to complete just the policy objectives. The GIS work may in fact be the optimal tool for determining which of the corridors to address first.

Mr. Loewenherz shared with the Commissioners a number of slides depicting the gaps in the identified east/west and north/south corridors. He allowed that some components were ranked high by staff even though they are not on an east/west or north/south corridor; examples include Eastgate Way and Northup Way. EW-1 is the SR-520 trail and does not include Northup Way. WSDOT would like Northup Way to be called the SR-520 trail so they could avoid constructing an off-street path. Bellevue wants to see an off-street path along SR-520 parallel to bike lanes on Northup Way; the two facilities would be used by two very different user groups.

Mr. Berg added that the state has been studying the issue of how to construct the SR-520 trail for some time. They are looking at Northup Way as being a logical extension of the trail. There may in fact be no logical alternative.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested that if bike lanes were constructed on Northup Way the route would become the de facto SR-520 trail and people would use it as such.

Turning to page 1 of the project list, Chair Northey asked why B-228.3, Newport Way, was on the list given that it is located in King County. Mr. Loewenherz said the project has been identified time and again as a missing gap by the public. Mr. Berg added that the South Bellevue Community Center is located on Newport Way in an area that amounts to an island; no one walking or biking can get to it. It is likely the area will ultimately become part of the city and staff sees the Newport Way corridor as a high connection priority.

Chair Northey said she walks and jogs on Newport Way and knows the need exists. She voiced concern, however, about making an exception. The roadway does run parallel to the Mountains to Sound investment. Sidewalks are more important than bike lanes on Newport Way given that bike lanes are planned along SE 36th Street. There just is not enough money to construct redundant systems, and it is not logical to prioritize projects that are not even in the city.

Commissioner Glass said he would rate the project as very important.

Commissioner Van Valkenburg agreed the city should avoid focusing on projects outside the city boundaries. She added, however, that Newport Way is unique in that Bellevue has a facility there and the city should act to protect its residents that use the facility.

Mr. Berg commented that having the project shown as high priority may give the city a negotiating tool when annexation does occur.

Commissioner Larrivee said his preference was to keep the project on the list as a high priority. It addresses safety and east/west flow.

Commissioner Simas said he would give the project a high priority with the caveat that implementation should occur only after the area is annexed.

The ranking for the project was not changed.

Chair Northey called attention to B07-004, 120th Avenue NE between NE 4th Street and Northup Way, and noted that the project was ranked high by staff even though it is not located in a priority corridor. Mr. Berg said the city is aggressively thinking about extending NE 6th Street across the freeway as a significant HOV and a non-motorized connection. The connection to 120th Avenue NE will allow that corridor to be used to get all the way out to the SR-520 trail.

With regard to B-243, Eastgate Way from Richards Road to 148th Avenue SE, Chair Northey noted that the project is directly parallel to the planned improvements on SE 36th Street. The corridor has precious little available right-of-way in which to add a bike lane. Mr. Loewenherz said the recommendation is for a bike climbing lane on the south side of the street and the necessary right-of-way is available. The Mountains to Sound Greenway will be a very expensive project that will not come to be for many years to come, whereas the Eastgate Way facility could be constructed much sooner and for relatively little cost.

Mr. Berg said the uphill section will require little more than signing and striping.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. Loewenherz said there has been some preliminary consideration given to financial comparisons among projects, but added that the results did not serve as the predominant consideration in the final ranking. He said staff is not prone to ranking a project high just because it would not be expensive to construct. Commissioner Larrivee asked if having the less expensive Eastgate Way project in place would diminish the need for the Mountains to Sound Greenway facility. Mr. Loewenherz said the issue is interim versus long term. The two facilities will be parallel but have a much different focus and set of users.

The ranking for the project was not changed.

Chair Northey asked the Commissioners to indicate whether or not the Mountains to Sound Greenway project should be given a high priority. Commissioner Simas said he was somewhat reluctant to give high priority to something that in reality will be decades in being realized. Commissioner Larrivee concurred.

Mr. Loewenherz said long-range visions can only be kept moving if incremental steps are made along the way. Commissioner Simas commented that with all the entities involved in the Mountains to Sound Greenway, the city will be at the mercy of others regardless of how high a priority the project is given. He said he would prefer to see the project ranked lower until others are ready to begin working on it.

Commissioner Glass said he would keep it as a high priority. It is an east/west route. While there may be politics associated with it, having it shown as a high priority could make it more likely to receive outside funding for it.

Commissioner Larrivee said his inclination was to rank the project lower.

Commissioner Simas suggested that a low ranking by Bellevue might bring the other entities to the table asking why, which would give the city the opportunity to say it will be ranked higher as soon as outside dollars are made available for it. Mr. Loewenherz said the executive director of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust has come several times to Commission meetings seeking a high ranking for the project. The project has a great deal of regional interest, and City Manager Steve Sarkozy sits on the board of the Trust. A higher ranking will increase the likelihood of seeing the project move forward. The Trust recently filed an application for Scenic Byway funding for a design project, and the city and WSDOT included letters of support with the application.

Commissioner Glass pointed out that having the project ranked high in the ped/bike plan will not necessarily mean the project will make it into the CIP any time soon. Commissioner Van Valkenburg concurred and said she would prefer it retain a high priority ranking. Chair Northey agreed as well.

Chair Northey asked why B-241.1, Northup Way between West Lake Sammamish Parkway and NE 8th Street, was ranked so high. Mr. Loewenherz said the project received a lot of positive public input. The hill can benefit from having the climbing lane, and it links to the West Lake Sammamish project.

Commissioner Glass said he originally ranked the project as a two because it is not on one of corridors, but added that it is a long way away from any other possible way up the hill, which is an argument in favor of the project.

Chair Northey asked why projects already in the CIP are on the list to be prioritized. Mr. Loewenherz explained that until a project is done, there is always the possibility that funds will be reallocated. Showing projects as high priority helps to keep them in motion.

Turning to project B-303, NE 40th Street between 140th Avenue NE and 148th Avenue NE, Chair Northey asked why the staff ranking was low when the GIS ranking was fairly high. Mr. Loewenherz said the project is not in an area where there is a great deal of density, and it was not particularly highlighted by the public.

There was agreement to rank the project at two.

Commissioner Larrivee called attention to project S-854.2, SE 7th Place from the edge of Wilburton Hill Community Park to 128th Avenue SE, and said the project is needed to improve safety. The route is used by school children.

Mr. Loewenherz allowed that staff attempted to limit the number of projects given the highest ranking. He added that there will be a need to compare the sidewalk project rankings against the bicycle project rankings; some changes may be necessary if a sidewalk project is ranked high but an associated bicycle project is not.

With regard to project B-388.1, Bellevue Way from Main Street to SE 6th Street, Chair Northey said she would keep the project as a two because it parallels the Enatai/Norhtowne facility and because it might be a light rail alignment. Commissioner Glass said he would give it a two. Commissioner Larrivee said he would keep the project as a high priority. Commissioner Van Valkenburg said she would rank it higher than staff did.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested that 102nd Avenue SE is a more viable corridor for bicycles. It brings riders right into Downtown Park on a much safer route. The Bellevue Way project has a very high GIS ranking and he said he could agree with having the project given a two.

Commissioner Glass suggested that projects B-237.2, B-329.2 and B-329.1 should all be ranked a ones given that they are corridor projects and scored high in the GIS ranking. It was agreed all three should be ones.

Commissioner Glass asked why the staff ranking put some of the corridor projects as medium priority and others as high priority. He suggested that every project on a priority bicycle corridor should be given a high priority ranking. Furthermore, missing link projects that would complete a corridor should especially be highlighted. Mr. Berg agreed and said it is just not possible to make every project a high priority, and there is not enough money to do all of the corridor projects.

Commissioner Glass suggested the Commission should make a determination as to which of the corridors are the highest priority and have the associated projects be the top projects. Mr. Loewenherz said that certainly would make scoring the CIP and TFP much easier. Chair Northey agreed but suggested some criteria would be needed to determine which is the most important.

Mr. Loewenherz advocated for NS-1. He said it links through the downtown and is in fact very nearly already done. The southern portion will be implemented through the CIP. The downtown area comes up again and again as a priority, and there are already discussions under way to potentially implement the portion on from Main Street to NE 12th Street through a

combination of Great Streets, midblock crossings, and Downtown Implementation Plan dollars. Direction from the Commission could help staff in moving the corridor forward in the conversation with the City Council. He said his other recommendation would be NS-5. To a large extent the route is also done, and what is left to be done will be relatively easy to implement in that it could fit within the CIP/TFP funding cycle. He said his third choice for the north/south route would be NS-6. With regard to the east/west corridor, Mr. Loewenherz suggested it would be great to have some design money for the Mountains to Sound Greenway to keep that project alive and moving forward. He said his other choices would be EW-3 or EW-5, noting that EW-2 is beyond the time horizon for the project.

Chair Northey suggested that every project on the selected corridors should be ranked a one. If exceptions to that rule are to be entertained, it will be necessary to look at the entire list of projects.

There was agreement to give all corridor projects with a GIS ranking of 50 or above a ranking of one, and to limit the review to the bike priority corridor projects that fall between 51 and 144 on the GIS ranking.

Commissioner Larrivee pointed out that the approach essentially sets aside the GIS ranking process to focus on the corridors, which represents a change in the original methodology. The ranking is based on connecting people to schools, parks and the like, which is not necessarily the role of the east/west and north/south corridors.

Chair Northey said it would be helpful to see a listing of the 50 top-ranked GIS projects on the corridors, the 50 top-ranked GIS projects not on the corridors, and all projects on the corridors ranked between 50 and 144.

Chair Northey suggested an additional Commission meeting should be scheduled for July 17.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Chair Northey reminded staff that the Commission has previously asked to be kept informed regarding the status of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor in Bel-Red.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 24, 2008

Chair Northey noted for the record that she had submitted some minor revisions to the minutes to staff.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Chair Northey's memo was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Van Valkenburg and the motion carried unanimously.

B. May 8, 2008

Chair Northey called attention to page 18 of the minutes and pointed out that agenda Item E has no discussion. She asked staff to verify if in fact the Commission did not discuss the candidate project list before acting to approve the minutes.

C. May 22, 2008

Chair Northey noted for the record that she had submitted some minor revisions to the minutes to staff.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Chair Northey's memo was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Larrivee and the motion carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

B. Public Involvement Calendar

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Northey adjourned the meeting at 9:59 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date