CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
TRANSIT CAPITAL PLANNING WORKSHOP
MINUTES

March 27, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Lampe, Larrivee, Zahn
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioners Jokinen, Tanaka
STAFF PRESENT:	Franz Loewenherz, Dave Berg, Department of Transportation
OTHERS PRESENT:	None
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Simas who presided. Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Jokinen and Tanaka, both of whom were excused.

1. DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Director Dave Berg informed the Commission that in September 2013 the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) published an urban streets design guide. Just over a year ago the same group published an urban bike guide and sought endorsements of it to try and raise the bike issues that occur in urban areas to the level of the FHWA. Ultimately the effort was successful and resulted in adoption by the FHWA of the urban bikeway guide outlining guidelines for agencies to follow when designing bikeways. NACTO is now seeking endorsements of its urban streets design guide to raise it to the level of FHWA endorsement.

Mr. Berg said the urban street design guidelines are timely given the work done by the Commission on the Downtown Transportation Plan which recognizes the need for a multimodal system. Given the increase in the number of residents living in the downtown, and the projections for even more, the need to accommodate more users on the streets continues to grow and the guidelines provide options for planners and developers to consider when looking at how to integrate the physical infrastructure of buildings with the more public infrastructure of streets and sidewalks.

Around the nation big cities are recognizing that their streets need a different type of approach, especially as the cities grow even more urbanized and as the number of residents increases. The conventional design guidelines simply are not addressing all of the needs. The public rights-of-way that used to be what people used to get to work, restaurants and shops are fast

becoming the front door to people's homes, and as a result more unique things need to be addressed. The guidelines are not prescriptive and they are not standards, but they do provide options, ideas and best practices from around the county. The guidelines recognize that urban situations are far more complex and they provide a toolbox of tactics to assure safe, livable and vibrant streets. In no instances are the guidelines intended to replace sound engineering judgment.

Mr. Berg said it was his intent to endorse the guidelines and said if directed he would bring the topic back to the Commission's table for a full conversation.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the sight distance standards on the books in Bellevue are dramatically lower than what ASHTO says. He asked if the urban street design guidelines include recommendations for sight distances at intersections. Mr. Berg said the guidelines do include things to think about when designing for sight distances, but the guidelines are not intended to replace existing standards. Commissioner Bishop said he would not want to see the city adopt anything that that cause it to step away from the standards it always employs; the existing standards have been shown to be the best. Mr. Berg stated that endorsement of the NACTO guidelines would not change any of the city's standards.

Commissioner Lampe asked Mr. Berg if in his review of the guidelines something jumped out as being something the city really should have considered in the past. Mr. Berg said there are quite a few things in the guidelines Bellevue already does and has been doing for years. Nothing major stands out as something totally new. There are, however, some good ideas included that could help Bellevue in the process of melding buses and bicycles on the transit corridor of 108th Avenue NE.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. Berg said the guidelines address the entire public right-of-way, both the streets and the sidewalks, but goes further and also addresses the private frontages.

Commissioner Zahn said the guidelines appear to be a good idea. She said the collaborations that created the guidelines may ultimately change ASHTO. The guidelines certainly are an accumulation of best practices and lessons learned.

Mr. Berg noted that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has endorsed the guidelines. There are state highways that pass through local jurisdictions, and WSDOT realizes that its guidelines are freeway focused. The NACTO guidelines offer opportunity to try doing different things in the small towns where state highways pass through.

Mr. Berg said he would email the Commissioners a link to the guidelines.

2. STAFF REPORTS

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz shared with the Commission King County

Metro's Spot Improvement Annual Report and explained that the document gives a sense of one of the many funding areas the agency has available to it to help realize improvements. He noted one project identified in the report focuses on work done at Bellevue College to improve safety at the egress location for the campus. The word on the street is that Metro staff would like to spend more time working with the city seeking local opportunities; the commitments being demonstrated by the city positions the city for additional funding in the future.

3. DRAFT TRANSIT CAPITAL VISION REPORT

Mr. Loewenherz said completion of the Transit Service Vision report was a major milestone, and the Capital Vision report is a complement to it. The Transit Service Vision report, which was completed in October 2013, lays out a clear direction designed to allow more people to reach more destinations in less time. The framework of enhanced service connectivity within Bellevue and regionally arose from the service-oriented strategies approved by the Commission and brought before the Council on May 20, 2013. Since that date staff has been working actively with the Commission toward completion of the Transit Capital Vision report. An update regarding the draft report will be shared with the Council on April 14, then the Commission will be asked to finalize the report at its meeting on May 8 along with the draft Transit Master Plan report which will meld the Transit Service Vision report, the Transit Capital Vision report, and the overall strategies into a single framework. The draft Transit Master Plan report will be presented to the Council on May 19. A SEPA checklist process has been initiated and it will include a public hearing on June 12. The full package will be delivered to the Council on July 7 for final adoption by resolution.

With the service vision finalized, a clear picture emerged relative to which roadways the frequent routes would operate on. The intent of the capital element is to enhance the speed and reliability of the buses and to facilitate accessibility to the bus stops by sidewalks and improved bus stop facilities. An extensive review process was undertaken using current and future data as to what conditions on the corridors are and will be. The strategies include the four policy elements related to capital as well as all the projects that are captured in the document.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that there is potentially a role to be played in terms of creating a culture of comfort with the transit system. One major barrier to usage is a lack of knowledge about how to navigate the transit system to get from place to place. Some investment in education and outreach apart from what Metro offers would pay large dividends in terms of getting people to use transit. Mr. Loewenherz agreed and pointed out that to that end that the transportation demand management program has an orientation toward enhancing the awareness of people of what their transit options are, the city has the Choose Your Way webpage, and the city has a partnership with TransManage, the Bellevue Downtown Association's effort to encourage downtown employees to use the various options.

Mr. Loewenherz called attention to the proposed transit speed and reliability projects on page 18 of the Transit Capital Vision report and noted that on February 27 staff was directed by the

Commission to begin the process of prioritizing the project list. The framework approach chosen starts with a base priority identification, which was informed by the long-term corridor composite scores. The list was then further refined by identifying which projects are in the Transportation Facilities Plan or the Capital Investment Program; which projects are specifically required to implement the future Frequent Transit Network route structure; and the projects for which the Commission has provided specific guidance. Finally, the project list takes into account the potential implementation horizon and project cost estimates.

Commissioner Zahn suggested that when the document is presented to the Council it should be made clear from the start that the purpose of the prioritization exercise was to identify which projects would be of most value in supporting the Frequent Transit Network. Commissioner Larrivee agreed it would be good to have a context-setting piece.

Mr. Loewenherz called the attention of the Commissioners to the map on page 15 of the draft report on which the transit running way and spot improvement projects were shown by estimated cost range. He said if money were not an issue, the projects shown would be the ones addressed first because they offer the highest benefit to the Frequent Transit Network. However, money is an issue and implementation will be heavily influenced by grant and other outside funding opportunities. During the update of the CIP project list, it will be necessary to make tradeoff decisions based on an assessment of the true value of each project.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that the inclusion of the implementation horizon is somewhat confusing. Mr. Loewenherz agreed that it adds a level of complexity; he added that implementation horizon was not factored in for the pedestrian/bicycle plan. In reality the CIP and TFP documents dictate very different implementation horizons. Commissioner Larrivee said it is good to have the project cost estimates but suggested it would be better to keep them separate.

Commissioner Bishop disagreed and said he wanted to see the project implementation horizon and cost estimates included because it adds a planning level of discrimination.

Commissioner Lampe pointed out that as drafted it is not possible to know which of the short-term projects are high priority, which are medium priority and which are low priority. Mr. Loewenherz said that could easily be remedied but suggested that may add a level of complexity that would create confusion.

Commissioner Bishop said he was comfortable with the high, medium and low number system. It presents some reasonable data and establishes a way of discriminating within the three broad categories of short-term, mid-term and long-term.

Chair Simas agreed that while the project implementation horizon table is good it does add a level of complexity and raises some questions. He said a simplified approach would be to create a matrix showing the projects arranged by low-cost/high benefit to high-cost/low benefit.

Commissioner Zahn called attention to Table 3 and suggested that in all likelihood a low-priority project will not get constructed in the short term. She pointed out, however, that of the spot improvement projects, more than half of the low-priority projects are listed in the short-term category. Intuitively it can be expected that high-priority projects will get constructed sooner rather than later. Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that many of the high-priority running way projects are expensive projects. Furthermore, many of them will only be useable once there is frequent transit service in place, which logically will be later in development of the system.

Chair Simas said the real question is what is the chart trying to convey. He suggested at the simplest level the chart indicates that there are benefits and there are costs. He said he liked Table 3 but suggested it might serve better as an appendix item. Mr. Loewenherz agreed that it might make more sense to portray only the high, medium and low prioritization in the executive summary and leave the issue of cost for the running way portion of the report and in the appendices.

Mr. Loewenherz sought from the Commissioners confirmation on the methodology. Commissioner Larrivee said he was comfortable with the first three but had questions about the fourth. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that it had not had much of an influence on the outcome given that the Commissioners had not offered many strong opinions, though it did influence the NE 10th Street project which originally was at medium and was moved down to low. In the case of the Bellevue College connection, the guidance provided by the Commission did not really matter because the project had already been elevated to high.

Commissioner Zahn suggested that the actions of the Commission to move projects up or down in importance should be transparent in the documentation. Mr. Loewenherz said that could easily be done.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop regarding the third criterion, Mr. Loewenherz said the 108th Avenue NE project ranked high from a composite score perspective, but the NE 6th Street extension and the Bellevue College connection projects did not, primarily because the NE 6th Street extension does not currently exist and because there is currently no bus service on Snoqualmie River Road. Both of those projects are, however, critical to the operation of the Frequent Transit Network. When seeking grant funds, it is always easier to reference high-priority projects in plans adopted by resolution by the Council.

There was general concurrence favoring the project prioritization criteria framework.

Mr. Loewenherz also shared with the Commission a map depicting transit signal priority projects. He noted that the projects on the map were in large part directly informed by the ability of Metro to upgrade its communication system to accommodate additional transit signal priority.

Mr. Loewenherz said the development lot section of the report and noted that it primarily focuses on narrative rather than projects. It is a reflection of the city's philosophical commitment to being a good team player and using urban design and development regulations in the major activity centers to support transit use. The text acknowledges the tie between land use and transportation planning and provides evidence of it in the transportation corridor studies that have been done.

Commissioner Bishop said he has often seen too much emphasis placed on land use supporting transit and not enough emphasis given to roadway infrastructure in the vicinity of the high-density developments. Transit is important, particularly in high-density areas, but when used as an argument against building roads that need to be built, trouble arises.

With regard to the pedestrian and bicycle environment section of the report, Mr. Loewenherz reminded the Commissioners that they previously reviewed the section in detail. He said the methodology was derived from the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan and projects that have come about since then. The hundreds of pedestrian/bicycle projects were screened to determine which are within a quarter mile radius of the Frequent Transit Network, and the screened projects were then prioritized using the methodology incorporated in the pedestrian/bicycle plan.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that 84 percent of all transit trips in Bellevue are via pedestrian/bicycle access; only 16 percent of transit boarding and alightings in the city occur at park and ride facilities. That makes the walking and biking environment critical to the success of the transit system. The data reflects the evolution of Bellevue as a transit market, though it does not diminish the importance of park and ride facilities.

With regard to transit stops, Mr. Loewenherz explained that Metro's warrant for a shelter is 25-plus daily boardings. He referred to Figure 46 in the document and explained that the map showed the location of stops that meet shelter warrants but which do not have a shelter. While there may be good reasons why shelters have not been constructed, including lack of right-of-way and other constraints, the data gives staff in the implementation phase of the project information to begin discussions with Metro about places to consider. Some downtown transit stop locations in need of a shelter could be addressed through the use of awnings.

Mr. Loewenherz referred to the section on commuter parking and noted that the demand model had been run on both constrained and unconstrained scenarios. He explained that the unconstrained scenario was predicated on money and environment not being objects, and on no impediments to building whatever the demand warrants for a given park and ride facility. The document does not attempt to reconcile the two extremes, it merely signals the fact that there is a job to do in getting the issue addressed.

Commissioner Zahn asked if there will be questions about where the cars that will be displaced from the park and rides during the construction of East Link will go. Mr. Loewenherz said he would be meeting with Sound Transit on March 31 to discuss the topic. One candidate

location is the parcel of land on Eastgate Way that was used during the Eastgate Park and Ride expansion, but there remain a lot of unknowns.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that during the initial discussions with the Commission about commuter parking the potential of leased church lots was raised. Staff was directed to investigate further and the chart and map on pages 76 and 77 demonstrate the findings relative to churches that are proximate to the 2030 Frequent Transit Network. In the aggregate, the church lots contain some 3500 stalls within a quarter mile, and 4700 within half a mile. One possible future work program item would be to investigate the sites in greater depth. The idea of amending the Land Use Code to facilitate use of the lots by commuters could be recommended to the Council. Currently the code requires an administrative use permit, and Bellevue is the only city in the region to require a permit of any sort for the use. Leased lots certainly are inexpensive to bring online compared to constructing new parking facilities.

Commissioner Bishop said he would not support having no process at all for allowing leased lots to serve commuter parking, particularly given the fact that most of the churches are located in residential areas. He said he could support streamlining and simplifying the process.

Commissioner Larrivee indicated his support for recommending to the Council changing the code to facilitate the process of using church parking lots to accommodate transit parking. He suggested Bellevue's process should be consistent with those of neighboring communities.

Commissioner Zahn suggested the streamlining and simplifying should include reducing or doing away with the permit fee to avoid de-incentivizing the use of church lots for transit parking. Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that the permit fees are used by the city to mail notice to affected property owners, post signs, and gather public comment; to recommend that there be no fee at all would be to say the city will allow the use and shoulder the costs. Commissioner Zahn said it could be viewed as a pilot program to mitigate the East Link project.

Mr. Loewenherz clarified that the process to amend the Land Use Code is detailed and must follow specific steps. He said the Commission could simply recommend to the City Council that the issue be evaluated through the Land Use Code amendment process with an eye on making it less onerous.

There was agreement to have Commissioner Bishop work with Mr. Loewenherz on drafting a recommendation to the Council.

Mr. Loewenherz said the need for bus layover spaces has generated a lot of data but without a specific resolution. He noted that transit operators are contractually obligated to provide layover spaces. Ideally they should located as close as possible to the termini of the stop and where the route will recommence to diminish the amount of wasted time. Within the service area there is currently 7000 linear feet of layover space, but it is not all located where it is needed. Table 10 in the report is based on the 2030 growing resources network and shows the annual cost in weekday hours incurred by traveling to layover locations that are either two

minutes or five minutes away. Accommodating bus layovers on city streets is not a favorite topic, particularly for the Council who ends up hearing from business owners and others who object to having buses sitting on the side the street. Locating the layover spaces away from the routes will impact the frequency of service.

4. DRAFT BENEFITS OF TRANSIT REPORT

Mr. Loewenherz said the Commission previously agreed that the report should focus on the benefits of transit, not the impacts of transit. He noted that within the document there are sidebar comments made by senior level persons from major corporate interests in Bellevue signaling the importance of transit from an economic standpoint, the environmental benefits, the community benefits, and individual benefits.

Commissioner Bishop noted that he had previously submitted to Mr. Loewenherz a couple of reports that address three or four of the issues, but not all 16 of them. The response was that the information would not be used in the report. He said his challenge continues to be that the report is incredibly one-sided. It is so much of a puff piece that it diminished the rest of the incredible work done by the city.

Commissioner Lampe agreed that Table 3 paints the picture that spending money on transit is good for the economy. Commissioner Bishop said the information he submitted was directly contrary to that conclusion. The transit industrial complex has been paid by the federal government to do studies to come up with warm and fuzzy findings, and they are what have been included in the report.

Chair Simas suggested that Microsoft would not own and operate its own bus system if they did not think mass transit was beneficial to their company. The task before the Commission is to do as the Council asked and put a good face on it. If the Council were to say transit is no longer a priority, all subsequent reports would likely read different, but that is not the case presently. The job before the Commission is to explain to people the benefits of transit. There are always costs associated with benefits, and the issue of whether or not the benefits outweigh the costs is something that will be debated for years to come.

A motion to adopt the Benefits of Transit report was made by Commissioner Larrivee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zahn.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that the report does not make any recommendations, it is only a study that outlines the benefits an effective transit system can provide.

Asked who will receive the report and how it will be used, Mr. Loewenherz said the Council will be the first to receive it. The Council specifically requested a literature review on the economic benefits of transit, and at their request they each will be emailed a copy of it on March 28.

Chair Simas said once they receive it the Council may conclude the report is in fact a puff piece and decide to send it back to the Commission with instructions to make it more balanced. The fact is they asked for specific information and the report provides it. Commissioner Larrivee said the Council is not intending to adopt the report but will adopt by resolution the overall Transit Master Plan, of which the Benefits of Transit report will be referenced as a resource.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the report will in fact be trotted out and read before the Council as evidence of all the wonderful things the Commission approved the Council adopted.

The question having been called, the motion carried 3-2, with Commissioners Bishop and Lampe voting no.

5. NEXT STEPS

Mr. Loewenherz encouraged the Commissioners to attend the April 14 Council meeting at which the reports will be submitted and discussed. Commissioners Lampe, Bishop, Zahn and Larrivee indicated they would attend.

Mr. Loewenherz said the work done by the Commission materially transforms the lay of the land. Since 2003 when the transit plan was adopted by resolution, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in Bellevue on a wide assortment of capital projects.

Mr. Loewenherz said he had a meeting on March 24 with Bellevue College leadership who expressed excitement about the Bellevue College connection. They used words like "transformational" and "legacy." He said he met with Sound Transit staff on March 26 to request modification of their long-range plans to include the project. They agreed and placed the project on the ST3 candidate project list. The project stems from what was at one time only a line on a map illustrating the concept.

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

Kevin McDonald — 6/12/14

Secretary to the Transportation Commission — Date

Scott Lampe — 6/12/14

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission — Date