

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 12, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Tanaka, Zahn

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Paula Stevens, Mike Ingram, Stela Nikolova, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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 Larrivee, who arrived at 7:00 p.m., and Commissioners Tanaka and Zahn who were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald introduced new Assistant Director for Transportation Planning Paula Stevens. Ms. Stevens said she moved to Bellevue from Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and will be overseeing the implementation and planning division as well as financial services, long-range planning and modeling. She said she has been involved in land use and transportation planning for about 20 years. She said she received her graduate degrees from Georgia Tech and worked for approximately a decade in Atlanta for consulting firms in the transportation planning and engineering field.

Senior Transportation Planner Mike Ingram informed the Commission that the City Council acted to adopt the 2013-2014 Transportation Facilities Plan on August 5. At the same meeting the Council directed staff to consider adding a project along Newport Way aimed at improving pedestrian conditions between Somerset Boulevard and 150th Avenue SE. Adding the project meant conducting some additional environmental analysis, which was done and an addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Statement was published on August 29. On September 3rd the Council adopted an amendment to the TFP to include the Newport Way project. The new project has a funding allocation of \$250,000 to do initial scoping and public engagement. No funds can be spent on the project, however, until the CIP is updated to include it.

Mr. Ingram said the pedestrian/bicycle progress report was completed in August. He introduced intern Stela Nikolova who conducted the analysis and authored the report.

Ms. Nikolova said the study evaluated progress in implementing the pedestrian/bicycle plan through 2012. The report includes a description of the projects completed in 2012, including those completed by new development, and maps showing the location of each project. The report also includes a list of projects expected to be completed in 2013 and a summary of City-sponsored activities related to encouragement of biking and walking.

Commissioner Lampe said he recently learned that a project that is not on the pedestrian/bicycle plan was shown at the Sound Transit open house for the Bel-Red area conducted earlier in the week. He asked if staff were aware of the project along NE 20th Street. Commissioner Bishop added that it was purported to be a joint Sound Transit/City of Bellevue project. Mr. Ingram said he would check into it.

Commissioner Bishop observed that the report says nothing about bicycle counts. Mr. Ingram said that information is contained in a different report. There is a national protocol for conducting bicycle counts and it has been followed annually since the adoption of the pedestrian/bicycle plan in 2009. Due to staffing constraints, however, the counts will not be made in 2013. Hopefully some of the data will be captured by the broader work the Washington State Department of Transportation is coordinating with the Cascade Bicycle Club.

Answering a question asked by Chair Simas, Mr. Ingram allowed that the report includes the source of funds for each project but does not identify the cost of each project. He said that information could be incorporated in the next iteration of the report.

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

Commissioner Lampe noted that he along with other Commissioners attended the recent capital and policy workshop that focused on several what-if transit scenarios immediately outside of the downtown area. The event was well attended.

Commissioner Lampe said he and Commissioners Bishop and Zahn attended the Planning Commission meeting on September 11 at which Kemper Freeman made a presentation regarding how Bellevue has grown over the years.

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. Downtown Transportation Plan Update

Mr. McDonald reminded the Commissioners that the date for presenting recommendations on mobility options for the Downtown Transportation Plan is September 23. Commissioner Lampe will represent the Commission before the Council but all Commissioners are welcome to attend.

The plan outlines four mobility options: vehicles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians. In the vehicle access category the report talks about internal access to the downtown, access to the neighborhoods, and access to regional facilities, as well as roadway capacity and intersection operations. The listed projects are aimed at adding vehicular capacity in and around the downtown. While there are few projects left to do in the downtown, projects east of the freeway and improvements made to the freeway will make a difference for downtown mobility and level of service. The recommendation of the Commission is to support and advocate for the projects. In addition to the projects in the report, the Council will be made aware of the concept of having a NE 6th Street subsurface arterial and the notion of effecting grade separations at the intersections of Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the presentation to the Council should avoid using the word "tunnel" in referring to the NE 6th Street subsurface arterial, which will be more of an underground garage access facility.

Chair Simas said there are a lot of good ideas out there the Commission has not been able to consider to date. He suggested that rather than being concerned with specific verbiage, the focus should be on being open to new ideas into the future as they come along. The subsurface arterial is just new idea.

Mr. McDonald said the report says the downtown grid system works well in large part due to the signal technology and adaptive strategies that are continuing to be implemented and refined.

With regard to transit, Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commissioners the map showing transit coverage. He noted that currently even with a limited number of routes in the downtown core, 86 percent of the population and employment are covered using a 600-foot metric. Typically coverage is calculated based on a quarter-mile radius from bus stops, though light rail generally has a wider capture zone. The methodology considered any portion of a block within the 600-foot radius to be served, so in some instances the actual distance could approach 1200 feet, which is closer to the quarter-mile standard. Use of the quarter-mile standard would show the downtown completely covered; the 2030 projection shows 97 percent coverage using the 600-foot standard, rerouting the transit network to be less focused on the transit center, and adding East Link to the mix.

The transit priority corridor network was devised based on the projected number of PM peak transit trips. The priority one corridors are those with 90 or more transit trips during the peak

period, and the priority two corridors having less than 90 transit trips during the peak period. The intersections along the priority corridors would be eligible for transit priority treatment. The recommendations include the distributed transit network to provide for more coverage to the core of the downtown.

The recommendations relative to speed and reliability look at the transit priority corridors and the associated intersections. Where there are concerns about speed and reliability there are tools that involve more site-specific analysis to identify specific improvements.

Bellevue does not control transit services within the city, so advocating with the providers is needed in order to meet the anticipated 2030 growth in transit demand.

Reconfiguring the bus bays in the transit center and adding bus layover spaces may provide some benefit. Some six to eight additional layover spaces are anticipated to be needed in and around the downtown, though their exact locations will be identified through the city engaging with the transit agency prior to new transit services coming online. The Transit Master Plan work that is under way anticipates the downtown playing a through passage role more than a terminus role, and transit passing through does not necessarily need layover space.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that transit layover areas are specifically identified on the on-street parking map. Mr. McDonald clarified that that map shows existing layover spaces but no proposed new ones.

Four different types of transit stops with various components are identified in the report. Each varies based largely on ridership and the type of activity that occurs at the stops. A single bus route with little transfer opportunity and low ridership has the fewest number of components compared to stops with higher ridership, more transfer opportunities, more of a need for wayfinding, and real-time transit arrival information. The recommendation includes uncluttering the transit center by removing some of the furniture and items that take up space but are not really needed. In anticipation of a light rail station coming to the City Hall site, the proposal includes a corridor between 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE with weather protection.

Mr. McDonald said the report includes recommendations regarding bicycling to, from and within the downtown, both for recreation and commuting purposes. The report has a map indicating bicycle facility types, including shared facilities, dedicated bike lanes, and off-street facilities shared by bicycles and pedestrians. He noted that the map included a grade-separated bicycle crossing at NE 8th Street to the east of 112th Avenue NE.

Commissioner Bishop observed that the grade-separated structure was shown on the map as going over NE 8th rather than under, which is what was proposed. Mr. McDonald said going under the roadway would be far more challenging. Commissioner Bishop said there is room between the collector-distributor road and the abutment of the existing structure. Mr. McDonald said the recommendation of the consultants was to have the structure go over NE 8th Street

because of the horizontal and vertical constraints associated with going below ground. The grade separation designation could be studied as going either over or under NE 8th Street.

Mr. McDonald noted that the map shows a bike lane going northbound on 112th Avenue NE and said the engineering staff believes there is enough space for the lane between NE 6th Street and NE 12th Street, continuing on as a bike lane to the north city limit. Narrowing the existing lanes would need to be done in order to free up room for the bike lane. The facility is needed and can easily be configured with paint and signage on the roadway.

Commissioner Bishop called attention to the bicycle facility running along the south side of NE 12th Street and the two-way off-street path running along the north side of NE 12th Street and asked why a dedicated bike lane and an off-street path would be needed on the same street. Mr. McDonald said the multipurpose path will serve more of a recreational purpose than the commuter-oriented dedicated bike lane. The same configuration is shown for Main Street. Sound Transit will be redeveloping from 110th Avenue NE to 112th Avenue NE and one of the permit conditions will be the development of the off-street path on the south side of Main Street.

Mr. McDonald said the line running along 108th Avenue NE between NE 10th Street and Main Street is intended to represent a shared facility that includes transit, bicycles and private vehicles along the priority one transit corridor.

Commissioner Bishop commented that the map shows a lot of bicycle facilities to serve the estimated 1000 daily trips by bicycles. There will be an estimated 660,000 daily person trips into and out of the downtown and the number of bicycle facilities appears to be disproportional. Chair Simas pointed out that the plan overall is focused on making the downtown as accessible as possible. He added that many of the bicycle facilities can be created using little more than paint. There are always tradeoffs to be made while keeping the overall goals and principles regarding accessibility in mind.

Commissioner Jokinen said bicycles are going to come no matter what and it will be better to have planned and designed to accommodate them.

Mr. McDonald said the plan represents a modification of the adopted pedestrian/bicycle plan in that it has a lot more shared facilities. The pedestrian/bicycle plan calls for far more dedicated and separated bicycle facilities in the downtown. The methods undertaken to date relative to bike parking have proved to be effective and should be continued. While no inventory has been done of actual use, the community supports the bike parking facilities as useful elements of the downtown infrastructure.

Chair Simas asked what steps are taken to determine the right place to locate facilities for parking bicycles, either at public or private developments. Mr. McDonald said often the answer is self evident, particularly where bicycles are parked on sidewalks and locked to trees, benches and light posts. Typically bike corrals are implemented in the place of an existing on-street

parking space, often at the request of a merchant.

Mr. McDonald noted that no policy language has been written yet for the downtown subarea plan. That work will begin after obtaining an endorsement from the Council on the recommendations, and the policy language approved by the Commission will be forwarded to the Planning Commission packaged with recommendations from the Downtown Livability Initiative.

The Commissioners were informed that the staff are working with King County Metro and Sound Transit on the issue of transit access for bicycles. Policy support will be needed to continue that work. End of ride commuter facilities to be provided in conjunction with new development will include secure and covered bicycle parking, lockers and showers. As a Land Use Code issue, the matter will be handed off to the Downtown Livability Initiative Advisory Committee.

The Downtown Livability Initiative Advisory Committee will also delve into the issue of how to better integrate wheeled users into the pedestrian corridor. Mr. McDonald shared with the Commissioners a schematic indicating one approach. Commissioner Larrivee pointed out that the schematic did not include many pedestrians and suggested that during the times when the pedestrian corridor is heavily used by pedestrians it will be more difficult to fit bicycle riders in. At the very least, bicycle traffic calming devices will likely be needed in some areas to keep speeds down. Mr. McDonald concurred and said the Downtown Livability Initiative Advisory Committee will look at the issue more closely.

Mr. McDonald observed that the Commission had spent quite a lot of time discussing pedestrian mobility. The recommendation includes three different types of crosswalks: standard, enhanced and exceptional. Each have components to facilitate pedestrian movement, acknowledge vehicle traffic, and include carrying design components through intersections to improve walkability. The recommendation also includes a map of midblock crossings, including existing and proposed, and stresses that any new midblock crossing of NE 4th Street or NE 8th Street be grade separated in recognition that they are auto-biased streets. The recommendation includes widening beyond what the code currently requires for some of the sidewalks and including landscaping in street trees or landscape strip.

Throughblock connections is another land use issue that will be handed off to the Downtown Livability Initiative Advisory Committee. In discussing the issue, there was consensus on the part of the Commission regarding the need for improved wayfinding, providing recognizable paving materials denoting the connections as public corridors, and making sure in their design they are accessible to everyone.

The discussion regarding on-street parking included both permanent and off-peak parking, and charging for the spaces. Mr. McDonald called attention to the map showing the location of existing on-street parking spaces, the location of high-opportunity areas into which it would be a simple matter to add spaces, and the location of areas where more of an analysis would need to

be done to determine the feasibility and usefulness of on-street parking. New on-street parking opportunities previously shown on the map along priority one transit corridors were removed from the map.

Commissioner Lampe asked if implementation of the pay-for-parking concept would be done in one fell swoop or through a pilot program. Mr. McDonald said there has been no proposal to incrementally add pay-for-parking as part of the previous budget proposal. While it could be implemented as a pilot program, the start-up costs are significant enough that it would be more cost effective to go all in. There are 300 existing on-street parking stalls, 50 to 75 locations which could easily allow for the creation of new stalls, and 100 to 150 more would take much more analysis. There are currently 43,000 off-street parking stalls, and with the Bellevue Square and Lincoln Square II expansions another 10,000 parking stalls will be added. Admittedly the number of on-street parking stalls is small by comparison, but their locations and the businesses they serve make them valuable resources.

Mr. McDonald said the recommendation includes an endorsement by the Commission of the pay-for-parking notion and support for a budget proposal to institute a pay-for-parking program in the downtown, provided the revenues from the program are used for program management, enforcement and streetscape improvements. The recommendation also include curbside uses such as loading zones, the temporary use of on-street parking spaces for other things, incorporating taxi stands into frontage improvements, passenger pick-up and drop-off, and providing locations for electric vehicle charging stations. Many of the uses are related to development review and as such would be recommended through the Downtown Livability Initiative, though policy language may be appropriate relative to taxi stand locations.

Mr. McDonald asked for consensus on discussion topics to share with the Council on the mobility issue. He proposed including how mobility relates to the economy and livability of the downtown.

Commissioner Lampe said the concept of average delay expected between 2010 and 2030 should be highlighted for and discussed with the Council in clear terms. Delay is a key aspect of mobility and the Council should be led to understand the Commission sees it as critically important.

Commissioner Bishop said the traffic engineering profession has for many decades wrestled with how to talk about level of service in a way lay persons can understand. Delay increases from 27 seconds average to 49 seconds average are difficult to portray. Levels of service mean nothing to the average person. The downtown standard is LOS E, though it currently stands at LOS C, which many already think is a mess. The plan will allow the downtown to move toward more congestion and the difficulty lays with how to describe the fact that congestion will deteriorate but not to the point where the standard will be exceeded.

Chair Simas suggested that the Councilmembers are all well versed in the level of service topic and realize that things are going to get worse. The Commission needs to be clear about the projected future, but at the same time needs to provide options and solutions for their consideration.

Commissioner Larrivee concurred but pointed out that the Commission's recommendations are focused on all modes of travel and integrating mobility across the board in a reasonable fashion.

Commissioner Bishop called attention to the second sentence of the first paragraph on the second page of the document. He said without question pedestrians, bicycle rider and transit users will find wonderful things in the plan, but those who choose to get around in cars are going to be hammered by the plan and will not find value in it.

Commissioner Jokinen respectfully disagreed. He pointed out that in terms of actual dollars, the bulk of the funding will be spent on roadway improvements. Very little will actually be spent on facilities for bicycles or pedestrians.

Commissioner Lampe concurred, pointing out that many of the bicycle facilities will require nothing more than paint on the road yet will have a very positive impact. The plan does not outline anything new relative to increased congestion for vehicular traffic; that things are going to get worse over time has been known for many years given the growth projections. That is the primary reason the plan addresses so many modal improvements. There are, however, no silver bullets.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that all things considered the plan does account for growth in vehicular traffic. Going from 345,000 to 665,000 daily person trips cannot be done without some impact; everyone is going to be more crowded and things are going to slow down. All that considered, however, there are still elements of the plan aimed at accommodating vehicular traffic. Congestion is what happens when a city grows.

Chair Simas said if he could take a bus and conveniently go to and from all his destinations he would not hesitate to leave his car at home. Many people are driven by convenience, which drives in part the need to invest in transit. The state is investing in transit in a variety of formats, and the city is investing in transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. It may be that the car is getting the short end of the stick, in reality all of the investments in alternative forms of travel are aimed at decreasing congestion. It is simply not possible to build a lot of new roads in an attempt to alleviate congestion.

Commissioner Bishop said he is generally happy with the plan as proposed but does not want to convey to the Council that everything is hunky dory. Chair Simas allowed that the remarks to the Council should include a recognition that things are going to get more difficult for vehicles. To do nothing at all would mean to allow things to get much worse much more quickly, and in that respect those who choose to get around in a car will find value in the plan.

Commissioner Larrivee added that the various modes taken together are as a system intended to facilitate getting an increased number of people into and out of the city. The increase in throughput will be a measure of success.

Mr. McDonald said actual traffic counts between 1990 and 2010 show relatively minor change and only minor fluctuations from year to year. That data cannot be used to demonstrate that the downtown has not grown at all. Rather, it is a statement that the investments the city has made in choices have met with success in reducing dependency on automobiles.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the report to the Council should highlight the fact that investments in pedestrian facilities have been needed and continue to be needed in order to accommodate the new reality that Bellevue is becoming a pedestrian place owing to its success in growing office, retail and residential. Mr. McDonald agreed and added that the public health benefits associated with walking and biking should also be mentioned. Commissioner Bishop pointed out that while such a statement would be true, the fact is the Commission in its deliberations did not bring up the issue of health benefits at all.

Commissioner Larrivee said the plan will not only make it easier but more attractive for pedestrians and bicycles to get around the downtown. That is something that certainly was part of the Commission's discussion.

Mr. McDonald said one means of achieving downtown economic development is to provide mobility options. It is the churn of people coming and going and getting around the downtown that is an indicator of economic health. Many of the new businesses and employers choosing to locate in the downtown are attracted by the diversity in mobility options. Visitors who visit and spend money in the downtown are also in need of mobility options.

With regard to livability, Mr. McDonald said the downtown has been in transformation mode ever since the downtown code was adopted in 1980. Since then the downtown has been repackaging itself with different development cycles. At first it was office and retail, now there is an insatiable appetite for housing. Transformative change in the downtown is being and will continue to be achieved through paying attention to mobility and urban design as the downtown become a more urban, active and livable place. The demographics of those who live in the downtown have changed over time and continue to shift to a younger set that is happy to walk.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that said another way, transportation options and infrastructure must be congruent with land uses as they come online. As more people choose to live in the downtown and walk around, more pedestrian facilities are needed for them to use to get around.

Mr. McDonald thanked the Commissioners for their hard work over the course of 25 meetings to develop the proposed Downtown Transportation Plan. He added that a booklet of vignettes is

being developed that provides images and language around the intended outcome of each mobility topic.

- 9. OLD BUSINESS -- None
- 10. NEW BUSINESS -- None
- 11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS -- None
- 12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. July 11, 2013
 - B. August 8, 2013

A motion to approve both sets of minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bishop and it carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commission the calendar and list of upcoming agenda items. He highlighted the need to conduct additional meetings to work through the Transit Master Plan issues. To that end there was consensus to schedule additional meetings as needed, beginning with a meeting on October 17 at 7:00 p.m. in addition to the regular meeting on October 10.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date