

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 14, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Paul Krawczyk, Franz Loewenherz, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 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 Bishop, who arrived at 6:33 p.m., Commissioner Larrivee, who arrived at 6:45 p.m., and Commissioner Zahn, who arrived at 7:30 p.m.

3. STAFF REPORTS

There was agreement to move this agenda item to the end of the meeting.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chair Simas reported that on November 12 he provided the City Council with an update on the Transit Master Plan. He said he addressed the service aspects as well as the capital issues that are being worked on. The Council did not ask any substantial questions but did have a discussion about modes of transportation and how they should be interacting with each other. He said he stressed the need for balance in determining how to move the highest number of people.

Commissioner Bishop said he attended the recent I-405/SR-167 executive advisory group meeting. The presentation given by the Washington State Department of Transportation lasted two and a half hours. Councilmembers Balducci and Wallace were in attendance to hear

arguments on both sides of the issue of whether or not the HOV hot lanes should be for 2-plus or 3-plus persons between Bellevue and Lynnwood and eventually south to Renton. WSDOT acknowledged that 2-plus cannot generate enough money to meet the state law requirements, making it necessary to go to 3-plus during the peak period. The group made that recommendation, though they also recommended 2-plus during the off-peak period.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Alex Zimmerman with Stand Up America, PO Box 4222, Seattle, said red light cameras exist only to make money for the company that operates them. Money is made under the table. The cameras are put up in dangerous places and those who run red lights must pay \$125. He said he has filed suit against the city because of the cameras and hopes the issue will come up before the state Supreme Court. By definition red light cameras operate on the bribery corruption principle. They bring almost \$2 million per year into the city but they do nothing about reducing accidents. Bellevue also issues tickets to drivers exceeding the speed limit by ten miles per hour. For 25 years the speed limit signs in the city did not change, but now the signs have changed and people are being ticketed. The solution is to establish a single speed limit for all and remove all the signs except those in dangerous places like school zones. That would cut out the millions the government takes from its citizens.

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. Lakemont Boulevard/Cougar Mountain Way Intersection Improvements

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk allowed that the Lakemont Boulevard/Cougar Mountain Way intersection project has been under consideration for quite some time ever since citizens contacted the city seeking changes to the intersection. He said a public open house was held on August 22 to highlight the proposed alternative intersection improvements.

The intersection experiences heavy peak hour volumes. Objectives were put together which included addressing the traffic issues, enhancing pedestrian access, improving vehicular safety, and minimizing the impacts to the adjacent sensitive areas. The Council approved a budget of \$1.5 million for the project. The study that was conducted in 2012 examined existing conditions and made traffic counts. Safety was also examined and it was found that the intersection experiences very few accidents. There were pedestrian concerns given that there is a park and schools nearby and no pedestrian crosswalk on Lakemont Boulevard.

Mr. Krawczyk said the study looked at what benefits would flow from widening the roadway

to add a left-turn lane; it was found that adding a turn pocket would alleviate many of the operational issues. However, it was discovered that adding a turn pocket would serve to increase the delays on SE 63rd Street. The study considered an all-way stop scenario and found that it would improve operations for SE 63rd Street and SE Cougar Mountain Way but would increase the queues on Lakemont Boulevard. The study also considered installation of a traffic signal and construction of a roundabout, both of which were shown to be effective. Signals operating under the SCATS system certainly improve traffic flow, but roundabouts keep all legs of intersections flowing. The roundabout requires more right-of-way and will have more impact on the surrounding area, but has operational and maintenance benefits.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Krawczyk said if a signal is installed the improvements will also include adding a left-turn pocket. That would efficiently benefit traffic on Lakemont Boulevard, but would cause an increase in the queues coming off of SE 63rd Street.

Mr. Krawczyk said the study shows that from an operational standpoint signaling the intersection or constructing a roundabout yield roughly equal performance, though the roundabout performs slightly better. From a safety standpoint, both options have advantages, though the roundabout improves bicycle safety and the signal improves pedestrian safety. The signalized option minimizes the right-of-way needs which reduces costs and avoids the adjacent sensitive areas. The roundabout option represents a significant savings in ongoing operational costs over the signalized option.

More than 100 people attended the August 22 open house where the signal and roundabout options were unveiled. After reviewing the alternatives and the project evaluation criteria, the residents expressed a strong preference for the traffic signal alternative.

Chair Simas pointed out that development of the area in and around the intersection is not all that old and he asked if at the time the intersection was designed the city had a good idea of what the future development of the area would be. Mr. Krawczyk said he was part of the staff team that worked on the development of the intersection, and also worked on permitting the school. At that time the intersection did not meet signal warrants, though with the land use planned for the area it was foreseen that eventually the intersection would need to be signalized. In fact, when the Open Window School was permitted, a condition was imposed requiring them to pay for a portion of the potential future signal.

A motion to recommend to the Council the traffic signal plan alternative was made by Commissioner Bishop. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and it carried unanimously.

B. Transit Master Plan - Preliminary Speed and Reliability Project List

Commissioner Bishop distributed to the Commissioners a document aimed at putting transit

ridership into context. He noted that in one of staff's documents it indicates there are some 1.2 million daily trips in city and that there will be 1.7 million-plus by 2030, of which 140,000 or about eight percent will be transit trips. The 50,000 transit trips shown in the BKR model is about four percent of the current 1.2 million trips, which is actually higher than the Puget Sound Regional Council regional projection of less than four percent for its 2040 plan. The projections indicate that bicycle and pedestrian trips will be about double the number of transit trips.

Chair Simas suggested that while no one would argue with those numbers, what it boils down to is the philosophies and goals the city and the region is trying to achieve. The overwhelming number of trips in 2030 will continue to be by vehicle, for which an infrastructure has already been established. There is not much more that can be done to accommodate vehicles, thus it only makes sense to look at and maximize all modes of travel, with particular focus on those where a positive and real impact can be effected.

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz said he had a lot of data to cover with the Commission, all of which pertained to the evening peak period that drives the city's capital investment decisions. He noted that the data represents a work in progress and said some of the gaps will be filled in the next time the topic is on the Commission's agenda. Bellevue does not have a lot of experience in implementing transit improvements so, if the Commission would like, a presentation either by King County Metro or the Seattle Department of Transportation can be scheduled.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that to date there has been a number of significant endorsements of the service-oriented strategies. Having received guidance from the Council on the abundant access framework, the process of determining how resources should be directed citywide over three time periods with three different funding scenarios was undertaken, the outcome of which is captured in the service vision report.

The 2030 growing resources scenario is what informs the Frequent Transit Network. Each route has different stop spacing, but each also has frequent service connecting Bellevue internally and with the region. The Frequent Transit Network offers a good foundation for the current scope of work on the capital element.

The outcome of the capital element will be a set of strategies involving both policies and projects. The capital element will speak most directly to the four categories over which Bellevue has the most influence: land use, the pedestrian/bicycle environment, transit stops, and the running way. The Volume I report speaks to the running way.

Speed and reliability have been held up by the public as the top priority. To the extent the city can improve service speed and reliability by investing in roadway and traffic signal infrastructure, transit will be seen by more people as a good travel option.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Loewenherz said the operating

speed assumptions were developed based on current conditions and assumptions about what traffic conditions will be like in the future. If the projected evening peak hour operating speeds are not achieved, it will be difficult to achieve the Frequent Transit Network.

Mr. Loewenherz said the evaluation methodology is being used to inform where the biggest return on investment is likely to be on the Frequent Transit Network lines. Factors like transit ridership are clearly an important consideration; investments will not be put into improving speed and reliability in corridors that do not serve many people.

There is a difference between the short- and long-term composite scores. The short-term score speaks to the possibility of early wins. The short-term score includes standing delay data from King County Metro's GPS system, and information drawn from a robust outreach to coach operators. Aggregating the evaluation methodology and the underlying data to the Frequent Transit Network yielded a color-coded map highlighting where investments in speed and reliability will meet current and future transit needs and congestion.

Mr. Loewenherz said the composite scores were weighted, with more value given to weekday ridership and weekday bus volumes and the approach delay, approach queue length and intersection LOS. He reiterated that improvements likely will be targeted to those corridors carrying the most people.

Mr. Loewenherz stressed that the list of projects associated with the Frequent Transit Network is conceptual. The final details of design will be developed as the projects proceed in the implementation process. Calling attention to the segment 116th Avenue NE from NE 12th Street to Northup Way projected for the evening peak period for 2030, he noted that 43 percent of the total person throughput is by bus, while only 1.5 percent of the vehicles on the corridor segment are buses. On Northup Way, 51 percent of all person throughput is by bus, and 2.1 percent of all vehicles are buses. The concept projects for discussion purposes include a queue jump in the northbound direction of 116th Avenue NE at Northup Way that can be accomplished without impacting the general purpose lanes.

Turning to NE 10th Street, Mr. Loewenherz said the projected travel demand in the 2030 evening peak period shows 34 percent of all person trips on the corridor segment between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE to be by bus, with buses representing one percent of all vehicles. One project envisioned will repurpose the eastbound evening peak period HOV lane for the corridor segment. He said there are not many projects on the list that seek to repurpose existing lanes. The expectation is that such conversions will be a hard sell even though the focus is on moving more people during the evening peak period. A frank discussion is needed relative to the tradeoffs.

Commissioner Bishop commented that Deputy Mayor Robertson specifically said that converting existing vehicle lanes to some other purpose is far different from adding new capacity with new pavement. Chair Simas said the work the Commission needs to do involves boiling it all down to the numbers. If the numbers show a lane conversion makes sense, the

Commission will need to do what it can to make the sale. As a Commission we would not want to make recommendations before the facts are in hand; that is not a coherent way for the Commission to recommend policy.

Mr. Loewenherz zeroed in on the section of NE 6th Street between 106th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE and noted that by 2030, 58 percent of the person throughput will be by bus, with buses making up 2.7 percent of the total number of vehicles. The extension project is in the TFP and is deemed to be critical for meeting the land use vision for the east side of the downtown. He then focused on 156th Avenue NE between NE 8th Street and Bel-Red Road in Crossroads and pointed out that in 2030 the projection is for 20 percent of all person throughput to be by bus, and that buses will account for 0.8 percent of all vehicle throughput. Project L24 involves constructing a southbound business access transit (BAT) lane from the city limit to just south of NE 24th Street; it will also benefit other vehicles by getting buses out of the general purpose lane. Project L23 would construct a northbound BAT lane from south of Northrup Way to just north of NE 24th Street.

The Commissioners were informed that the Lake Hills Connector has the least amount of person throughput with a 2030 projection of 13 percent, with buses making up 0.5 percent of the total vehicles. Project L10 calls for construction of a westbound transit bypass lane at the intersection with Richards Road. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that the project has some problems, including ecological issues, and has a relatively small benefit, but is designed to address the 2030 LOS E queuing issues.

Mr. Loewenherz said Bellevue Way SE between 113th Avenue SE and I-90 will by 2030 have a much higher percentage of the person throughput, 38 percent, occurring by bus, with buses making up only 1.1 percent of the total vehicles. The segment along 112th Avenue SE from Main Street to Bellevue Way SE is projected to have 31 percent of all person throughput occurring by bus, with buses accounting for 0.7 percent of all vehicle throughput. The person throughput by bus on the segment of Bellevue Way SE between SE 8th Street and 113th Avenue SE will reach 44 percent, with buses again accounting for 1.1 percent of all vehicle throughput. Project L1 is identified even though it will be implemented as part of East Link. Project L2 involves the median HOV lane running past the Winters House. Projects L3 and L4 both involve construction and will require some additional right-of-way.

By 2030 the projections show that 25 percent of all person trips in the evening peak period will be by bus on Factoria Boulevard between SE 36th Street and SE Newport Way, with buses making up 0.9 percent of all vehicles. No arterial HOV lane is proposed for the very constrained segment. Project L9 will benefit auto travel more than any other mode. The I-90 trail will ultimately become the Mountains to Sound Greenway trail once the extension is made over the SE 36th Street and Factoria Boulevard intersection. The proposal is to remove the trail connection under the ramp and widen the road out so that the queuing that backs up onto the freeway can be mitigated.

Mr. Loewenherz said the project on 142nd Place SE is familiar to Commissioner Larrivee who sat on the Eastgate/I-90 CAC. The segment between Coal Creek Parkway and SE 36th Street is projected to see 53 percent of all person throughput occurring by bus, with buses making up 6.4 percent of the total vehicle count. Project L27 involves the direct access ramps connecting to the Eastgate park and ride. There is a lot of interest in developing housing nearby to serve Bellevue College. Existing buses coming from Issaquah follow a circuitous pattern to access the Eastgate park and ride and the college; the project would get the buses off of 148th Avenue SE and give them a much more direct route up Snoqualmie River Road to the college. The project would also facilitate pedestrians and bicycles accessing the Mountains to Sound Greenway trail.

Mr. Loewenherz stressed that the cost/benefit data in the report does not take into account signal priority. The Dynameq model is not sensitive to signal priority, nor is it sensitive to queue jump improvements. He shared with the Commissioners the projected operating speeds for the frequent express, frequent rapid and frequent local transit routes and noted that relative to the baseline the BAT/HOV lane scenario increased operating speeds by one mile per hour. Autos traveling in the same corridors are projected to see their operating speeds increase by a similar amount. With regard to the 2030 evening peak signalized intersection levels of service, the data shows no degradation in the aggregate between the baseline and the BAT lane; a modest improvement is actually indicated.

Mr. Loewenherz said he would welcome requests from the Commissioners for more detailed modeling and micro-simulation for a particular project or corridor. He said one potential would be NE 10th Street. Commissioner Bishop agreed with that choice and also suggested 108th Avenue NE. Mr. Loewenherz said the challenge with 108th Avenue NE is that the particulars of the project have yet to be identified. NE 10th Street and Main Street both include conversions and may be more appropriate for more detailed modeling. He agreed, however, to see how far he could push 108th Avenue NE relative to coming up with a design idea. He stressed that the budget will allow for modeling only four intersections.

Commissioner Zahn said the focus needs to be on where the biggest risks, challenges and objections are when deciding where to allocate the limited resources. The intersections selected for specific analysis should be those that will bring about some wins. She said she would like to hear which intersections the staff would choose.

Mr. Loewenherz suggested that there will be a lot of concern on the part of the Council toward endorsing any conversion projects. The downtown has been a topic of clear interest. He suggested identifying the NE 10th Street, Main Street, 108th Avenue NE corridors and the intersection of Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE. He said he would talk with the consultant about adapting the existing model to get the best value out of the limited contract.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lampe, Mr. Loewenherz said ultimately the Commission will make a recommendation to the Council regarding the Transit Master Plan.

Immediately thereafter there will be conversations with King County Metro and Sound Transit to see if they can get some of the projects constructed in the near term. That is why a near-term composite score was produced that relies heavily on operator input and AVL/GPS data.

Commissioner Jokinen questioned spending lots of money on projects that in the aggregate will only improve speeds by one mile per hour unless someone can explain to the Commission why it would make sense to go forward with the projects. Mr. Loewenherz suggested that the data produced for the report likely understates the actual benefits. King County Metro and Seattle Department of Transportation could shed some light on the practices, though neither entity actually engages in much before and after analysis; they are sold on the benefits and choose to put their energies into actually constructing the projects; they would not be going in that direction if there were no resulting benefits.

Commissioner Bishop highlighted project L6 and said it appears to be a legacy from a previous study. On the city's coding maps, it falls into the lowest category. Mr. Loewenherz agreed that some projects on the list will not rank very high, and L6 may be one of them.

Commissioner Zahn asked if there could be another metric other than miles per hour to measure system improvements, such as vehicle throughput. She also asked if it is worth asking Seattle if they have anecdotal evidence rather than hard data that the improvements they have invested in have actually helped.

Mr. Loewenherz said for the next meeting he would try to quantify the one mile per hour increase both in terms of throughput and cost. While the metric may seem small, in the aggregate it may translate into a fairly significant benefit. He stressed that the picture would be much clearer if the city had the dollars available to do VISSIM modeling citywide; that modeling work would be sensitive to the queue jumps and signal priority and would yield what the aggregate of projects would produce. VISSIM modeling will be done on a couple of intersections and the results will be available in January.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that L26, the project on 148th Avenue NE between NE 20th and NE 24th, also has the word "convert" in its description. He suggested it could serve as a backup project for the in-depth modeling. Mr. Loewenherz said he would put it on the list, but added that he favored the downtown projects in that there is already a VISSIM model in place there.

There was consensus among the Commissioners to keep January 23 open for a second meeting in January in case more time is needed to continue the Transit Master Plan study discussions.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. McDonald said the requested modeling work relative to the downtown transportation plan projects has been completed and

will be reported on at the December meeting.

Commissioner Lampe called attention to the memo in the packet regarding the southbound HOV lane on Bellevue Way and asked if the Commission was supposed to address it. Mr. McDonald said the memo was included at the request of the Commission to see the level of service improvement resulting from having the lane. He said the data was drawn from the Transportation Facilities Plan model that was previously presented to the Council. The specific project was not isolated in the analysis of build versus baseline because the project is already in the baseline for the 2030 analysis.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Simas proposed changing the protocol regarding Petitions and Communications to allow three minutes per person rather than five. The Council allows three minutes and he suggested the Commission should operate from the same standard.

A motion to limit speakers during Petitions and Communications to three minutes was made by Commissioner Jokinen. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee.

Commissioner Larrivee said it was his understanding that individuals were allowed three minutes to speak and organizations five minutes. He agreed, however, that the Commission's process should match that of the Council. Commissioner Zahn concurred.

Commissioner Lampe said he could put forward the argument that the Commission deals with a lot of technical issues that might be difficult to comment on in only three minutes. He said his inclination was to allow five minutes per speaker.

Commissioner Bishop said prior to his tenure on the Commission he found himself in the position of speaking during Petitions and Communications. He agreed that three minutes is often not enough time to delve into technical issues. Chair Simas pointed out that on a case by case basis the Commission can always choose to allow a speaker additional time.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested that all of the city's boards and commissions deal with complex issues, and if they allow only three minutes per speaker the Transportation Commission should do the same.

The motion carried 6-1, with Commissioner Lampe voting against.

Chair Simas clarified that the motion as approved would allow individuals three minutes to speak and organizations five minutes.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 10, 2013

Commissioner Lampe drew attention to the penultimate paragraph on page 9 and asked to change the word "tremendous" in the last sentence to "significant."

B. October 17, 2013

Commissioner Bishop called attention to the last sentence of the last paragraph on page 4 and pointed out that the reference to commuter parking does not reflect the citywide home-to-work commuter trips in 2030. He said he would like to have that information.

A motion to approve the October 10, 2013, minutes as amended and the October 17, 2013, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and it carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed the calendar and upcoming agenda topics.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:42 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date