



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 20, 2007

TO: Chair Yuen and Commission Members
Bellevue Transportation Commission

FROM: Kris Liljeblad, AICP, Assistant Transportation Director 452-2866
kliljeblad@bellevuewa.gov
Paul Inghram AICP, Comprehensive Planning Manager 452-4070
pinghram@bellevuewa.gov

SUBJECT: Downtown Mobility Comprehensive Plan Amendments

SUMMARY

On August 6, 2007, the Bellevue City Council initiated a Comprehensive Plan amendment to provide mobility improvements at several locations in and adjacent to Downtown Bellevue. Design and implementation work is advancing on project recommendations from the Downtown Implementation Plan and the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Study. As that work has proceeded, further improvements have been identified that would increase mobility within the Downtown, and also provide improved connectivity between Downtown and the Wilburton/Auto Row area. The amount of recent and anticipated growth in the Downtown has caused staff to be concerned that without prompt policy direction, the ability to secure needed improvements will be lost. A Comprehensive Plan amendment is needed to ensure that as new development occurs, adequate transportation capacity will be required through the development review process to maintain traffic flow to/from, and within the Downtown core.

No action is required at this time. Staff anticipates bringing this item back for additional review in October. The Transportation Commission's recommendations would be helpful if provided to the Planning Commission prior to their anticipated public hearing in December.

BACKGROUND

Downtown Bellevue is the major activity center for the greater Eastside, with concentrations of office, retail and residential uses. The dramatic recent growth is expected to continue at a vigorous pace into the foreseeable future, in part due to very low office vacancy rates and a strong housing market. Meanwhile, the construction and growing pedestrian and vehicular demand as new buildings are occupied make it increasingly difficult to keep people moving without substantial congestion and delay. Staff's concern is that without prompt action to provide policy direction on needed elements of the future transportation system, the ability to secure them during development review will be lost.

Staff have been working to advance the design and implementation of the Downtown Implementation Plan, and in the process, have identified additional improvement needs. The Wilburton/NE 8th Street Study also identified improvements that would increase connectivity and

access between the Wilburton/Auto Row commercial area and Downtown. Those improvements may continue to move forward as part of the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Study and are included here to ensure that they are addressed even if commercial redevelopment issues associated with that project remain unresolved. A more specific listing of these changes, and the rationale follows:

1. *NE 4th Street Extension* – The extension of NE 4th Street from 116th to 120th Avenue NE was evaluated within the context of Auto Row redevelopment, and as a component of both the Wilburton/NE 8th and Bel-Red Corridor planning efforts. It is a critical project, extending the grid of arterial streets serving both the downtown and the redeveloping area just to the east. It would serve a large number of trips, offering needed relief to NE 8th Street, 116th Avenue, and 120th Avenue south of 4th Street. [The NE 4th extension would be amended into the Downtown Subarea Plan as a project serving Downtown from outside the subarea, and also into the East Bellevue Transportation Plan project list.]
2. *NE 6th Street HOV Bridge over NB I-405* – The extension of the NE 6th HOV bridge would allow buses and carpools to cross the freeway without the traffic and signal delays associated with the congested intersections at the arterial crossings of NE 12th, NE 8th and NE 4th Streets. Transit travel time savings entering/exiting downtown are expected to become more important with the implementation of King County Metro’s Rapid Ride connection between Downtown Bellevue, Overlake and Downtown Redmond, plus future feeder bus connections to a Downtown Bellevue light rail transit station. [The NE 6th HOV Bridge extension would be amended into the Downtown Subarea Plan Project List.]
3. *Intersection Channelization Modification* –The work done to date to analyze 2030 traffic conditions, including some new potential downtown development, has indicated that additional intersection improvements are necessary to alleviate congestion and maintain traffic flow. If the current pace of development continues, opportunities to make these changes could be lost:
 - a. Bellevue Way and NE 8th Street – The needed upgrade is a southbound to westbound right turn lane on Bellevue Way. The current southbound through/right curb lane is often blocked due to pedestrian traffic in the NE 8th Street crosswalk, blocking the through movement and upstream driveways. A dedicated right turn lane would allow the through movement to flow during the green phase.
 - b. Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street – The needed improvements include right turn lanes for southbound Bellevue Way to westbound NE 4th (toward Bellevue Square parking) and westbound NE 4th to northbound Bellevue Way movements (toward Lincoln Square).
 - c. Bellevue Way and NE 2nd Street – The needed upgrades include a northbound Bellevue Way right turn lane to eastbound NE 2nd Street, and a dual left turn lane for southbound Bellevue Way to eastbound NE 2nd.

- d. NE 2nd Street and 112th Avenue – The recommendation would provide for the future connection of NE 2nd Street to I-405, including a straightening and realignment of NE 2nd Street to the north between 112th and 114th Avenues, dual southbound to eastbound (toward I-405) left turn lanes, and a northbound 112th to eastbound NE 2nd right turn lane.
- e. NE 8th Street and 106th Avenue – This intersection is complicated by the close proximity of a large sequoia at the northwest corner, just behind the sidewalk. While intersection improvements will occur on the northeast quadrant as part of the Wasatch block, some realignment will be needed to maintain the curblines at the northwest corner. This will require shifting the south curblines along NE 8th about 8-10 feet further to the south.

[All five intersection improvements would be amended into the Downtown Plan Project List in the Subarea Plan.]

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to investigate the technical issues associated with these individual projects. Staff will also determine how the Downtown projects fit within the plan being developed under the Great Streets project. More information is planned to be presented to both the Transportation and Planning Commissions in October. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan amendments in December. Any questions or comments that the Commission members have at this time would help staff to prepare for the subsequent consideration in October.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Conceptual plan for NE 4th Street Extension, 116th – 120th Avenue
2. NE 6th Street HOV Bridge Extension over I-405 - graphic
3. Intersection plans for:
 - a. Bellevue Way at NE 8th Street
 - b. Bellevue Way at NE 4th Street
 - c. Bellevue Way at NE 2nd Street
 - d. NE 2nd Street at 112th Avenue
 - e. NE 8th Street at 106th Avenue

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT:

Motion to initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to provide mobility improvements at several locations in and adjacent to Downtown Bellevue. A CPA is needed to ensure that as new development occurs, adequate transportation capacity will be required by development review to maintain traffic flow. The requested action is for Council to initiate the CPA process, placing the specified items in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program for 2007.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The requested action would not have any direct fiscal impact. The described mobility improvements would have to be included in approved CPAs, and then become funded projects in the Capital Investment Program (CIP) before fiscal impacts would result.

STAFF CONTACT:

Goran Sparrman, Director, Transportation Dept., 452-4338
Dan Stroh, Planning Director, PCD, 452-5255

POLICY CONSIDERATION

The Growth Management Act provides that comprehensive plans may be amended only once a year, with very limited exceptions, to ensure that the cumulative effects are understood. The City Council establishes an Annual Work Program to accomplish this, and initiates proposed amendments into the Work Program through various means. Council discussed the Planning Commission's Recommended Threshold Review for proposed CPAs on June 11th and approved the 2007 CPA Work Program on June 25th. The effect of initiating items into the work program is to direct staff and the Planning Commission to expend resources on analyzing and developing recommendations on the merits of each item. The Council's decision to consider this proposed amendment does not constitute a decision or recommendation that the proposed amendment should be adopted. The Planning Commission will hold at least one public hearing in Fall 2007 on items in the CPA Work Program and make recommendations for final decisions by the City Council, likely in the 1st Quarter of 2008.

BACKGROUND:

Downtown Mobility Changes

Downtown Bellevue is the major activity center for the greater Eastside, with concentrations of office, retail and residential uses. The dramatic recent growth is expected to continue at a vigorous pace into the foreseeable future, in part due to very low office vacancy rates and a strong housing market. Meanwhile, the construction and growing pedestrian and vehicular demand as new buildings are occupied make it increasingly difficult to keep people moving without substantial congestion and delay. Staff's concern is that without prompt action to provide policy direction on needed elements of the future transportation system, the ability to secure them during development review will be lost.

Staff have been working to advance the design and implementation of the Downtown Implementation Plan, and in the process, we have identified additional improvement needs. The Wilburton/NE 8th Street Study also identified improvements that would increase connectivity and access between the Wilburton/Auto Row commercial area and Downtown. Those improvements may continue to move forward as part of the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Study and are included here to ensure that they are addressed even if commercial redevelopment issues associated with that project remain unresolved. A more specific listing of these changes, and the rationale follows:

1. *NE 4th Street Extension* – The extension of NE 4th Street from 116th to 120th Avenue NE was evaluated within the context of Auto Row redevelopment, and as a component of both the Wilburton/NE 8th and Bel-Red Corridor planning efforts. It is a critical project, extending the grid of arterial streets serving both the downtown and the redeveloping area just to the east. It would serve a large number of trips, offering needed relief to NE 8th Street, 116th Avenue, and 120th Avenue south of 4th Street. [The NE 4th extension would be amended into the Downtown Subarea Plan as a project serving Downtown from outside the subarea, and also into the East Bellevue Transportation Plan project list.]
2. *NE 6th Street HOV Bridge over NB I-405* – The extension of the NE 6th HOV bridge would allow buses and carpools to cross the freeway without the traffic and signal delays associated with the congested intersections at the arterial crossings of NE 12th, NE 8th and NE 4th Streets. Transit travel time savings entering/exiting downtown are expected to become more important with the implementation of King County Metro’s Rapid Ride connection between Downtown Bellevue, Overlake and Downtown Redmond, plus future feeder bus connections to a Downtown Bellevue light rail transit station. [The NE 6th HOV Bridge extension would be amended into the Downtown Subarea Plan Project List.]
3. *Intersection Channelization Modification* – The work we have done to date to analyze 2030 traffic conditions, including some new potential downtown development, have indicated that additional intersection improvements are necessary to alleviate congestion and maintain traffic flow. If the current pace of development continues, opportunities to make these changes could be lost:
 - a. Bellevue Way and NE 8th Street – The needed upgrade is a southbound to westbound right turn lane on Bellevue Way. The current southbound through/right curb lane is often blocked due to pedestrian traffic in the NE 8th Street crosswalk, blocking the lane. A dedicated right turn lane would allow the through movement to flow during the green phase.
 - b. Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street – The needed improvements include right turn lanes for southbound Bellevue Way to westbound NE 4th (toward Bellevue Square parking) and westbound NE 4th to northbound Bellevue Way movements (toward Lincoln Square).
 - c. Bellevue Way and NE 2nd Street – The needed upgrades include a northbound Bellevue Way right turn lane to eastbound NE 2nd Street, and a dual left turn lane for southbound Bellevue Way to eastbound NE 2nd.
 - d. NE 2nd Street and 112th Avenue – The recommendation would provide for the future connection of NE 2nd Street to I-405, including a straightening and realignment of NE 2nd Street to the north between 112th and 114th Avenues, dual southbound to eastbound (toward I-405) left turn lanes, and a northbound 112th to eastbound NE 2nd right turn lane."
 - e. NE 8th Street and 106th Avenue – This intersection is complicated by the close proximity of a large sequoia at the northwest corner, just behind the sidewalk.

While intersection improvements will occur on the northeast quadrant as part of the Wasatch block, some realignment will be needed to maintain the curbline at the northwest corner. This will require shifting the south curblines along NE 8th about 8-10 feet further to the south.

[All five intersection improvements would be amended into the Downtown Plan Project List in the Subarea Plan.]

EFFECTIVE DATE:

If approved, this Motion becomes effective immediately upon Council adoption.

OPTIONS:

1. Initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to provide mobility improvements at several locations in and adjacent to Downtown Bellevue into the 2007 Work Program, and direct the Planning Commission to return recommendations through the CPA review process.
2. Do not initiate the staff-proposed Downtown Mobility CPA into the 2007 Work Program, and provide alternative direction to staff.

RECOMMENDATION:

Initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to provide mobility improvements at several locations in and adjacent to Downtown Bellevue into the 2007 Work Program, and direct the Planning Commission to return recommendations through the CPA review process.

MOTION:

Move to initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to provide mobility improvements at several locations in and adjacent to Downtown Bellevue into the 2007 Work Program, and direct the Planning Commission to return recommendations through the CPA review process.

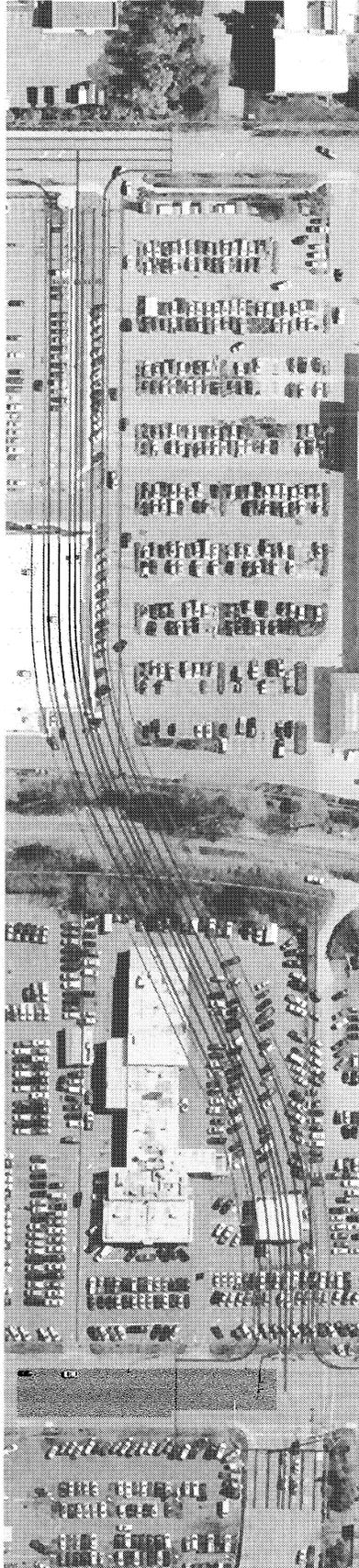
ATTACHMENTS:

1. Conceptual plan for NE 4th Street Extension, 116th – 120th Avenue
2. NE 6th Street HOV Bridge Extension over I-405 - graphic
3. Aerial Photo of NE 6th Interchange and Adjacent Vicinity
4. Intersection plans for:
 - a. Bellevue Way at NE 8th Street
 - b. Bellevue Way at NE 4th Street
 - c. Bellevue Way at NE 2nd Street
 - d. NE 2nd Street at 112th Avenue
 - e. NE 8th Street at 106th Avenue

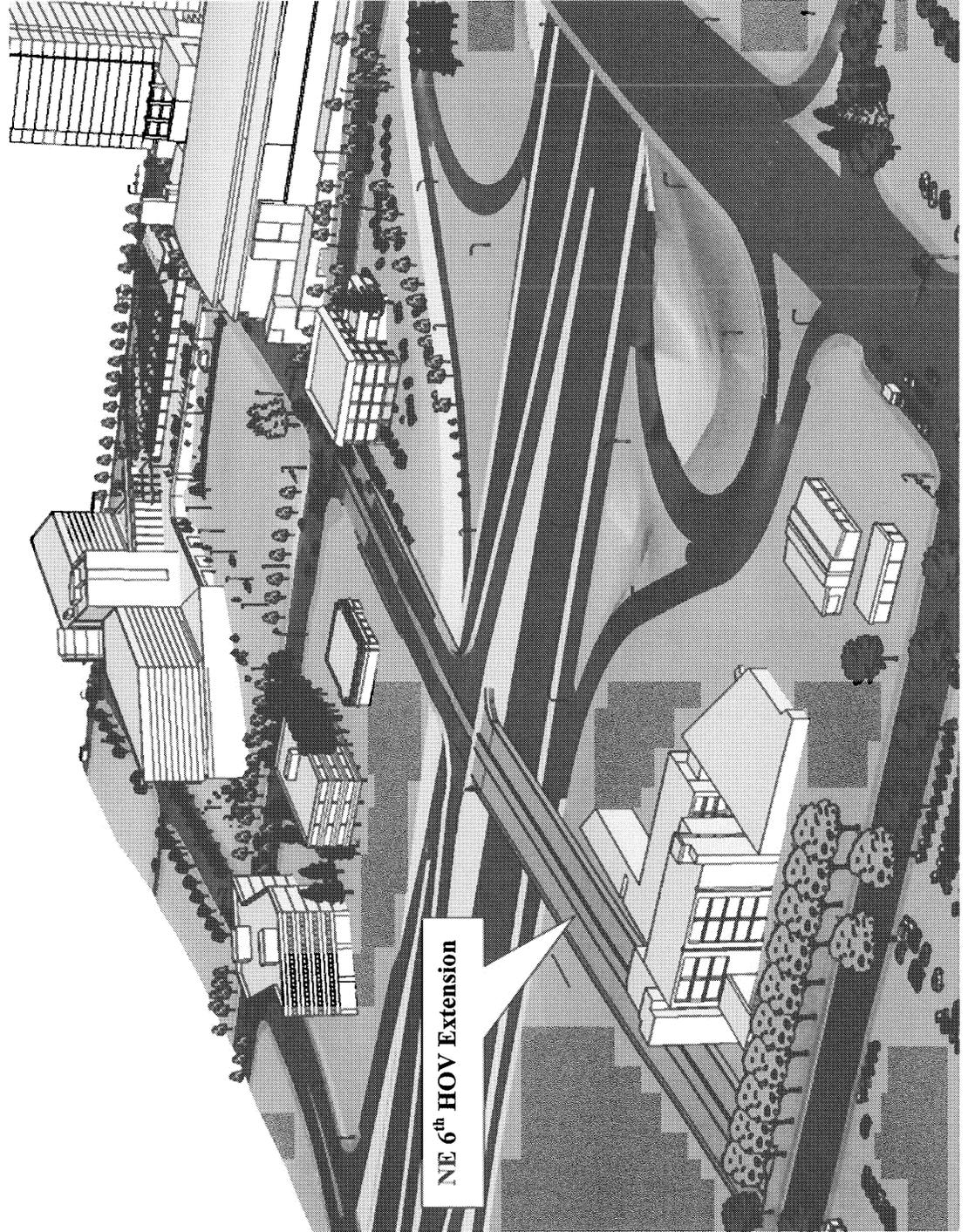
AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE:

- 1) Notebook containing PCD Threshold Review staff reports
- 2) Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan
- 3) Downtown Implementation Plan Final Report
- 4) Bel-Red Final EIS; Appendix A Transportation Analysis
- 5) 2006 Wilburton/NE 8th Study CPA Recommendations

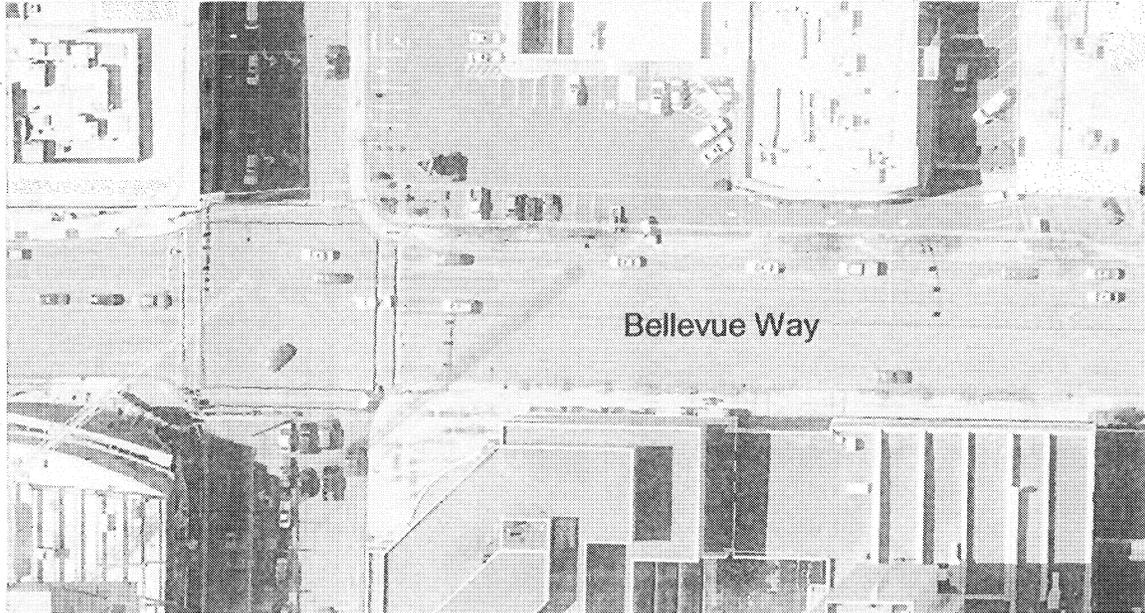
1. NE 4th Street Extension – The extension of NE 4th Street from 116th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE was evaluated within the context of Auto Row redevelopment, and as a component of both the Wilburton/NE 8th and Bel-Red Corridor planning efforts. It is a critical project, extending the grid of arterial streets serving both the downtown and the area to the east. It would serve a large number of trips, offering needed relief to NE 8th Street, 116th Avenue, and 120th Avenue south of 4th Street. The NE 4th Extension would be amended into the Downtown Subarea Plan as a project serving Downtown from outside the subarea, remove SWI-17 from the Wilburton Subarea Plan that prohibits this extension, and also go in to the East Bellevue Transportation Plan project list.



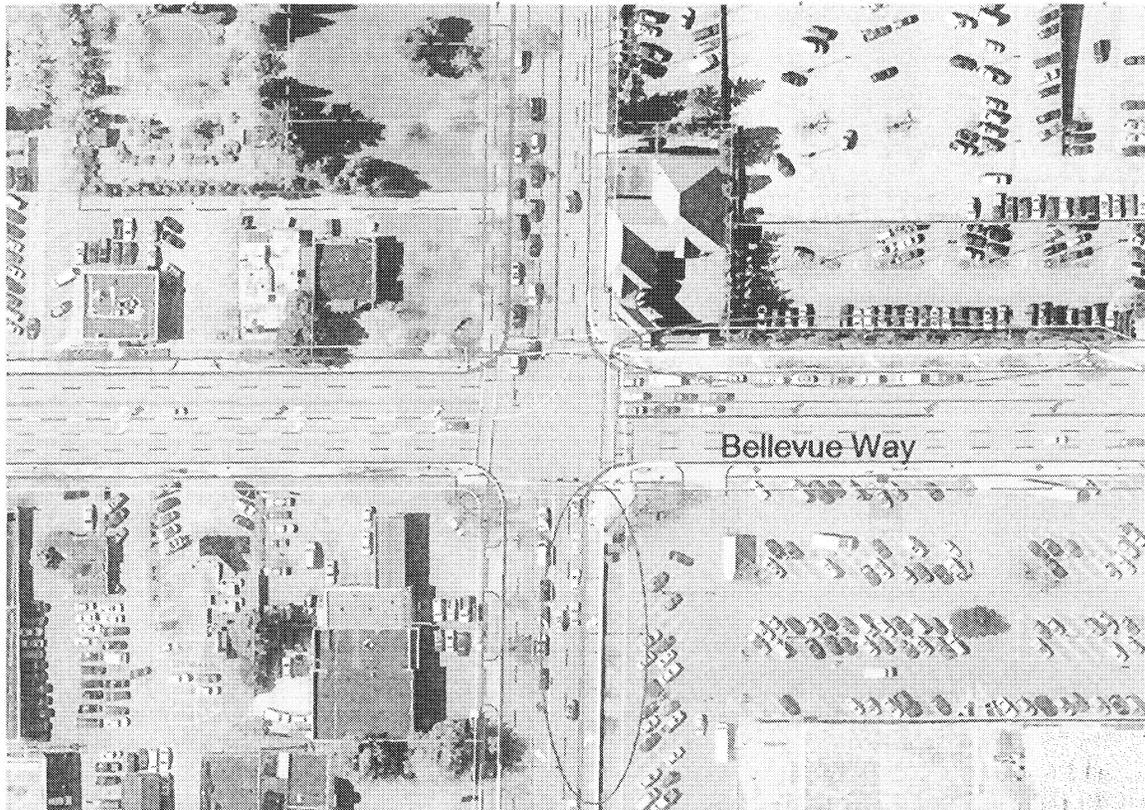
2. *NE 6th Street HOV Bridge over NB I-405* – The extension of the NE 6th HOV bridge would allow buses and carpools to cross the freeway without the traffic and signal delays associated with the congested intersections at the arterial crossings of NE 12th, NE 8th and NE 4th Streets. Transit travel time savings entering/exiting downtown are expected to become more important with the implementation of King County Metro's Rapid Ride connection between Downtown Bellevue, Overlake and Downtown Redmond, plus future feeder bus connections to a Downtown Bellevue light rail transit station.



- 3a. Bellevue Way and NE 8th Street – The needed upgrade is a southbound to westbound right turn lane on Bellevue Way. The current southbound through/right curb lane is often blocked due to pedestrian traffic in the NE 8th Street crosswalk, blocking the lane. A dedicated right turn lane would allow the through movement to flow during the green phase.



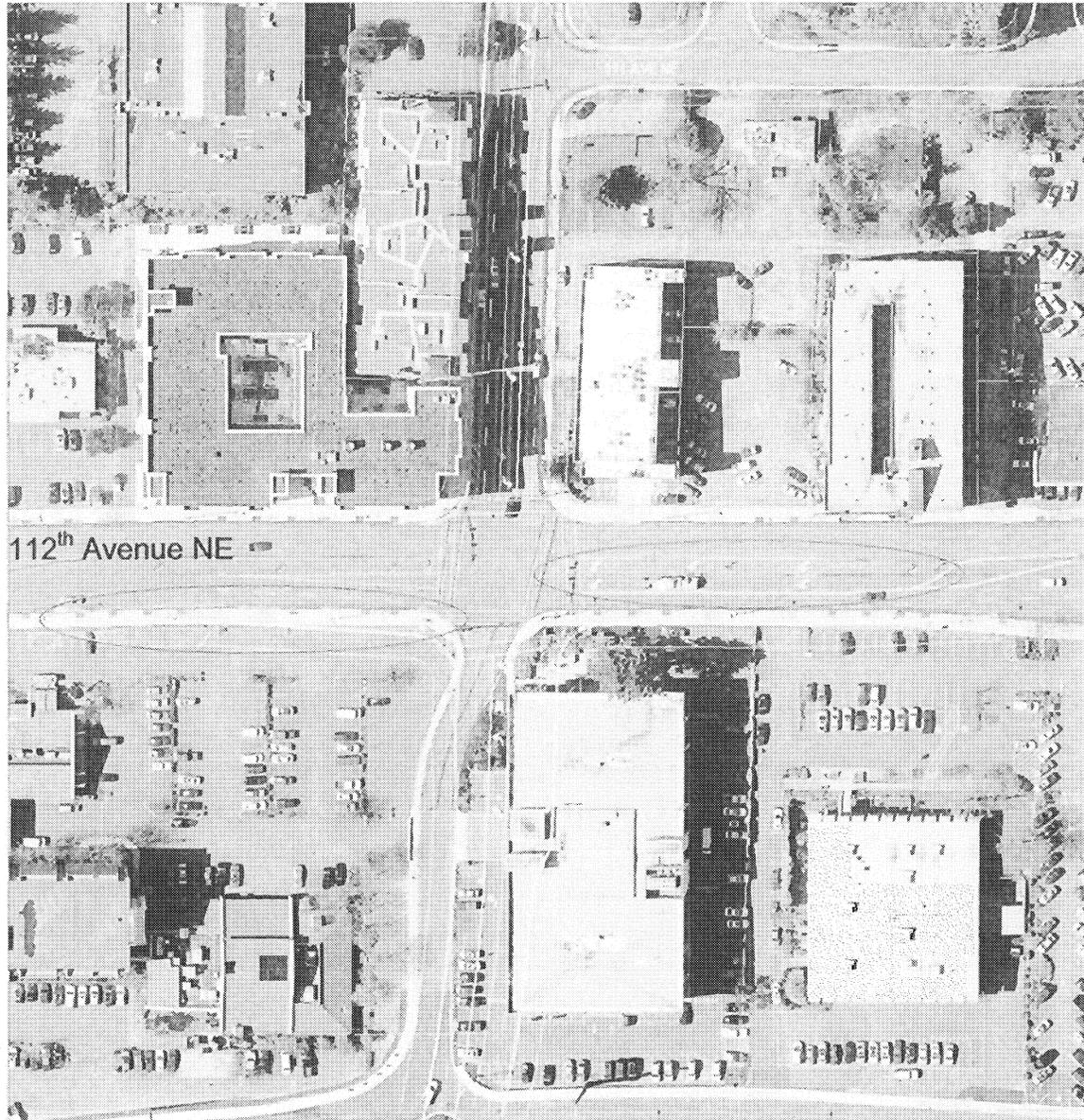
- 3b. Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street – The needed improvements include right turn lanes for southbound Bellevue Way to westbound NE 4th (toward Bellevue Square parking) and westbound NE 4th to northbound Bellevue Way movements (toward Lincoln Square).



3c. Bellevue Way and NE 2nd Street – The needed upgrades include a northbound Bellevue Way right turn lane to eastbound NE 2nd Street, and a dual left turn lane for southbound Bellevue Way to eastbound NE 2nd.



3d. NE 2nd Street and 112th Avenue – The recommendation would provide for the future connection of NE 2nd Street to I-405, including a straightening and realignment of NE 2nd Street to the north between 112th and 114th Avenues, dual southbound to eastbound (toward I-405) left turn lanes and a northbound 112th to eastbound NE 2nd right turn lane.



3e. NE 8th Street and 106th Avenue – This intersection is complicated by the close proximity of a large sequoia at the northwest corner, just behind the sidewalk. While intersection improvements will occur on the northeast quadrant as part of the Wasatch block, some realignment will be needed to maintain the curblines at the northwest corner. This will require shifting the south curblines along NE 8th about 8-10 feet further to the south.

