

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BEL-RED CORRIDOR PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2006
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Creighton, Co-Chair; Terry Lukens, Co-Chair; Joel Glass, Doug Mathews, Sue Baugh, Steve Dennis, Norm Hansen, Earl Overstreet, Faith Roland, Bill Ptacek, Pat Sheffels, Laurie Tish

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kurt Springman, Dean Rebhuhn, Ken Schiring

OTHERS PRESENT: Kevin O'Neill, Matt Terry, Dan Stroh, Michael Paine, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Goran Sparrman, Kris Liljeblad, Department of Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

- 1. Welcome and Review of the Agenda**
- 2. Approve Minutes of November 14, 2006, Meeting**

It was noted that the names of three committee members were misspelled in the minutes.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Mathews; second was by Mr. Hansen and the motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Planning Manager Kevin O'Neill at the November 14 meeting the question was asked whether the City Council would be engaging again with the Sound Transit board on the East Link alternatives. He said the Council in fact did act on December 4 to endorse a letter that will be before the Sound Transit board on December 14. A copy of the letter was provided to the committee members.

Mr. O'Neill said there are several alternatives for Segment D in the Bel-Red corridor, most of which utilize NE 16th Street, in addition to using the Bel-Red Road alignment and the SR-520 alignment. The recommendation of the Council supports the NE 16th Street alignment.

- 3. Steering Committee and Public Process Over Next Few Months on Developing a Preliminary Preferred Alternative**

Mr. O'Neill recommended deferring the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Steering Committee from January 4 to later in the month of January. He said the anticipated target date for release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is January 17 and it would be helpful to have it in the hands of the committee members prior to the next meeting in order to focus the discussion on the results of the DEIS. He proposed holding the meeting on January 25.

Mr. O'Neill said the intention is to have Redmond staff on hand at the next meeting to provide

an overview of the planning being done for the Overlake area. The Redmond and Bellevue councils met jointly recently to receive a briefing.

Once the DEIS is released, there will be a 45-day comment period, starting on January 17. A public open house and public hearing on the DEIS will be slated for early to mid-February. The comment period will end prior to the regularly scheduled committee meeting in March. There will then be a round of public meetings with stakeholder groups, following which the committee will be asked to concentrate on developing a preferred alternative to be endorsed in April.

There was agreement to structure the DEIS public hearing to occur before the committee. The environmental coordinator will be required to be present.

Mr. Overstreet asked what lessons learned from the earlier stakeholder sessions can be applied to the next round of meetings in March. Mr. O'Neill said in the first round panels of business and property owners were convened to focus on and discuss the issues. That format proved to be very successful and could be utilized again in March to help inform the work of the Steering Committee. The meetings will be noticed using direct mail, BTV, *It's Your City* and the city's website.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Hansen, Mr. O'Neill allowed that the preferred alternative may be a combination of some of the four alternatives that were studied in the DEIS. From a SEPA standpoint, that is okay so long as the general range of impacts is within the bracket of what was tested. Any hybrid alternative that envisions development beyond what was modeled would need to be retested.

4. Proposed Evaluation Tool

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said staff has been discussing how to assist the committee in evaluating the various alternatives. One way to do that will be to look to the objectives the committee concluded each alternative had to embrace. Those broad measures, however, will not serve well in determining how well the alternatives compare to one another.

The best approach could be to break the objectives into specific components. Mr. McDonald offered the committee a matrix with columns for the broad objectives; the adopted objectives; staff-generated components of the objectives; and a mix of quantitative data and subjective judgments for how well the alternatives meet the objectives.

Mr. McDonald said the first group of alternatives will contain actual specific information from the Environmental Impact Statement. The second column will contain quantitative measures as well represented as a percentage of the amount of housing and the amount of office that would be developed in a mid-rise building form; for instance, the only type of housing that approaches the mid-rise level would be the housing associated with the development nodes near transit stations. The office mid-rise will fall both in the light rail development nodes and the designated office campus areas; the only place that has an office designation that would not be mid-rise is the area of the study area to the south of Bel-Red Road.

There will also be a category of evaluation criteria that are not quantifiable. One of the objectives is to provide for light industrial uses; it is clear that the No Action alternative does that, as does Alternative 2. Alternatives 1 and 3 offer less opportunity for light industrial over the long range, though it is expected that some of the existing light industrial uses will continue for a time. Accordingly, the evaluation criteria will be registered as plus, check and minus.

With regard to the category of meeting market needs and economic realities, the component is focused on the degree to which an alternative allows for a development program that meshes with the market forecast. Presumably, all of the alternatives except for the No Action alternative, can accommodate the development program.

Mr. McDonald said the category of opportunities for new housing and new jobs is similar to the market forecast, but it is attempting to evaluate the quantity of new housing and new jobs relative to each other, and relative to the goal of achieving balance between jobs and housing.

With regard to the neighborhood impacts category, Mr. McDonald said the evaluation tool is intended to portray the relation of new neighborhoods to the existing land use patterns and existing neighborhoods.

Each of the alternatives can support the broadest of the sustainability objectives, including smart growth strategies that concentrate development and a multimodal transportation system with the greatest density near transit stations. The DEIS will show the relationship between the development nodes and the soil types under them that will facilitate low-impact development strategies. To the extent that the development nodes can be located where the soil types allow for the percolation of rainwater, certain of the environmental sustainability goals can be met.

With regard to parks and open space, Mr. McDonald said there are components dealing with trail systems. He said where there is redevelopment potential in the vicinity of a stream system, the redevelopment can be conditioned to provide an extra buffer and trail along the stream.

For the most part, quantitative information from the DEIS will be used to fill out the transportation section of the matrix. There will, however, also be qualitative information related to non-motorized components and connections with multimodal trails.

Mr. Hansen asked if traffic volume numbers for existing streets that connect with adjacent neighborhoods will also be shown. Mr. McDonald allowed that there will be both volume numbers and level of service calculations for 45 intersections within the corridor and the city.

Mr. Ptacek asked if there will be room to include an evaluation of what the proposed changes to the Bel-Red area will bring to the overall community beyond what is already there. Mr. McDonald said determinations of that sort are speculative and difficult to include in a matrix as measurements. By breaking down the individual components and reassembling them into a preferred alternative, the result will hopefully create a system that provides a lot of value to the community.

Mr. O'Neill commented that EISs include qualitative data but also some quantitative data. They are very useful for evaluating impacts, and they can be used to evaluate policy, but in the end it will be necessary to make choices about the final vision that are not based on numbers alone.

Mr. Dennis suggested the proposed evaluation tool will be helpful. He added that it will be necessary to move beyond the numbers and will have to consider citywide impacts.

Mr. Lukens pointed out that there is a subjective overlay to all land use decisions. The jobs/housing balance is one thing the city has not done a particularly good job at; if that component is deemed to be important, it will have to be given some extra weight, and that will be a subjective discussion. What it should come down to at the end is whether or not the preferred alternative will bring about an improvement to the Bel-Red area and the city as a whole.

Mr. Creighton commented that during the tour of Portland the group saw both quality developments and developments that were of dubious quality. He suggested the committee should weigh in on the side of encouraging quality development as the corridor redevelops, which is also a subjective measure.

Mr. Creighton asked how the unknowns associated with Redmond will be factored in. Mr. O'Neill answered that the EIS assumes growth will occur in both downtown Bellevue and in Redmond based on the existing land use plans and the Puget Sound Regional Council forecasts. Redmond is currently looking at levels of development that exceed the forecasts; where they will land on that question is unknown. As the preferred alternative is developed, it will need to match up with the work under way by Redmond, which may require additional analysis down the road.

Ms. Tish noted that the details under the market feasibility section lists mid-rise structures as five to six stories. She said given what Wright Runstad outlined in its briefing, taller structures on the order of eight to ten stories might be appropriate. Mr. McDonald said structures of eight to ten stories are also considered mid-rise buildings. However, the glossary terms developed for the study defines mid-rise as buildings in the five to six story range. He said the EIS talks about building height only in the chapter on aesthetics; the EIS focuses on the overall development program and how it is arranged horizontally across the entire study area, not how it stacks vertically.

Mr. O'Neill added that there are certain tradeoffs associated with the different development types. While the glossary definitions are not set in stone, should the committee decide to consider different development profiles, the range of tradeoffs should be fully discussed in formulating the preferred alternative.

There was consensus in favor of developing and utilizing the proposed evaluation tool.

5. Issues / Questions Relating to Selection of a Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Mr. O'Neill said the briefing the committee received from Wright Runstad on November 14 was very helpful in understanding their vision for the old Safeway site in the corridor. While there is no specific proposal on the table, their vision raises certain issues that will need to be grappled within developing a preferred alternative, specifically building height, density and transit-oriented development, the overall development program, transportation capacity and connectivity, and the site as a catalyst for spurring redevelopment of the area.

Mr. O'Neill commented that in the downtown there are highrise buildings, and in other parts of the city there is very low-scale office development of only one or two stories. In no part of the city outside of the downtown is office with an FAR of over 0.5 allowed. One of the objectives endorsed by the committee at the outset calls for an appropriate scale of development and envisions the Bel-Red corridor as a transition zone between the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. The glossary developed is consistent with that. Wright Runstad proposed a variation of building heights in the 75- to 130-foot range, and that leads to the question of whether or not buildings of that kind are more of a downtown product.

Transit-oriented development has been an overriding theme of the Bel-Red study. The preliminary alternatives anticipate the East Link project, and transit-oriented development is a tool that creates a synergy between transit and land uses. The principles and objectives endorsed by the Council and the committee fully support the transit-oriented development concepts, and

each of the alternatives carried forward to the EIS have nodes of development. There are, however, different assumptions about how much development should be allowed in each node. The vision of Wright Runstad is consistent with the principles.

One question to be addresses is how much development should occur at the nodes versus throughout the rest of the 900-acre study area. The development program is based on the market assessment. Concentrating development in certain parts of the corridor raises questions about how much of the area will or should be in play. A development program at the low end of the office spectrum could presumably be entirely accommodated on the Wright Runstad site; going in that direction would be a de facto statement that office should not happen anywhere else in the corridor. The committee may decide that is the path to take, but the tradeoffs involved will need to be fully discussed.

The development program will be tied directly to the transportation and land use integration issue, which is an overriding principle and a critical element for the Bel-Red corridor because the current transportation network is immature. The Wright Runstad proposal is consistent with the overall vision and anticipates an integrated grid. All of the action alternatives assume an ambitious set of transportation improvements, but phasing development with transportation enhancements will be paramount.

Mr. O'Neill allowed that the Safeway site represents a major development opportunity given its size, location and readiness for redevelopment. Any major development, however, could serve as a catalyst for other development. As redevelopment occurs, there will be an inherent tension between new and current land uses and how the area should function as a whole.

Mr. Ptacek asked if the modeling assumes that more density in the nodes near the transit stations will alleviate the need for additional capacity on the roadway network by increasing transit usage. Mr. O'Neill answered that the more development is concentrated, the better transit works, both regionally and locally. With jobs and housing together, there is less demand on the overall transportation system.

Mr. Hansen pointed out that some of the areas in the study area have very good views. He said some buildings may need to be higher and some lower in order to take advantage of the views.

Mr. Dennis asked if there are building code breaks at certain heights. Department of Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry said there is one set of codes for buildings up to 75 feet and another set for buildings above 75 feet.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Roland, Mr. O'Neill said the recommendation of the committee for a preferred alternative will be made to the Council while Sound Transit is in the middle of its EIS process. The Sound Transit board will ultimately have to consider the decision of the Council. All of the station options will be considered, including the 124th Avenue NE option.

6. Next Scheduled Meeting

- a. January 25, 2007

7. Public Comment

Mr. Todd Woosley offered his support for the proposed evaluation tool. He said it will help keep the committee focused on the objectives and criteria. He said his prime concern is the

possibility of the Bel-Red area becoming overly congested as redevelopment occurs; to avoid that will require adequate capacity to maintain levels of services. He suggested the committee should schedule an update on the Regional Transportation Investment District process to gain a better understanding of the broader transportation picture. He voiced concern over the notion of having a major sports arena in the Bel-Red area because of the traffic impacts it would generate; the use should only be allowed if all of the impacts can be fully mitigated.

Mr. Leonard McGhee with Sound Transit said staff will not be making a recommendation to the Sound Transit board regarding the station location alternatives. He noted his support for analyzing all of the proposed station locations.

Mr. John Torrance suggested the issue of building height in the study area should remain an open question. An FAR of 2.2 or 2.6 will yield buildings with enough height to take advantage of the views, and the buildings will accommodate people from different economic strata. It is likely that in the future the city will follow the lead of other major cities in passing tower separation ordinances that will require separation between towers. The city needs density and should permit it in the Bel-Red corridor.

Mr. Howard Katz informed the committee that the development around Lake Bellevue is located in a flood zone. He suggested the planning should include improvements to the stream system.

Mr. McDonald responded by saying that the EIS will note the level of development-related impacts to the stream system. As redevelopment occurs over time, there will be improvements made to the function of the streams and the quality of water. He said he is not aware of any classified flood hazard areas within the Bel-Red corridor.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Lukens adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.