

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES

December 13, 2012  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Glass, Lampe,  
Larrivee, Tanaka

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Jokinen

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Judy Clark, Sean Wellander, Hu Dong,  
Kevin McDonald, 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 6:13 p.m., and Commissioner Jokinen, who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk reminded the Commissioners about the Comprehensive Plan scoping forum scheduled for January 24. He said all of the city's boards and commissions will attend.

Mr. Krawczyk reported that the budget adopted by the City Council is largely as was proposed.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS,  
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mayor Conrad Lee took the opportunity to wish the Commissioners a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He said the Commission has his heartfelt thanks for all the work it does. The city is facing a number of challenging and important issues, and the input provided by the Commission is invaluable.

## 5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Lampe reported that he and Chair Simas met with Mayor Lee prior to the start of the Commission meeting to share with him the discussion the Commission had earlier about being more engaged in some of the activities related to transportation. Mayor Lee expressed a willingness for the Commission to be more involved, but stressed that ultimately policy direction comes from the Council; as such, the Commission serves in an advisory capacity and is limited by the mandate that has been given to the Commission. While the Commission should be kept fully informed regarding the I-405 master plan, for instance, the Commission will not have any direct influence in any policy matters related to the plan.

Chair Simas said the issue of impact fees was discussed with Mayor Lee as well. It was made clear that the responsibility for establishing the fees will remain with the City Council. The job of the Commission is to implement the policies and principles created by the Council, and to act as a sounding board for the Council. When new and interesting ideas arise, the Commission should discuss it, determine whether or not it should be followed up on, and then take the issue to the City Council, either directly or through the staff.

Commissioner Bishop reported that earlier in the week he attended the Chamber of Commerce transportation committee meeting at which Greg Stone from the Washington State Department of Transportation spoke about the tolling system. He said it was reported that the legislature is working toward a tolling system for the entire regional freeway system, the next element of which will be I-90. An evaluation of tolling every vehicle using I-90 between I-405 and I-5 has been conducted, with implementation starting in just a few years. The problem is that whenever tolls are implemented on functioning roadways, there is always some diversion of traffic that takes place; some of the diverted traffic can be expected to find its way onto Bellevue's arterials. The Commission should stay on top of that issue as it progresses.

Commissioner Lampe said he recently came across an interesting book titled *Walkable City*. He said it was a good and enlightening read in light of what the city is going through relative to growth pains. He said the superblocks in the downtown offer challenges to doing things right for pedestrians.

## 6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

## 7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Tanaka. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and it carried unanimously.

## 8. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

## A. Downtown Transportation Plan Update – Preliminary Forecasting Results

Modeling and Analysis Group Manager shared with the Commissioners written materials, including an update to the memo and the Dynameq analysis results on intersection level of service. She highlighted the projects that were considered to be in the baseline, but noted that the extension of the state-sponsored HOV hot lane on I-405 between NE 6th Street south to SR-167 had been added to the list. The new hot lanes to the north of NE 6th Street to SR-522 were previously on the list. As currently understood, the southern portion would result from the conversion of the single HOV lane to a hot lane.

Commissioner Bishop said it was his understanding the state was going to add a lane, not convert one. He suggested that as just outlined, the model would indicate no real change.

Commissioner Lampe said the state has been clear about wanting to have an additional lane. WSDOT has said the cost/benefit for the southbound section is far above any of their other projects. Commissioner Bishop said the benefits are related to the additional capacity of the additional lane. He suggested the model should include more than just the conversion of an HOV lane to a hot lane.

Ms. Clark said the 2030 build projects include the SR-520 bridge project, hot lanes going both directions from downtown Bellevue, the widening of NE 2nd Street to five lanes between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE, five lanes southbound on 110th Avenue NE between NE 8th Street and NE 6th Street, the extension of NE 6th Street, and extension of NE 4th Street, 120th Street north to about NE 18th Street complete with a realignment of the intersection at NE 8th Street, a portion of NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street between 116th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE, a new NE 16th Street between 130th Avenue NE to 132nd Avenue NE, and a new street at approximately NE 18th Street between 120th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE. She said another background project is on Bellevue Way and will add one southbound HOV lane from the intersection at 112th Avenue SE to the South Bellevue park and ride, continuing to I-90.

Commissioner Lampe said it was his understanding some modeling would be done on the Bellevue Way HOV lane to determine whether or not it will help resolve the bottleneck. Hu Dong with the Modeling and Analysis Group said the modeling was done in-house. A bottleneck was identified for eastbound toward Issaquah rather than toward Seattle. The eastbound volume is higher than the westbound volume. There is a lot of eastbound traffic that must merge with the general purpose lane on I-90, and that friction triggers some backup. Ms. Clark added that the Sound Transit project from the park and ride to I-90 takes advantage of the existing structure that currently operates as a two-way reversible HOV ramp; when the two-way operation is no longer allowed, Sound Transit will repurpose it as a direct HOV lane to westbound I-90. However, because most of the traffic is eastbound, anyone in the HOV lane will have to get over. The model shows that the southbound HOV lane on Bellevue Way would take a few hundred trips off of 112th Avenue SE and onto Bellevue Way.

Commissioner Glass asked if the analysis compared having an extra general purpose lane with having an HOV lane. Ms. Clark said she had not been directed to do that. The HOV lane increases the overall capacity.

Ms. Clark said the 2030 No Build + Build Projects scenario includes the whole of the I-405 southbound braid from SR-520 to approximately NE 10th Street, a new half diamond interchange on SR-520 at 124th Avenue NE, and NE 15th Street between 124th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE.

Ms. Clark shared with the Commissioners a series of color-coded slides depicting the 2030 roadway segment levels of service comparing the 2030 Build with the 2030 No Build scenarios in five-minute increments between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. She also showed slides indicating the 2030 intersection levels of service that compared the 2030 Build and 2030 No Build scenarios also in five-minute increments between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Included was a single slide showing the average intersection delay and level of service for the Build and No Build scenarios. Ms. Clark pointed out that the Build scenario generally improves the average level of service over the No Build scenario.

Commissioner Glass asked why under the Build option the westbound intersections and street segments do not improve over the No Build approach. Ms. Clark pointed out that the difference is not significant compared to the amount of improvement in the eastbound direction.

Commissioner Larrivee pointed out that during the evening peak the bulk of the downtown traffic is outbound traveling east toward the freeway. He suggested the picture during the morning peak would be just the opposite.

Mr. Dong commented that most of the projects in the Build scenario are outside the downtown area. Most are freeway related projects and will create more capacity for the freeway. The eastbound outstream will flow better. With few projects on the downtown side, the westbound flow will not change much and certainly cannot be expected to improve.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the notion of creating a tunnel to get traffic into the downtown proper from the freeway should have been included in the modeling work. Chair Simas said the tunnel has been proposed several times but is not part of any official policy framework. That is why it is not included in the model. If the Commission wants the tunnel included, the Commission would need to either address the Council directly, or direct the staff to carry the notion forward to the Council with a brief outline of the merits and drawbacks. In either case, the decision to move ahead in studying the idea would lie with the Council. Commissioner Bishop said in his estimation the cost of the tunnel would be similar to the cost of the NE 2nd Street interchange, which the model showed would have some benefit. The tunnel could be an even better choice and it should be evaluated.

Mr. Krawczyk any element proposed for addition to the package will need to be consistent with the framework created to guide the downtown transportation plan update. Senior Planner Kevin McDonald said the measures of effectiveness are intended to identify and prioritize projects that will resolve mobility challenges for the downtown. The modeling work done to date draws one to the conclusion that major roadway capacity projects to serve the 2030 travel demand are not needed in downtown Bellevue. Certain intersections and segments may in fact need some modifications, but the modeling does not support the notion that major capacity projects are needed to solve the congestion problems. Mr. Krawczyk added that the established threshold for the downtown is LOS E, and the Council set that threshold purposely to focus more development in the downtown.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that about 75 percent of all transit trips to the downtown are coming through the transit center, and the transit center is very close to operating at its peak capacity. Multiplying the number of transit trips by any significant number will overwhelm the facility. Putting a tunnel under the transit center close to the East Link station will bring online the opportunity to create a facility that will be able to handle the demand. Another thing the downtown is in great need of is improved freight delivery to downtown buildings, and a tunnel that could handle trucks could allow freight to be brought in to the very core of the system. Now is the time to be thinking about having the tunnel in place.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that the tunnel in Seattle serves a different mode and does not equate directly to how a tunnel in Bellevue would work, but it could provide some data relative to cost and positive and negative impacts. More information about it would be helpful to have before taking the next step and asking the Council to include the tunnel in the modeling work.

Chair Simas asked Commissioner Bishop to put on paper his idea of how the tunnel would operate and what specific functions it would serve. He said the Commission could then discuss the paper before forwarding it to the Council with a request for inclusion in the modeling. Commissioner Bishop said he would be happy to do that.

#### B. Downtown Transportation Plan Update – Transit

Mr. McDonald said transit in the downtown is linked to a number of audiences, including downtown residents, downtown employees, and visitors who come to recreate and shop in the downtown. He said the Council expects to see a multimodal transportation system to come out of the downtown transportation plan update work, and transit is certainly one of the primary modes. Transit ridership must also be considered in light of the travel demand for the 2030 horizon year.

Mr. McDonald said existing transit policies focuses on making connections within the downtown as well as to Bellevue neighborhoods and the region. The policies also call for

identifying the amount of transit service needed to meet the projected demand as well as providing layover space for buses in the downtown.

The object of transit service is to provide mobility for people. The facilities and information those people need both on and off the transit system is very important. The 2004 downtown transportation plan includes direction to support high-capacity transit, which at the time did not have a route or a technology associated with it. A route has since been identified, and light rail is the preferred technology. The projects needed to implement the policies include new facilities to support transit services and ridership; an expanded transit center; the feasibility of a circulator; improving transit stops and facilities; and infrastructure related to the concept of contra-flow lanes northbound and southbound on 108th Avenue SE to provide better transit access to and from the transit center.

Mr. McDonald said the specific metrics for transit rider mobility lie at the root of the discussion of how to move toward improving transit service and facilities. Facilities at specific intersections and locations will be needed to support ridership in terms of bus stops and light rail stations, and the components of each will be determined by the type of bus stop and light rail station and how they function. Travel time along segments and roadway corridors will be important because transit vehicles share the roadway with other vehicles.

Another important element is the number of people who either live or work in the downtown who have access to a frequent daily transit service within a five-minute walk, as is the aggregate number of people who overall are served by transit on a daily basis.

The projections indicate that employment growth will add nearly 28,000 jobs in the downtown by 2030, and nearly 12,000 new residents. Those increases will add to the number of autos on downtown streets, the number of pedestrians, and the number of transit riders.

The Commissioners were shown a map of the downtown area with each traffic analysis zone shown along with the number of persons who currently work in each zone. Mr. McDonald noted the concentration that occurs in the core and another concentration in the medical institution district east of I-405. While the latter is outside the downtown proper, the connection between the two areas must be addressed. The Commissioners were also shown a map indicating the projected growth in employment for each traffic analysis zone by 2030, which showed a much more even distribution pattern. Maps showing the current and projected 2030 population patterns were also shared with the Commissioners, along with a chart indicating the growth for all travel modes, with the greatest increase projected for the transit mode.

Mr. McDonald ran through an analysis of the current and projected downtown trip patterns, including an outline of trips by purpose. He noted that at certain measurement points, traffic in the downtown has remained flat for some time, while transit ridership for the downtown generally has steadily increased, and the projected transit ridership for 2030 is some five times

greater than the 2010 baseline.

The Commissioners were shown a map with population and employment density overlaid by the frequent transit network, which is defined by King County as transit service all day with 15-minute headways during the peak periods and 30-minute headways during the non-peak periods. Also shown on the map was the location of each bus stop with a circle around each representing a 500-foot radius approximating a ten-minute walk distance. The map indicated that a fair portion, as much as 40 percent, of the downtown is served by frequent transit service. By 2030, with some bus routes and light rail added to the mix, along with additional population and employment, the projection indicates there will be some coverage gaps. Mr. McDonald allowed that in light of the fact that the transit center is already close to capacity, serving the downtown in 2030 may require a redistribution of the transit network.

Mr. McDonald said the scope of the work for the transit mobility component of the downtown transportation plan fits into four categories, beginning with coverage and the specific elements of transit routing and stop locations, transit service connections between the downtown and the medical institution district to the east of I-405, and connections to specific visitor destinations such as shopping, entertainment and recreation.

Commissioner Bishop stressed the need to include connections to and from non-residential and non-employment locations.

Commissioner Tanaka added that to make a comprehensive and successful transit system, it will be necessary to provide as many transit stops as practicable and feasible. Anyone having to walk a great distance in order to access a system will be disinclined to use the system.

Commissioner Bishop said a circulator would be the very best way to serve the residential areas that are located adjacent to the downtown.

Commissioner Glass said it will be necessary to have coverage within the downtown but also to places people will want to go that are not inside the city. Mr. McDonald said the scope of the Bellevue transit master plan update will include connections to regional locations.

Mr. McDonald said speed and reliability is the second component of the transit system that will be analyzed. He said bus service into and out of the downtown needs to be competitive with other modes. The list of best practices include transit signal prioritization, and peak-hour transit lanes created by repurposing roadway segments and corridors.

Commissioner Bishop cautioned against allowing bumpouts into the lanes to enhance transit to the detriment of vehicular level of service. Buses should stop in their travel lanes to avoid travel time increases by having to get back into the travel lanes.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if it would make sense in the downtown to have designated bus

lanes. Mr. McDonald allowed it might be worth looking into, perhaps with peak hour transit prioritization.

Commissioner Tanaka said he commutes by bus frequently to downtown Seattle. Recently a number of buses there have been relocated onto 2nd Avenue, and the right lane is dedicated to transit only. The problem is that buses still get held up with autos using the lane to turn right at designated intersections. The buses also get held up because of pedestrians or because of congestion generally, causing the whole system to slow down. Mr. McDonald said pedestrian congestion and right-turning vehicles are causing bus delays in downtown Bellevue as well.

Mr. McDonald said transit capacity is the third component of transit system analysis. The capacity of the transit center is tied to available passenger waiting space, passenger transfer and circulation space, and the capacity of the center to handle transit vehicle circulation. The projected number of transit trips that will need to be handled by 2030 calls out for an overall system that can provide a certain standard of service.

Commissioner Lampe suggested bus vehicle size could play a role in determining the overall capacity of the system.

Mr. McDonald said passenger comfort, access and information is the fourth component of transit system analysis. Shelters, wayfinding, electronic information and other factors are appropriate on a stop-by-stop basis. The city can impact passenger comfort, access and information by creating wayfinding, the shelters, associated crosswalks and midblock crossings. In all other areas the city can encourage transit agencies to provide better service.

Commissioner Larrivee said adjacent services, especially near the more popular bus stops, can also add to passenger convenience. One attraction the transit center has is Starbucks and other stores.

Commissioner Bishop said restroom availability is also an important element, even if it just takes the form of wayfinding to direct passengers to the nearest restroom.

Mr. McDonald asked the opinion of the Commissioners relative to providing information to passengers via smart phone technology or electronic display panels. Commissioner Tanaka pointed out that not everyone has a smart phone. The buses already have the ability to transmit data relative to their next stop based on GPS tracking. What is most important for passengers is to know when the next bus will arrive, regardless of which technology is used. Commissioner Tanaka said he has seen some systems that have electronic touchpads at some stops that passengers can use to help them know which bus they need to take to get where they want to go.

Commissioner Larrivee said safety measures should be factored in when designing facilities where passengers will be waiting.

9. OLD BUSINESS -- None

10. NEW BUSINESS -- None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bill Eager, 1120 Belfield Park, referred to the memo provided by Ms. Clark and the section that talks about extending the hot lanes from NE 6th Street to SR-167 on I-405. He noted that on the second page of the memo the statement is made that the hot lane is viewed as one of the most worthwhile transportation projects in the region. He said there is a political enthusiasm developing for hot lanes. At first blush hot lanes seem like a good idea, but like a lot of things a closer look reveals the warts. The DOT conducted a study some three years ago in which they analyzed the east corridors, and more recently the state transportation commission contracted with a firm to do an independent review of the same corridor. The findings conclude that hot lanes provide a better ride for a few people who are willing to pay the toll. The revenues collected are not nearly sufficient to pay for the costs of building, operating and maintaining the hot lanes. Hot lanes see less volumes, accommodating only 1000 to 1200 vehicles per hour per lane; general purpose lanes carry between 1800 and 2200 vehicles per hour per lane. Hot lanes depend on there being congestion in the general purpose lanes, and vehicle speeds are generally below the target 45 miles per hour as a result of excessive congestion in the general purpose lanes causing backups in exiting the express toll lanes. Because the revenue from the hot lanes is well short of what is needed to operate and maintain them, the drivers who are stuck in the congested general purpose lanes actually are paying the bill. Hot lanes complicate freeway operations; their location in the middle of the freeway mean traffic getting into and out of the hot lanes must cross all the general purpose lanes first. The operation of hot lanes cannot be fully isolated from the operations of the general purpose lanes.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 25, 2012

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and it carried unanimously.

13. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

Mr. Krawczyk reviewed with the Commission the calendar and list of upcoming agenda items, and reminded the Commissioners of the Comprehensive Plan scoping meeting slated for January 25 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the Commission should be given a briefing on the transit

elements of the approved I-405 master plan so the city's long-range planning efforts can be synched up. Mr. Krawczyk said he would look into that.

Commissioner Larrivee said the notion of network-wide tolling should also be discussed by the Commission. He said it probably is inevitable that tolling will appear on I-90, I-5 and I-405, and that will bring with it some large ramifications.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

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Secretary to the Transportation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date