

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

December 8, 2008
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger and Councilmembers Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Davidson, Lee and Noble

ABSENT: Deputy Mayor Balducci

1. Executive Session

Councilmember Bonincontri opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation and one item of labor negotiations.

The Study Session resumed at 6:33 p.m., with Mayor Degginger presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Federal Legislative Agenda

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the federal legislative agenda and introduced Vicki Cram, Ball Janik LLP, to provide an update.

Alison Bennett, Policy Program Manager, requested Council input on policy and funding issues to assist staff in drafting the federal legislative agenda. Staff will bring the document back for Council discussion at the end of January.

Ms. Bennett referred the Council to a draft letter in the desk packet regarding Bellevue candidate projects for the 2009 federal stimulus infrastructure package. She requested input on the letter as well, noting that staff would like to send it out by the end of the week.

Ms. Cram described President-Elect Obama's interest in an economic stimulus package creating potentially 2.5 million jobs. The projects focus on expanding the energy grid, expanding broadband and wireless infrastructure, improving energy efficiency in public buildings, providing a wide range of infrastructure projects (e.g., roads, bridges, water/sewer facilities), modernizing schools, and updating electronic medical records. A preliminary package by the

House Infrastructure Committee covers a broad range of infrastructure categories but does not earmark specific projects. It requires reports from states and cities every 60 days to document how monies are being spent. Additional proposals are under development by various interests including associations of governors and mayors, who are particularly interested in streamlining transportation projects.

Ms. Cram said Congress will also be working to complete the FY 2009 appropriations process. Authorization of the Surface Transportation Bill for highway and transit projects is slated for 2009. Congress is interested in rewriting the bill with a change in guidelines that focus on metropolitan mobility and blending highway and transit monies, while also addressing housing, density, and pedestrian/bicycle issues. This approach is compatible with the City's vision for the redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor. Climate change and urban issues will be emphasized during the legislative session as well.

Councilmember Lee thanked Ms. Cram for the report. He is pleased to see the focus on local infrastructure including transportation projects.

Ms. Cram explained that the City is working with the Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities to compile a list of priorities and to lobby for funding.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Director of Intergovernmental Relations Diane Carlson said the City has a number of projects that could begin implementation within 90 days to two years. These are included in a list of 2009 stimulus package candidate projects provided in Council's desk packet. It also reflects a number of projects that would require a longer lead time for implementation.

Ms. Cram acknowledged that cities and states are working to determine how to structure projects for near-term implementation, in order to qualify for economic stimulus funding. It is possible the package will include two or more phases.

Ms. Cram responded to additional questions of clarification.

Mayor Degginger commented that it is critical for Bellevue to work with federal legislators over the coming months.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Ms. Cram said there will be a green jobs overlay to the economic stimulus package, with a focus on retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency and conservation. It might also include longer term projects investing in the research and development of green technologies.

Dr. Davidson stated his interest that the economic stimulus package generate jobs in the private sector and not just within government.

Mr. Lee hopes the package does not introduce an excessive amount of bureaucracy to the overall process of infrastructure development.

Following additional brief questions, Mayor Degginger thanked Ms. Cram for the update.

(b) Sound Transit East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Bernard van de Kamp, Regional Projects Manager, opened staff's presentation regarding the Sound Transit East Link (light rail) draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Don Billen, Sound Transit, reported that the DEIS, which has been prepared through the coordination of a number of federal, state, and local agencies, will be released soon. The DEIS public comment period has been extended from the standard 45 days to 75 days, and will run from December 12 to February 25. Public hearings and open houses are scheduled for late January including one on January 28 at Bellevue High School and a second on January 29 in City Hall.

Following the DEIS comment period, the identification of a preferred alternative is slated for April 2009. The final EIS will be prepared through 2010, at which time the Sound Transit Board will adopt a preferred project. Mr. Billen said 19 route choices including variations of surface, elevated and tunnel options are under consideration in the DEIS. A wide range of environmental impacts have been addressed in the DEIS, and these will be discussed with the City Council in more detail in January.

Mr. Billen explained that Sound Transit 2 funds environmental review and preliminary engineering work for the proposed segment to downtown Redmond, but construction funding is not provided. The City of Redmond is planning a right-of-way (ROW) preservation ordinance for the Overlake area and downtown Redmond in anticipation of future expansion.

The DEIS analyzes four potential light maintenance facility locations in the Bel-Red corridor and in Redmond. They are not funded or needed for the 15-year time horizon, but they will be needed for the long term.

Brooke Belman, Sound Transit, reviewed outreach activities associated with the release of the DEIS. These include briefings with elected officials and community organizations, web site information, and public meetings/open houses. Comments may be submitted to Sound Transit via testimony at a public meeting, mail, or email.

Mr. van de Kamp described the City's work with Sound Transit to provide technical briefings to interest groups within the community including the City's Boards and Commissions. He noted the potential for a Council-sponsored public hearing to determine the community's priorities and preferences. The City is working to enhance Sound Transit's outreach activities by utilizing a number of communication methods including Bellevue Television (BTV), *It's Your City*

newspaper, City's web site, kiosks and information displays in public places, mailings to interested parties, and contacts through neighborhood programs and associations.

Mr. van de Kamp briefly reviewed the Council's previous input and policy guidance regarding the implementation of light rail as part of an overall long-term, multi-modal transportation system. Objectives include optimizing ridership, mitigating construction impacts and risk, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, and advancing the long-term land use vision of each Bellevue subarea.

Next steps for Bellevue include Council discussions on January 12 and January 26 regarding system and segment findings contained within the DEIS, and the compatibility of overall DEIS findings with Bellevue policies. Council discussions will continue on February 9 and 23 to discuss alternatives and alignment/station preferences.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Mr. van de Kamp explained that Bellevue has used its own model to project ridership as part of the Downtown Implementation Plan Update process, as well as to project ridership for the Bel-Red corridor redevelopment plan. This model is different than the one used by Sound Transit for their purposes. However, the City and Sound Transit have coordinated their efforts in this regard.

In further response to Mr. Noble, Mr. van de Kamp confirmed the City's commitment to protecting neighborhoods and the land use vision of each Bellevue subarea.

Councilmember Chelminiak suggested placing a hard copy of the DEIS at City Hall's Service First desk for the public's use, as well as providing the document on CD if requested. Mr. van de Kamp confirmed that copies will be available at libraries as well.

Mr. Chelminiak said he would like City staff to compare the issues addressed in the DEIS with the issues and objectives identified by the City's Light Rail Best Practices Committee. He is particularly interested in how well the proposed alignments match up with specific Comprehensive Plan Amendments adopted by the Bellevue City Council. He requested an update of ridership projections to incorporate the implications of redevelopment in the Bel-Red area. Mr. Chelminiak is especially interested in ridership estimates for route B7 along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad ROW.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed concern that the fewest number of environmental issues were raised regarding three elevated routes. Potential impacts include noise, vibration, traffic, and visual issues. As an example, he noted that one alternative is an elevated route from I-90 through downtown and the Bel-Red corridor and east to the Overlake area. He is concerned that the DEIS identifies no visual or vibration issues for this route.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Billen said the cost estimates have been updated and contingency funds have been identified to reflect the current design stage for the East Link

project. Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Billen said details on contingency funding vary with each alternative. This information can be presented to the Council in January.

Responding to Mr. Degginger regarding the comparability of the East Link to other Sound Transit projects, Mr. Billen said it is similar to the placement of light rail through Seattle's Rainier Valley in terms of being adjacent to residential neighborhoods. In terms of land use, Mr. Billen noted the lack of a strong similarity to other Sound Transit projects. However, East Link could be compared to light rail in Tacoma in terms of going through a downtown. Mr. Billen said redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor will be different in many aspects from any Sound Transit project to date.

Councilmember Davidson commented that the implementation of light rail through the Rainier Valley included some level of redevelopment along the route. He noted that Bellevue residents do not envision redevelopment between I-90 and the Bel-Red corridor, however. Mr. Billen concurred with this observation.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, the Council confirmed its interest in holding its own public hearing to continue to encourage input from the community.

At 7:59 p.m., Mayor Degginger adjourned to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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