

CITY OF BELLEVUE
EASTGATE/I-90
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

November 18, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Courter Blanton, Tom Bohman, Lindy Bruce, Dave Elliott, Jay Hamlin, Jeffrey Hummer, Francois Larrivee, Mark Ludtka, Tom Perea, Jim Stanton, Rachel Solemsaas, John Stokes, David Vranizan, Cynthia Welti

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rob Pucher

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Bergstrom, Dan Stroh, Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development; Franz Loewenherz, Kevin O'Neill, Department of Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. Welcome and Review of Agenda

Jay Hamlin called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. He said he is a member of the Bellevue Planning Commission and indicated that he had been tapped to serve as co-chair with Francois Larrivee of the Bellevue Transportation Commission. He thanked the CAC members for taking the time to help the city develop an updated land use and transportation vision for the Eastgate/I-90 area that will help it remain strong and vibrant in the coming decades. He said city staff would be using the input received from the CAC as well as from the public at open house events and other venues to help shape the project alternatives.

Co-Chair Hamlin noted that the CAC members had been appointed by the City Council to provide guidance for the project. The CAC will serve as an advisory body to the Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission and the City Council. The diverse composition of the CAC will ensure that the broad interests of the community will be represented. The work of the CAC will be guided by the principles approved by the City Council.

2. Committee and Staff Introductions

Co-Chair Larrivee said he is employed by Hopelink, an Eastside human service agency, as associated director of their transportation division. He said he has served as a member of the Transportation Commission for the past two years, and previously served as a member of the Utilities Commission. He said he is a resident of the Woodridge neighborhood and has lived in Bellevue for 16 years.

Tom Bohman said he a senior director with Cushman & Wakefield, a commercial real estate firm. He said he has worked in the commercial real estate world for 21 years focused primarily on office and does a lot of leasing in the I-90 corridor. He said he lives

in the Enatai neighborhood.

Jeffrey Hummer said his home is near Bellevue College. He said he used to have a small landscape company and has worked in the area for about 20 years. He said he previously served as a member of the Lake Hills Shopping Center CAC.

Dave Elliott said he works as a commercial realtor in the Kent Valley and focuses on warehouse and office spaces. He said he has lived in Bellevue for 25 years and previously served eight years as a member of the Transportation Commission. He said his home is very close to the study area.

John Stokes said he has lived in the Woodridge areas for the past 19 years and frequents the businesses in the Eastgate/I-90 area. He said he currently serves on the Parks and Community Services Board and is passionate about education and sustainability.

Lindy Bruce said she is a board member of the Sunset Community Association which represents 450 homeowners to the north and south of Kamber Road. She said she had previously served on other CACs in the city.

Mark Ludtka said he is an architect by training and has done several projects in Bellevue as well as in Seattle and around the world. He said his interest in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor is that he commutes through it every day and has watched it grow since 1995. It will be important to apply intelligence to the future of the area given that there is not much land left.

Carrie Courter Blanton said she serves as the real estate director for Honda Auto Center of Bellevue and the adjacent Newport Heights office building. She said she is a lifelong resident of Bellevue and has a vested interest in the viability of the Eastgate/I-90 corridor.

Tom Perea said he lives in the Eastgate area and is impacted by what happens there. He said he operates two preschools in the area and has been active in working with the city on the annexation issue.

Jim Stanton said he has for the past ten years worked for Microsoft conducting their external community and government affairs work, and for the 20 years prior worked as a land use planner in a variety of capacities. He said he had served on the Metro task force.

David Vranizan said he works for the Benaroya Company which owns a building in the Eastgate area. He said he lives in the Lakemont area and now has a short commute to the company headquarters in the corridor. He said the Benaroya Company wants to be a good neighbor.

Jay Hamlin said he has been serving on the Planning Commission since July 2009 and also works for Microsoft as a program manager in the database area. He said he has been a resident of Bellevue for 27 years and currently lives in the Somerset area. He said the Eastgate/I-90 corridor is vitally important to the city but also to those who live in the general area.

Cynthia Welti said she works with the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Trust, the purview of which is the area along I-90, including the Eastgate area. She said she looked forward to participating on the committee.

Rachel Solemsaas said she serves as vice-president for administrative services at Bellevue College.

Co-Chair Hamlin introduced Mike Bergstrom, a senior planner in the Department of Planning and Community Development, and Franz Loewenherz, a senior planner in the Department of Transportation. He noted that the two would serve as project co-managers for the city.

Planning Director Dan Stroh introduced himself and suggested that the potential for the Eastgate/I-90 corridor is significant. He said he was anxious to hear the opinions of the CAC members.

Strategic Planning Manager Kevin O'Neill said the city has been trying to get the Eastgate/I-90 project going for a while and indicated he was looking forward to the outcome.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram said he would be helping to staff the project.

Cynthia Krass, a student at Bellevue College working toward a career in planning, indicated that she was serving as intern to Mr. Loewenherz.

Carol Hunter with the Washington State Department of Transportation introduced herself and noted that she serves as manager of the I-90 corridor study for WSDOT.

Jim Arrowsmith introduced himself and indicated that he works as a service planner for King County Metro.

Sherry Lundberg stated that she is a resident of the Lake Hills neighborhood and was present to gain more information.

Diane Yeats with the King County Solid Waste Division said she was present representing that arm of King County government.

Peter ((inaudible)) said he lives on Newport Way in unincorporated King County and was present to learn more about the process.

3. Citizen Advisory Committee Mission and Role

Mr. Loewenherz noted that there are some 500 businesses in the project area, three of which are Fortune 500 corporations. In all, the businesses employ 24,000 persons, representing 17% of the city's total employment base. Approximately 75% of the project area employees are office workers. Of all the land uses in the project area, office is by far the largest at 40 percent of the total acreage, or 5.5 million square feet. Mr. Loewenherz said the City Council would be looking to the CAC to help identify strategies that will help retain and attract more office.

Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that Bellevue College is the third largest institution of higher learning in the state, behind only the University of Washington and Washington State University. The school has a total enrollment of 34,000. The 2008 master plan for the college envisions an expansion of 284,000 square feet, a 46 percent increase over the current 612,000 square feet. The master plan is in the process of being updated, and some of those land use and transportation considerations will be part of the Eastgate/I-90 study.

The longest gap in the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway is in Eastgate; it is the 1.9-mile

section between Factoria Boulevard and the Sunset trail. The city's adopted 2009 ped-bike plan identifies the missing gap as a high-priority project. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan there are numerous references to improving the frontage road along I-90 and making it a signature facility that connects the city and the region.

The majority of transit boardings that occur in the project area occur at the Eastgate park and ride. Via more than 500 bus trips per day, almost all major centers in King County can be reached from the facility, including Issaquah, Crossroads, Overlake, Redmond and Kirkland. The facility is about three times the size of the South Bellevue park and ride, and its utilization rate is over 80 percent. The Eastgate facility accounts for 48 percent of all the boarding activity in the project area, with the next highest level of boarding activity occurring at the direct access ramp, which is accessible from the parking garage. King County Metro and Sound Transit will both have roles to play in the study.

Mr. Loewenherz said the roundabout at the West Lake Sammamish Parkway was among the first to be constructed in the state. More recently a project along 148th Avenue SE that involved the city, Bellevue College and the Washington State Department of Transportation implemented another roundabout on the college campus. During the course of outreach done to date, several residents and business interests have suggested innovative transportation treatments; those and other ideas will be looked at as part of the transportation component of the project.

The lights on the 150th Avenue SE bridge crossing over I-90 are painted red and white like candy canes in recognition of the fact that there used to be an airport in the vicinity. The airport was decommissioned in the 1980s and is now the site of the I-90 Business Park. Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that since the airport was decommissioned, more than two million square feet of office, hotel and industrial uses have been added to the parcel.

Mr. Bergstrom said the city studies its various employment centers over time, and the Comprehensive Plan recognizes the Eastgate/I-90 corridor as one of the city's major employment centers. The Comprehensive Plan calls for a reevaluation of all commercial areas to ensure their vitality and productivity.

Continuing, Mr. Bergstrom said the primary study area was determined by the City Council with staff input. The relationship to the surrounding neighborhoods from traffic impacts and the like are recognized and will be included in the study.

The study will in part seek to develop a long-term transportation and land use vision for the corridor to make sure it will remain viable for the next 20 years and beyond. It will be necessary to make sure that the land uses determined to be appropriate are supported by multimodal transportation improvements, with an emphasis on low-cost/high-benefit improvements in recognition of the current economic times. Additionally, focus will be given to promoting a stronger identity and urban design image for the area; recognizing the corridor's location along the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway; and supporting the efforts of Bellevue College to become a four-year institution.

Some erosion to neighborhood services has taken place within and around the corridor. The area has a lack of transportation connectivity and there are transportation chokepoints that need to be addressed. The study area is home to a collection of very different land uses and characteristics, and the focus will be on taking a holistic planning approach.

The CAC will be asked to assist in guiding the process by providing guidance in developing the work products; developing and evaluating land use concepts; and focusing

on the multimodal transportation measures that will be needed to support the land use concepts. The committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission and the City Council. The planning principles adopted by the City Council are intended to guide the work of the CAC. The diversity of the CAC members was intentionally brought about to make sure the broad interests of the community are represented, and to help participate in public outreach.

Mr. Bergstrom said the schedule calls for carrying on the study for about a year and culminating in a final report to be presented to the City Council. A logical sequence in planning steps will be followed, beginning with background and concepts and moving on to identifying and getting grounded in the various issues, identifying opportunities, developing alternatives, and finally developing a preferred alternative.

Following the work of the committee there will still be work to be done. Once the Council blesses the work of the CAC, there will be steps taken to develop the necessary Comprehensive Plan amendments and Development Code amendments by the appropriate city commissions. The CAC will not need to be involved in those steps.

Mr. Bergstrom said there are state laws that govern how local jurisdictions do their planning. Paramount among them is the Growth Management Act which gives direction on how to develop their comprehensive plans. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is divided into two volumes, the first dealing with a number of general elements, including land use policies, capital facilities, transportation and others. The second volume contains, among other things, the city's 14 subarea plans. The Eastgate/I-90 study is not technically a subarea plan update because it will not include the entire Eastgate area and because it will include portions of two other subareas, Richards Valley and Factoria. Facilities plans are in the second volume as well, and the Eastgate/I-90 study will involve three of them: East Bellevue, Eastside and Pedestrian/Bicycle.

The policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan feed into more detailed plans, such as the Transportation Facilities Plan and the Capital Investment Program, as well as development regulations such as the Land Use Code.

4. Project Overview

Mr. Loewenherz said the City Council spent two meetings deliberating on the wording of the guiding principles document which will serve to inform the study. The Council stressed the importance of having the corridor remain economically vital going forward, and it will be informative to investigate what other jurisdictions in the corridor are doing in that regard. The vision put forward by Issaquah for its portion of the corridor contains the bold idea of transforming the frontage road to allow for significantly higher densities in mixed use buildings. The scope of work handed down by the Council makes reference to coordinating with the other jurisdictions, and some preliminary outreach in the form of an economic development forum was conducted during the summer.

Neighborhood services is another topic area to be covered. Responding to the Council directive, the staff undertook some preliminary outreach to residents in the form of online questionnaires and open house events aimed at gauging how residents feel about the area. One theme that arose was that neighborhood services are lacking, specifically shopping choices, restaurants and retail establishments. Some residents went so far as to say they spend none of their money in the project area, choosing instead to go either east or west on I-90 to do their shopping. The CAC will be asked to address that concern during the process.

Bellevue College is clearly important to the study area. The group will be asked to support the school's 2011 master plan update through mitigating traffic impacts along 148th Avenue SE and with parking and transportation demand management strategies. Two Bellevue College students will be serving as interns to the project.

With respect to smart growth and transit-oriented development, Mr. Loewenherz said there are potential opportunities to exploit the fact that the corridor has the largest park and ride facility in King County. Because of its central location and direct freeway access, and because of the level of service it enjoys, there are opportunities to develop around the park and ride facility. By adopting the ped/bike plan in 2009, the Council put forward a vision that reaffirms the need for a fully integrated multimodal approach to addressing growth and travel in the area.

During the outreach effort much was heard from residents and business owners about concerns regarding the road infrastructure. They mentioned most often roadway design, signal timing and lack of street connectivity as contributing to out-of-direction travel and longer travel times. The study will engage a review of the barriers to access with an eye on how to address the concerns.

Sustainability will be a key element of the study. Mr. Loewenherz suggested the CAC should keep in mind that transportation accounts for approximately 50 percent of the region's greenhouse gas emissions. A coordinated approach between land use and transportation has the potential of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the length of auto trips, the number of auto trips, increasing transit ridership, and increasing bike ridership. The CAC will address a number of different strategies.

Urban design is a theme that arose during the discussions with the participants at the economic development forum as well as in comments from residents. There were several comments made about a lack of visual cohesion in the corridor, and about a lack of aesthetic quality. Some of the panelists went so far as to observe that many people do not even know the Eastgate area is in Bellevue given how separate it is from the Bellevue image. The project area encompasses 633 acres bisected by I-90. The CAC will be asked to consider how to go about creating a more unified concept, and examples of how other jurisdictions have faced similar issues will be explored.

Mr. Loewenherz said there is a real interest in improving operations on I-90. The city has been working with WSDOT on the I-90 corridor project, which has a 2030 time horizon. The forecast suggests that commutes on the freeway centered around the Eastgate interchange will get much worse over time with congestion lasting longer and affecting a wider area of the corridor. WSDOT staff will detail the concepts for the CAC during the study.

Sound Transit Phase II, which will link downtown Seattle with Bellevue is under way. The Phase III planning work is scheduled to get under way in the next couple of years; the focus there will be on extending the light rail line to Issaquah. During the course of the study the CAC will have the opportunity to get out ahead of the Phase III effort in thinking about where stations might occur in the corridor, and to generally engage with Sound Transit planners.

Mr. Loewenherz said the reality is that Bellevue, like other area jurisdictions in the region, is facing significant fiscal constraints. The Council wants the CAC to keep that fact in mind in developing concepts and project lists. It will be necessary to think critically about how to address the strategic concepts.

5. Committee Notebook Materials

Mr. Bergstrom provided the CAC members with notebooks containing the Council guidelines, meeting protocols, and a compilation of background materials. He noted that materials will be added as the project moves forward.

Mr. Bergstrom informed the CAC members that as a Council-appointed body, the work of the group is public and subject to the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act. All meetings must be open to the public and minutes must be kept. A quorum will need to be attained for each meeting, which will mean at least eight members present. No action can be taken unless it occurs during the course of a meeting open to the public. CAC members must avoid back-and-forth out-of-meeting communications. Anything dealing with the project, from printed materials to written notes, emails and voicemails, will be a discloseable public record.

6. Future Meetings

There was consensus on the part of the CAC members to schedule meetings for the first Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. There was also agreement that some meetings may be scheduled to occur within the study area itself.

There was agreement that it would be helpful to schedule a daytime tour of the study area on a Saturday.

7. Questions and Answers / Other Business

Mr. Perea said he would like more information as the project moves forward about what Issaquah has proposed for its section of the corridor. He noted that the Eastgate area has a lot of homes that are rented out and thus fewer homeowners taking pride in making the area look better; that is one reason it would be beneficial for the area to be incorporated into the city. Alternatives to the rental market should be explored, possibly apartments or other housing for college students.

Ms. Bruce said she lives to the north of Eastgate Way and commented that the two frontage roads are very different. As such, there may be different development possibilities on each road. Mini parks should be included in the vision.

Mr. Vranizan said there are a limited number of connections between the north and east sides of I-90, and the views are not overly attractive. Screening or other options along the lines of what Issaquah has done should be explored.

Mr. Stokes commented that what happens in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor directly impacts a number of different communities in the area. There is a lot of variety, with both really nice areas and areas that could stand to be improved. The plan for the area should look at opening things up a bit and including not only sustainability but livability. He also commented that any study of the Eastgate/I-90 corridor would be incomplete without giving some consideration to the Factoria Shopping Center, its problems and potentials.

Mr. Elliot said he shared the same concern.

Mr. Bergstrom stressed that Factoria is not in the study area. He allowed, however, that it will come into play as an adjacent use. Factoria certainly has an effect on how the primary study area functions; it is a retail area and as such has an effect on the health of other retail uses within the study area.

Mr. Loewenherz said some of the conclusions from the Factoria Area Transportation Study will be brought to the table to help inform the Eastgate/I-90 study. For a variety of reasons, many of the plans for the Factoria area, especially the mall, have been shelved.

Mr. Elliot commented that the Factoria Area Transportation Study was thorough and comprehensive, but much has changed since the study was completed. The redevelopment of the mall has been pretty much stopped. There is shopping and retail at both ends of the primary study area, namely Issaquah and Factoria, and both will need to be taken into consideration as driving factors.

Mr. Stanton said the building his company occupies in the study area is not the most desirable place to be. He said it is a great building and the location is convenient for the most part, but the employees who work in the building, if asked, would likely say they would prefer to be in a more lively area, such as downtown Bellevue. Adding services and increasing the coolness factor for the study area could change those outlooks. He said westbound traffic on I-90 generally concludes that it has reached an urban area when it gets to Eastgate. What is missing, however, is an introduction to the region; WSDOT does not even mow the interior of the interchange anymore. There is great potential for having the Eastgate area provide the needed introduction to the Puget Sound region for the hundreds of thousands of vehicles that daily bring people in from outside the area.

Mr. Bohman concurred. He said there is no sense of arrival upon entering Bellevue from I-90. There should be something that announces the area as an important and meaningful place. He agreed that the north and south sides of the study area are very different from each other; there is little connection between them, primarily because it is so difficult to get from one side to the other. The only way to make the area more cohesive will be to address the transportation issues.

Mr. Ludtka commented that the study area is challenged from the standpoint of general access. There really is only one exit for eastbound drivers, and two for westbound drivers. That is an issue that will need to be addressed if the vision is for increased population and density in the area.

Ms. Solemsaas said transportation issues are of prime importance for Bellevue College. The students commute to and from the campus every day, and they have limited opportunities for going out for lunch without taking a car. The master plan for the campus does address those issues, as well as residential issues. The surrounding uses are primarily commercial and office; more services would be welcomed.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Matt Cyr spoke representing Champion Center near the entrance to Bellevue College in the secondary study area. He said a way is being sought that would allow the coffee shop to be leased out to a commercial coffee shop. That would provide a neighborhood service and would be within walking distance for students at the college campus. The zoning restrictions currently will not allow the change to occur.

9. Adjourn

Co-Chair Hamlin adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.