

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 9, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Jokinen, Lampe, Northey, Simas

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Glass, Larrivee

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Dave Berg, Carl Wilson, Kevin McDonald, Steve Costa, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Northey, who arrived at 6:38 p.m., and Commissioners Glass and Larrivee, both of whom were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

A. CIP Budget Update

Deputy Director Dave Berg said the City Council completed its deliberations on the budget at its December 6 meeting at the conclusion of which they voted to approve the budget for the next biennium. He said the testimony provided by the Commission in mid-October definitely had an impact, the proof of which was the fact that the Council voted to approve most of the items on the Commission's list. They fully funded the first phase of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project; the 145th Place project; and the 108th Avenue SE project. The Council made the decision not to fully fund the neighborhood sidewalk program. Some money was added to the neighborhood traffic calming program, though it was not fully funded. The SE 16th Street project was not, however, funded.

On the capacity side, in addition to fully funded the NE 4th Street extension and the first segment of 120th Avenue NE, the Council elected to fully fund the design, right-of-way and construction for the second segment of the 120th Avenue NE project. Money was also added for the second zone between 120th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE; for 124th from NE 15th to the SR-520 ramps; and for the long section of 120th Avenue NE from Bel-Red Road to Northup Way. By moving the design of the large capacity projects forward, the sooner they will be eligible for grant funding.

Mr. Berg said the NE 4th Street extension project will be constructed in phases, with the first phase covering the section between 116th Avenue NE and the railroad, and the second phase involving the section between the railroad and 120th Avenue NE. The design for the project closer to Best Buy remains in flux; a preferred alternative has been identified but it is continuing to be tweaked. The current preferred alternative would shave off a portion of the Best Buy store and essentially trigger very few right-of-way impacts on the Home Depot site. One of the primary challenges for Best Buy is the fact that their loading dock is currently on the west side of the building and the new roadway will make it very challenging to access.

Commissioner Lampe said he was glad to see the Council act to take some of the money from the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project and allocate it to the 120th Avenue NE project instead.

Commissioner Simas asked how the NE 4th Street extension and 120th Avenue NE projects would be impacted should the Wilburton LID not be approved. Mr. Berg said the issue has been discussed but there have been no conclusions reached. The LID will be before the Council again on January 3.

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk reported that the city and the city and the Transportation Commission has received the Governor's 2010 Smart Communities Award for the work on the Bel-Red subarea plan.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Lampe reported that he attended the November 30 Sound Transit board meeting where the focus was on the East Link environmental report.

Chair Tanaka noted that he and Commissioner Simas attended the October 18 Council meeting and shared with the Council the position of the Commission relative to CIP projects in the budget. The issue of balance was stressed.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Joe Rossman, 921 109th Avenue SE, said the organization *Building A Better Bellevue* was founded in the summer of 2010 and represents the interests of the Surrey Down community and others concerned about how light rail will impact the south part of the city. Work conducted by the group over the last five months was presented recently to a small group of community leaders. The findings will be of considerable interest to the Transportation Commission given that they involve policy matters that should be taken up by the City Council. *Building A Better Bellevue* is a truly a volunteer community organization that is working diligently to identify policy opportunities and to make sure that the way in which light rail is brought to the community will work best for the city, for the communities and for the citizens. In July a happenstance conversation occurred between a steering committee member and an individual who serves in a high-level consulting capacity for Sound Transit and the King County Department of Transportation. Statements made in that conversation included: “Bellevue people are so provincial they will never let Sound Transit do what it needs to do to be successful in bringing light rail to the Eastside;” “We never intended to bring light rail into Bellevue any other way than on Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue;” “We only examined the B-7 and other route options so that we could say that we met state and federal requirements for community input.” Based on those shocking comments, *Building A Better Bellevue* set out to develop a panel of experts. To date some 20 persons with more than 25 collective man-years of experience working as consultants, as well as engineering experts in many aspects of transportation planning, have participated. The group has found that the method by which the B-7 route was determined to fail based on the criteria established by Sound Transit has many questions. Examples were identified where, based on judgments about design and methods of construction, the costs were exceptionally high and other construction options could have been utilized. For instance, by moving the light rail to the east side of the B-7 corridor huge environmental impacts could be avoided, along with major portions of the cost impacts that Sound Transit found unacceptable. They called for removing berms that would have many environmental impacts. They had a costly park and ride station on the south side of SE 8th Street that could have been placed somewhere else; it was also sized twice as large as it needed to be for the number of parking spaces required by their own planning documents. They used a method of crossing the Slough that was the most expensive possible. They failed to use right-of-way on the side of I-405 that would make it possible to dramatically reduce the impact on properties and property takings. They did strange things such as place a crossover within about 100 yards of many residences, thus maximizing the sound impacts, when in fact there were many other options open to them further away from residences. In all, the Sound Transit work is an example of the kind of gamesmanship that can go on in public works planning. *Building A Better Bellevue* believes it would be possible to build an optimized B-7, eliminating the SE 8th park and ride station and saving \$120 million. A reduced-size park and ride station could be constructed and still save \$30 million. Other cost and impact reductions are available as well which could make the B-7 pass all of Sound Transit’s criteria.

Commissioner Lampe noted that as a resident of Surrey Downs he had been afforded the opportunity to hear the full presentation on the report done by *Building A Better Bellevue*. He

commended the group for the work they have accomplished. The Council has approved the contract for engineering the B-7 area, so much of the work will either be confirmed or refuted based on what the engineer finds in the coming months.

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Bel-Red Corridor Transportation Development Standards

Transportation planner Carl Wilson noted that a few things have changed since the memo in the packet, dated October 22, was written. He said the consultant, ZGF, was hired to come up with a unique theme for street frontage design and appearance in the corridor that would lead to the selection of types of street furnishings and light standard design. In discussions with the consultant and city staff it became clear that more work needed to be done to develop a visual character for the whole area before focusing on the appearance of street furnishings. The consultant contact was bolstered with both time and money to help the staff come up with a better idea for the overall look and feel of the area. The additional work is in progress.

Mr. Wilson shared with the Commission display boards showing generic street depictions of what could occur in the corridor. The pictures showed 130th Avenue NE to the north of the light rail line as a retail street; a new local street; and concepts for the green street having a European look and feel, including parking level with the sidewalks and separated only by bollards, and an overall courtyard-like cross-section with rain gardens.

The work of the consultant to date with regard to developing a visual theme for the corridor has focused on three areas: a modern theme, a natural theme, and an industrial theme tied to the heritage of the corridor. The final product will be an addendum to the transportation department design manual and must be approved by the Director.

Commissioner Lampe observed that none of the drawings show the light rail line and asked if the line is being taken into account in the work that is under way. Mr. Wilson said the scope of work has stayed away from the issue of light rail. There is a much larger and more detailed work under way which will focus on the design of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor through which light rail will operate. The street theme and design work from the current project will likely carry over into the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street design work.

Commissioner Northey asked if the Commission will be allowed input into the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street design process. Mr. Krawczyk said staff is still working with the Council on the width of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor. He said he did not know if the Commission would be asked to weigh in.

B. 130th Avenue NE Station Area Planning

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald reported that in August the Council approved embarking on the 130th Avenue NE station area planning project as an implementation strategy for the Bel-Red subarea plan. The Transportation and Planning departments are both involved in the effort. Through a competitive bidding process, the consultant team of VIA Architecture was selected to assist in the process. VIA brings international experience in station area planning to the table, including a lot of work in Vancouver and Toronto metropolitan areas. The project is funded substantially through federal stimulus funding through a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce.

In general, station area planning deals with areas in proximity to transit stations, both light rail and bus rapid transit. The light rail stations in the Bel-Red subarea will not be operational for another ten years or so, but it is important to conduct the station area planning sooner rather than later. Early planning is the best way to plan for infrastructure around new stations and to coordinate design efforts with transit agencies for the development of the station.

Mr. McDonald said the current work is the first of several station area plans that will be developed in Bellevue. Each station will be different in terms of its land use and planning needs. Many of the stations will have an emphasis on access to and from them as opposed to major land use transitions around them.

The landmark and award-winning Bel-Red subarea plan will assist the area in transitioning from the existing light industrial and commercial pattern to a higher density pattern that mixes in residential uses and other amenities around future light rail stations. The subarea plan was adopted by the Council in February 2010. One of its key concepts is sustainability, both with regard to the natural and built environments.

Urban design will be a major element in creating Bel-Red as a place with a distinctive character. The adopted design standards are meant to ensure that as redevelopment occurs it will incorporate the best of urban design appropriate to the context. The subarea plan also focused on the environment and seeks to take advantage of the environmental amenities that either are already there or that have the potential to be there. There are many streams that flow through the corridor, but many of them are generally unknown because they have been piped; one of the key concepts of the plan is to daylight those streams so they can become a public amenity. There are few parks in the corridor currently, and it will be important to integrate parks as the community develops.

The subarea plan calls for bringing online a number of different housing types, though not single family housing units. The focus is on providing a diversity of opportunities for people to live.

There is an arts and culture component to the Bel-Red subarea. In many of the former light industrial buildings there is art being manufactured. The Pacific Northwest Ballet has a dance

facility in the corridor as well.

Mr. McDonald said the existing street system in the corridor was designed to accommodate the light industrial and commercial developments reasonably well. As the area redevelops, however, it will be necessary to have a more complete and connected street system, including elements of non-motorized transportation.

The 130th Avenue NE station area planning work is one of the implementation strategies for the Bel-Red subarea plan. The station area planning for the 120th Avenue NE station will be the focus of the Spring District redevelopment being planned by Wright Runstad.

There is a land use component to the workplan related to the 130th Avenue NE station that looks at how to transition from a light industrial area to an area of higher intensity mixed use buildings. The work will focus on determining where the logical first steps should take place and how they should be accommodated, as well as how to phase the development over time, the types of housing to begin with, how to leverage other resources to get housing constructed in the area, and the what types of supportive commercial uses should logically locate in the area to achieve the vision for the subarea.

Mr. McDonald said transportation will be key to ensuring that the vision is implemented. One important element of the transportation infrastructure will be light rail. In the area of the 130th Avenue NE station, the light rail will be integrated into the street, with the line running in the center of the roadway. The rail platform will be located between 130th Avenue NE and 132nd Avenue NE. Work is under way to design the local streets required by the code to support the land use pattern of the subarea. Developing a street network will, however, be an interesting exercise to be explored through station area planning.

One of the issues with the 130th Avenue NE station area is that it involves a number of different parcels, some big and some small. As redevelopment occurs there will need to be a strategy for financing, phasing and implementing the new street network to have it work in the interim and make sense in the end. Similarly, the ped-bike system will need to be linked to serve the immediate vicinity of the station but also to the adjacent neighborhoods and regional facilities such as the SR-520 trail and the future Burlington Northern/Santa Fe trail.

Pedestrian access to the station will be vitally important. Mr. McDonald shared with the Commission a map of the station area depicting the street network with five-minute and ten-minute walks highlighted. The specific properties that can be accessed by five- and ten-minute walks using the existing street network were noted. He then pointed out that the new streets will provide much better access, both in distance and in the number of parcels accessible with a five- or ten-minute walk.

Goff Creek flows through the center of the station planning area, so it is the primary environmental concern. The background work that is under way includes alignment issues and

how to enhance the creek, including how to daylight it. The concept is to incorporate park features along the stream along with urban plazas and open space. The tree canopy will be increased and the overall greenness of the corridor. The “great streams” strategies developed during the Bel-Red corridor study envisions a robust and healthy stream system.

Mr. McDonald stated that along with the light rail station at 130th Avenue NE, Sound Transit is planning to construct a park and ride lot. Surface parking is not fully consistent with the vision of the Bel-Red subarea plan, especially in the area immediately around the station. Staff and the consultant would like to work with Sound Transit on a potential joint development opportunity to avoid long-term surface parking near the station.

One of the key expectations of the grant funders is the development of a plan that will reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions resulting from activities occurring within the station area. The consultant has experience in that area and has a good tool for testing different development scenarios.

The station area work will not be conducted in a vacuum. It will be related to the East Link project, the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street design standards, the Bel-Red street standards, the Goff Creek corridor plan, and the hydrology and hydraulics plans.

Mr. McDonald shared with the Commissioners a drawing of what the 130th Avenue NE station could look like. He noted that the city is working closely with Sound Transit engineers to ensure that the design of light rail, the station platforms, and the alignment will be compatible and consistent with the Bel-Red subarea plan.

NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street runs through the entire subarea and will have a major influence on all of the planning work in the corridor. It is intended to accommodate cars, buses, bicyclists, pedestrians and light rail. The roadway has been divided into a number of different segments, each with a different characteristic that can be addressed separately, yet each working in concert as a continuous corridor.

The Bel-Red plan envisions daylighting Goff Creek and bringing development up next to it so it can become an amenity for the area.

The station area planning work will result in a document that will be a repository of all things related to Bel-Red. It will also provide tools and techniques for implementing the Bel-Red plan with regard to land use and transportation. It is intended that the report will serve as a template for other station area plans in the city.

The work includes a public involvement component. There have been discussions with people who own businesses and properties near the 130th Avenue NE station to determine what their long-term plans are. The project was made part of a larger open house event recently. The Transportation Commission and Planning Commission both were invested in developing the

vision for the Bel-Red subarea plan and both will be kept fully informed as the process moves ahead.

The terms of the grant funding dictate that the planning work be completed by the end of February 2012.

Commissioner Lampe asked if the 130th Avenue NE station is intended to serve as a catalyst to the redevelopment of the area. Mr. McDonald said without the station most of the land uses envisioned to occur around it would not be possible. The station area planning effort in part is focused on what the city can do to help new development start. That could include creating natural amenities, such as parks, or enhancing a portion of Goff Creek so the development community can see that the city is serious about implementing the Bel-Red vision. Vehicular and pedestrian connections to the station will be vital, and they will need to be funded and constructed in a way that will not put all of the burden on developers.

Commissioner Simas asked if there are any current thoughts about the parking garage needed near the station. Mr. McDonald said no alternatives have been identified yet. The consultants are looking at the best practices employed by other communities in similar situations.

Chair Tanaka asked if there will be a role for the Commission to play in the future with regard to maximizing alternative transportation opportunities. Mr. McDonald commented that the Commission is heavily involved in the development of the ped-bike plan and the Bel-Red subarea plan. Both plans will inform the work of station area planning. As options are identified, they will be shared with the Commission.

Chair Tanaka asked how it will be determined that the planning has succeeded from a transportation standpoint once the station is constructed. Mr. McDonald said Sound Transit employs metrics in determining success. They have ridership expectations, and to the extent those are met Sound Transit will be happy. What will make the city happy will be the station becoming the focal point for the surrounding redevelopment in line with the land use vision, the environmental enhancements, and the transportation system.

C. 108th Avenue SE, SE 34th to Bellevue Way Project Update

Transportation planner Steve Costa said the project scope initially included the construction of five-foot bike lanes on both sides of 108th Avenue SE, and a six-foot sidewalk on one side of the roadway. The side on which to construct the sidewalk was to be determined through public outreach. The length of the project that runs through the Enatai neighborhood is approximately 5000 feet; it passes through a part of Beaux Arts Village. The existing concrete roadway has held up fairly well but is some 60 years old.

Mr. Costa said the project goals include making connections with the improvements made to the north of Bellevue Way along 108th Avenue SE in the late 1990s, and improving pedestrian

access to the neighborhoods.

The project was taken to the neighborhoods who raised objections. There was suspicion on the part of some residents that the project was in some way mitigation for light rail through the neighborhood. A petition signed by 40 people in the neighborhood indicated favor for a multiuse facility instead of separate sidewalks and bike lanes. They also indicated their desire to see trees preserved and with them the character of the neighborhood. There were also concerns voiced about making improvements that would preclude on-street parking.

Mr. Costa said Beaux Arts was incorporated in the 1960s and has about 300 residents. The city limits include half of 108th Avenue SE. The town council was engaged to talk about the project, the result of which was their going through a comprehensive plan process. They concluded they did not want bike lanes passing through their jurisdiction.

The local interests clearly did not mesh with the ped-bike goals originally set out for the project. At the one extreme there were people who wanted to see everything kept as it is, while at the other extreme there were people who were concerned about losing parking and accessibility. An open house was conducted in May to gain more input about the project. The desire to preserve the neighborhood character was reiterated at the meeting. Objections were raised to having sidewalks and bike lanes, and about having bicyclists passing through the area.

The public felt that for the south section of the project the best approach would be to construct a multiuse path coming up from the parkway. The regional I-90 trail connects to 190th Avenue SE. In the middle section the public felt the multiuse path should be continued but narrowed to accommodate the steep driveways in the area. On the north end sidewalks and bike lanes are needed to connect the existing gaps.

Pedestrian safety for school children will be part of the project. A segment will be constructed along the west side going up to Enatai Elementary to provide some extra space for either on-street parking or for cyclists.

Mr. Costa commented that during the discussions the utilities department was contacted. They indicated that there is a water main in the project area, sections of which date back to the mid-1940s. As part of the project, those sections will be replaced. Puget Sound Energy will participate in the project as well by addressing lighting levels through the corridor.

The total budget for the revised project for design and construction is just shy of \$2 million, which is significantly less than what the original project scope would have cost. The design work should be completed in early January. Construction should begin in late spring 2011.

Commissioner Northey observed that the neighborhood is relatively quiet so it is not a huge loss to not have bike lanes for the entire length.

Commissioner Lampe asked there is much pedestrian activity in the area not associated with the grade school. Mr. Costa said there is actually quite a lot of recreational use in the area by the locals.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Wilson explained that he serves as a member of the Kirkland Transportation Commission. He said he informed the Commission at its meeting on December 8 that the Bellevue Transportation Commission was interested in reaching out to neighboring jurisdictions.

Chair Tanaka said the Commission is most interested in seeking to understand if there is a better way of dealing with issues. To that end the Commission would like to know more about how area councils and commissions deal with similar issues.

Commissioner Simas said he is always interested in knowing more about process and the types of issues that should be assigned to the Commission to work on versus the kinds of issues the Commission is actually working on.

Mr. Wilson said the Kirkland Transportation Commission is allowed to raise its own issues but also gets assignments from the City Council. Lately the Commission has been focused on developing a policy relating to future uses within the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe right-of-way.

Commissioner Northey suggested that if a formal meeting of the two groups gets planned, there should be a list of discussion topics developed ahead of time.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 14, 2010

Commissioner Northey called attention to last sentence of the first paragraph under Item B on page 4 and suggested it be revised to read “Many of the downtown projects were approved assuming new revenue streams, and by not raising taxes to support these mobility initiative projects, the effect was to cut funding for non-mobility initiative projects.”

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Lampe. Second was by Commissioner Simas 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 Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date