

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 14, 2005
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bell, Vice Chair Young, Commissioners Matthew, Wendle, Yuen

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Elliott, Northey

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Steve Costa, Mike Mattar, Mark Poch, Kris Liljebblad, Department of Transportation; Diana Canzoneri, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: Marty Henningsgard, International School Student

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Bell who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Wendle, who arrived at 6:40 p.m.; and Commissioners Elliott and Northey, both of whom were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz reported that four excellent persons have applied to fill the vacant Commission seats. The application deadline has been extended again from April 15 to April 22 and during that time additional applications may be received.

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

Councilmember Claudia Balducci thanked the Commission for the work done on the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project. She said Commissioner Matthew represented the Commission ably in making the presentation to the Council. She said the Council appreciates the dedicated work of the Commission.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Yuen said he participated in a tour of the SR-520 bridge that included Governor Gregoire. He said the Governor concluded that the bridge is a priority project, but it will more than likely have to become a toll bridge.

Commissioner Elliott said he represented the Commission at the April 11 Council meeting at which the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project was presented. He said the meeting was very well attended and several from the audience spoke. On April 12, Marty Nizlek, president of the West Lake Sammamish Homeowners Association, called to pass on to the Commission his thanks for supporting the project.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Economic Profile

Diana Canzoneri, Assistant Planner, Department of Planning and Community Development, explained that the economic profile document was developed in an attempt to provide a foundation of understanding about Bellevue's economy and economic trends. The information will need to be updated regularly to keep it from being out of date. She said the Council is currently engaged in deliberations concerning Bellevue's economic development strategy, and the document is intended to inform that process.

The document is quite large. It includes chapters on employment, wages and income, major employers and business patterns, population and labor force demographics, commercial real estate vacancy trends, and Bellevue's economy and the regional economy. The document begins with an executive summary that provides a short synopsis of the data contained in the various chapters. Key findings from each chapter are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter.

The Commissioners were told that there is a difference between total jobs and covered jobs. Ms. Canzoneri said covered jobs are those jobs covered by the state's Unemployment Security division; covered jobs make up 85 to 90 percent of the total number of jobs in Bellevue. Sole proprietors are not in the covered jobs category, and Bellevue is home base for many sole proprietors.

Bellevue has four major employment centers. Downtown is the most dense employment center. Of the 120,000 or so covered jobs in the city, however, only about 35,000 of them are in the Downtown. There about 40,000 jobs in the SR-520/Bel-Red corridor, another 30,000 or so in Factoria/Eastgate, and some 15,000 in the 116th/Bellfield area. Crossroads is not a major employment center, but it is a major commercial area.

By 2002 nearly half of all Bellevue jobs were in the finance, insurance, real estate and services

(FIRES) sector. Most of the job growth in Bellevue, and indeed in the region, has been in that sector. Another important sector for Bellevue is the wholesale, transportation, communication and utilities (WTCU) sector, of which communications is the most important subsector. Bellevue is also home to a lot of retail jobs. The high tech cluster makes up about 16 percent of the city's job base.

There are some 1.1 million covered jobs in King County, and Bellevue has about ten percent of that total even though it has only about seven percent of the overall population. Bellevue has 13 percent of all FIRES jobs and 16 percent of all high tech jobs in King County. During the period between 1995 and 2002, jobs in Bellevue grew by 17 percent overall, but communications jobs grew by 36 percent. Other sectors that are seeing significant growth include educational services and business services. The majority of the fastest growing businesses in Bellevue are in the FIRES sector. The business services subsector is also notable.

Ms. Canzoneri shared with the Commission a graphic listing the top 12 employers in Bellevue in terms of numbers of employees. She said each of the top employers has more than 800 employees. Bellevue does not, however, have a large employer on the scale of Microsoft or Boeing, which speaks to how diversified the city's economy is. There are more than 250 business locations in Bellevue that employ 100 people or more.

In deciding where to locate a company headquarters, there are both economic and quality of life issues that come into play. Of the 25 largest software development companies that are either headquartered in the region or have their area headquarters in the region, 11 are in Bellevue. Other types of firms headquartered in Bellevue include real estate and construction, tourism, information technology, and professional services. A significant number of the 100 largest public companies in the state are headquartered in Bellevue. The list changes frequently given the nature of business, but the upshot is that Bellevue is a very attractive place to have a home office.

Businesses in Bellevue that employ fewer than 20 persons collectively make up about 20 percent of the overall Bellevue employment picture but 82 percent of the overall number of Bellevue business locations. Only four percent of the total number of business locations employ 100 persons or more, but they represent nearly half of all the jobs. Clearly both major employers and small businesses are important to the economic fabric of the city.

Nearly half of the businesses in Bellevue that are registered with the state are sole proprietorships. Those jobs do not show up in the category of covered jobs. Nationally, most small businesses begin as sole proprietorships and as such play a very important role in the economy.

Bellevue's demographics are generally very favorable to economic growth. The population is continuing to grow, the residents have very high education levels and higher-than-average incomes, and a high percentage of the workers are employed in management and professional jobs. Bellevue worker's median earnings and Bellevue resident's incomes tend to be higher

than in King County, and much higher than the figures for the nation.

According to the 2000 Census data, about 22 percent of the people who work in Bellevue also live in Bellevue. Of the total number of employed Bellevue residents, 39 percent work in Bellevue.

The Regional Economic Strategy study being conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council identifies five pilot clusters. Bellevue has concentrations of employment in several of the clusters, including the top three, information technology, aerospace and business services.

Ms. Canzoneri said in 1970 Bellevue was essentially a bedroom community, with far more residents than jobs. By 2000, however, the city had 130,000 total jobs and 110,000 residents.

Between 1995 and 2002 the number of covered jobs in Bellevue rose by 17 percent, which was more than the percentage increase for Seattle, King County, and the region as a whole. The growth experienced for the Eastside of King County was 29 percent. Between 1995 and 2001, jobs in Bellevue grew 28 percent, but during the economic downturn between 2001 and 2002 the city lost eight percent of its jobs, which was close to 10,000 jobs; the percentage hit Bellevue took was worse than that of the Eastside as a whole, King County, Seattle, and the region as a whole. Bellevue is not immune to the economic cycles that occur across the nation and in the Puget Sound region.

Three out of every four jobs in Bellevue between 1995 and 2002 were in the FIRES sector. The jobs in high tech cluster, which draws from the FIRES sector, also grew rapidly. The overall number of business locations in Bellevue rose between 2001 and 2002 despite the economic downturn, due entirely to the increase in the number of small businesses. Job growth is continuing to occur, but by the end of 2004 the number of jobs was still not back up to the 2001 levels.

The Commission was shown a chart depicting the annual average wages for King County, the Puget Sound region, and the state. The lines closely tracked the economic upturns and downturns by year. Clearly a job is not just a job given that some pay far more than others, making it possible for workers to have an improved quality of life. Bellevue residents and households tend to have higher than average incomes. Several of the employment sectors that pay high or moderate wages have concentrations in Bellevue, including communications, real estate, business services, and engineering, accounting and management.

The percentage of Bellevue residents who are in the labor force has been declining since 1990, largely because of a growing senior population. Bellevue has a significantly lower concentration of residents between the ages of 19 and 44 than does Seattle.

Vacancy rates serve as an indicator of economic health. During the economic downturn, the quarterly office vacancy rate in downtown Bellevue rose from a low of about two percent in 2000 to a high of 26.4 percent in 2002. By the fourth quarter of 2004 the vacancy rate had fallen to 11.1 percent, and as of the first quarter of 2005 the rate stood at 10.8 percent.

Analysts believe the rate will continue to drop and be at about seven percent by 2006.

Commissioner Young noted that marketing and other efforts in the greater Seattle area are planning to add 100,000 jobs in the next few years. He asked how that figure is being incorporated into long-range transportation planning studies. Ms. Canzoneri allowed that there is a direct tie between transportation systems and the ability of a region to accommodate both population and job growth. Freight mobility and area attractiveness are crucial components to growth. The regional economic strategy and the concepts that come out of it will help inform land use plan Vision 2020 and the transportation plan Destination 2030 at the regional level.

Mr. Liljeblad said one advantage of having the Puget Sound Regional Council conducting the study is that they will become the repository of all the socio-economic data and will coordinate the comprehensive plans for all of the local jurisdictions in the region. In doing so they will be able to identify homes for all of the expected jobs in locations with the best fit. Each jurisdiction must identify their targets for accommodating both residential and employment growth, and those figures are to be updated annually. The Puget Sound Regional Council has been improving regional employment information since the late 90s and especially since the release of the 2000 Census data. This has been partly due to the ability of the state forecasters to collect data from employers while maintaining confidentiality at the regional level.

Ms. Canzoneri suggested the Commission might benefit from having a presentation regarding the regional economic strategy and how it relates to transportation. Mr. Loewenherz said he will work to coordinate that.

Commissioner Wendle asked how often the economic data is to be updated. Ms. Canzoneri said it will likely be updated every five years or so. In addition, key economic trends should be tracked annually.

B. Impact of Cell Phone Usage on Drivers

Mr. Loewenherz introduced International School student Marty Henningsgard and said he has been working with him in refining the presentation. He said staff has not had opportunity to run the recommendations past the human resources, legal and risk management departments.

Mr. Henningsgard said for the past few months he has been studying the impact of cell phone usage on drivers. Having heard the presentation, Mayor Marshall proposed sharing the data with the Transportation Commission.

Mr. Henningsgard said in 2005 there were an estimated 125 million cell phone users in the United States, 85 percent of which admit to using their cell phones while driving their cars. Some 40 countries worldwide already have regulations against using cell phones while driving, and there are bans in the states of New York and New Jersey as well as the District of Columbia.

The bans have been imposed owing to driver distraction. According to AAA, 25 to 30 percent

of all accidents can be attributed to driver distraction. That translates into about 2600 fatalities, 330,000 injuries, and 1.5 million instances of property damage nationwide. There are two main categories of distractions: physical and cognitive. Cell phones contribute to physical distractions in that the user must hold the phone in one hand while driving with the other. New cell phone technology allows for text messaging which requires even more concentration.

Cognitive distractions related to cell phone usage can occur with either handheld or hands free phones. Inattention blindness is one result of cognitive distractions. The phenomenon is a relatively new discovery and is based on the fact that the mind cannot process everything it sees or encounters simultaneously. Researchers at Harvard found in 1998 that a person can see something without even recognizing that it is there when distracted or when processing other information. In one study it was found that about half the number of subjects missed their freeway exits when talking on the cell phone. Inattention blindness can be far more dangerous when it involves seeing but not processing the presence of a pedestrian or bicyclist. Persons who are distracted have less eye movement which can result in lower object recognition rates.

Mr. Henningsgard showed the Commissioners a 30-second video clip in two teams of three high school students, half dressed in black and half dressed in white, were passing basketballs back and forth. The Commissioners were asked to count how many times the white team passed the ball. It was then pointed out that in the middle of the clip a person wearing a gorilla suit had passed through the middle of the students and beat on his chest, but because the concentration of the Commissioners was on counting the number of passes by the white team, the majority of Commissioners did not even see the person in the gorilla suit.

At 30 miles per hour cars travel about 44 feet per second. A person who turns to pick up a cell phone, taking only two seconds to do so, travels 88 feet. Everything that is encountered within that distance will not be seen by the driver. One study found that in the case of head-to-head accidents where both drivers supposedly have a full view of the road ahead, about 33 percent of the drivers hit their brakes in an attempt to avoid the accident; about eight percent of the drivers swerved to avoid the accident; and about 32 percent of the drivers did nothing. The conclusion reached was that some sort of distraction prevented the driver from seeing the danger and acting to avoid it. The majority of accidents occur at relatively slow speeds, which is good given that the force of an accident is quadrupled for every doubling of vehicle speed. However, if the number of driver distractions can be reduced, the number of accidents will be reduced, and those accidents that do occur will be less severe.

Mr. Henningsgard said a 2004 study found that about eight percent of all drivers on the road are using a cell phone at any given time nationwide. The average cell phone call lasts about two minutes, which at highway speeds relates to a distance traveled of about two or three miles. A study that was released in February 2005 concluded that drivers using cell phones, either hands free or hand held, are 18 percent slower in reacting to situations, which equates to a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent. In 2001, 4699 accidents in California were blamed on drivers using cell phones; those accidents resulted in the deaths of 31 persons.

The city of Bellevue has on its books inattentive driving laws. The state of Washington does not, though it is illegal to hug someone while driving. Inattentive driving laws most commonly are not enforced until after an accident has occurred.

There are a number of common objections to the notion of banning cell phone usage. One is that using a cell phone is no more distracting than carrying on a conversation with another person in the car. The fact is, however, that passengers are aware of the situations facing the driver and know when it is time to keep quiet to allow the driver to concentrate on driving. Another argument is that cell phone usage is no less distracting than eating or playing the radio. Cell phones are, however, more demanding; when they ring people find it difficult to refrain from answering them. They are also more distracting in that unlike eating cell phone usage requires concentration to maintain the ongoing conversation.

There are certain legal issues involving the use of cell phones while driving. Companies and organizations can be held liable for accidents caused by employees who are distracted by cell phones. Johnson & Johnson was one of the first companies to prohibit their employees from using cell phones while driving. In 2002 Smith Barney paid out over \$500,000 as the result of a wrongful death lawsuit where it was determined that a stockbroker reaching for a cell phone ran a red light and killed a motorcyclist; because the call was a work call, the company was found to be liable.

Not allowing the use of cell phones while driving would save lives by reducing the number and severity of accidents. Harvard researchers found that the value of cell phone calls made while driving was about \$80 billion, which compares to about \$81 billion in damage resulting from accidents in which cell phones were being used.

Mr. Henningsgard suggested the city should consider restricting its employees from using handheld cell phones while driving city vehicles. Such an action would put Bellevue in a leadership role and avoid potential liability while serving to protect citizens. The city should also consider incorporating into its legislative agenda support for a statewide ban on the use of handheld cell phones while driving.

Commissioner Young asked if any research has been done regarding all forms of driver distractions, not just using cell phones. Mr. Henningsgard said there has been additional research and he agreed that there are a lot of things people do while driving that serve as distractions. Cell phone usage ranked number eight on the list on one study but is continuing to move up as more and more cell phones get used.

Chair Bell said in one study he read comparing handheld cell phones to hands free cell phones it was concluded that both types are distractions. The question is not necessarily what the hand is doing but rather what the mind is doing.

Chair Bell thanked Mr. Henningsgard for his presentation and the suggestions made. He said he would favor having the city set an example by not allowing employees to use cell phones while driving city vehicles.

Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that one area of concern from the city's perspective is the use of cell phones by fire and police personnel given that it is an important part of their work. Those kinds of issues would need to be explored before taking any action.

Commissioner Young suggested the presentation should be given to business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Downtown Association.

C. NE 30th Public Involvement Review

Traffic Engineering Manager Mark Poch explained that project PW-I-70 involves the intersection of Bel-Red Road and NE 30th Street. To the east is the Sherwood Forest neighborhood, and to the immediate west is the main Microsoft campus. In 1990 Bel-Red Road was widened from two lanes to five lanes, and immediately after that the number of accidents at Bel-Red Road and NE 30th Street increased. In 1995 a rechannelization project addressed that issue. Signal warrants have been met at the intersection for several years based on traffic volumes on both Bel-Red Road and NE 30th Street, and speeds on Bel-Red Road. One significant change since the 90s has been the increase in the number of pedestrian crossings at the intersection, owing in part to the growth of the Microsoft campus. PW-I-70 will add a signal at the intersection; the project is in the current CIP for design in 2005 and construction in 2006.

Access from the Microsoft campus to Bel-Red Road was approved in December 2002 in an agreement between Microsoft and Redmond. More recently, Microsoft proposed a development agreement to guide campus growth over the next 20 years as an additional two million square feet of office space is brought on line. Bellevue received notice of the development agreement in January 2005. The agreement includes a proposed access from the campus to Bel-Red Road shown as Exhibit H. When Bellevue staff reviewed the exhibit, concerns were identified with the ability to meet some of the Comprehensive Plan policies established for the area. Accordingly, a recommendation was made through the development agreement comment process regarding how the access could be better handled.

Mr. Poch pointed out that in both the Redmond and Bellevue comprehensive plans there is one main theme for the area, namely that passthrough traffic to and from the campus and the neighborhood is to be prevented. There is also policy language limiting overall access to Bel-Red Road, and collaborating closely with the Sherwood Forest neighborhood. The Microsoft proposal outlined in Exhibit H includes an offset intersection from NE 30th Street. The concern is that traffic exiting the neighborhood on NE 30th Street can make a left-turn onto Bel-Red Road and then an immediate right turn into the Microsoft campus, an alignment that is conducive to passthrough traffic. Traffic coming from the campus to NE 30th Street is restricted from going back into the neighborhood by placing a barrier curb on the existing right-turn lane, but the more sneaky drivers could simply drive around the end of the island. Also, the barrier curb presents a number of hazards in its own right. Conflicts are created in the curb end area where vehicles are transitioning from one lane to another, and because of the speeds on Bel-Red Road that is a concern.

Mr. Poch said Exhibit H as proposed does not meet the Comprehensive Plan policies regarding passthrough traffic. Accordingly, staff has developed three additional alternatives. Under Alternative 1, called the Evergreen East concept, the Microsoft campus driveway is located to the south of NE 30th Street. Traffic would be prevented from leaving the neighborhood and entering the campus by establishing an exclusive lane in the middle of Bel-Red Road bounded on both sides by a barrier curb. Traffic coming from the campus is prevented from entering the Sherwood Forest neighborhood by making the exit from the campus right-out only, emphasized by a barrier in the middle of the roadway. The alternative meets the intent of the Comprehensive Plan policies, but presents some engineering concerns due to the extensive use of barrier curbs. If Alternative 1 is selected, staff will highly recommend that the intersection of Bel-Red Road and NE 30th Street be signalized to help the left turn get into the correct position.

Alternative 2, called the Sherwood Forest alternative, places the access from the Microsoft campus at NE 30th Street. The alternative was developed by staff in direct response to the Exhibit H concept from Microsoft. Two methods for applying the concept have been crafted, and both have been presented to the Sherwood Forest neighborhood via newsletter and survey. Comments were also received at an open house on March 16, 2005. Sherwood Forest Alternative 1 includes an aggressive island in the middle of the intersection to prevent traffic from going from the neighborhood across the intersection to the campus entrance. Traffic coming from the campus must turn right only, and traffic coming from the neighborhood can turn right or left onto Bel-Red Road. The alternative does not allow any left turns into the neighborhood, or into the campus, from Bel-Red Road.

Sherwood Forest Alternative 2 uses a different island layout to prevent passthrough traffic. As with Alternative 1, traffic coming from NE 30th Street must turn either right or left onto Bel-Red Road. Left turns from Bel-Red Road to the campus and the neighborhood are still allowed under the alternative.

The neighborhood expressed a clear preference, 63 percent, for Sherwood Forest Alternative 2. Twenty-six percent favored Sherwood Forest Alternative 1, and eleven percent offered other suggestions, such as offsetting the campus entrance either to the north or the south of NE 30th Street; a few expressed a desire to be able to travel straight through the Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection to get to and from the Microsoft campus. Mr. Poch allowed that Sherwood Forest Alternative 2 meets the criteria of the Comprehensive Plan by addressing passthrough traffic, retaining one intersection on Bel-Red Road instead of two, addresses pedestrian and hazard concerns, and coordinates with PW-I-70.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wendle, Kris Liljebblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said the city of Redmond is still reviewing the Microsoft development agreement. The Redmond City Council is slated to discuss it on April 19, but there is no approval date set yet.

Mr. Poch said Alternative 3 is the recommendation of staff. It is based on Sherwood Forest

Alternative 2 but is modified to address community concerns. The Microsoft campus driveway access is still located at the intersection of Bel-Red Road and NE 30th Street. An aggressive barrier is included to prevent passthrough traffic between the campus and the neighborhood. The campus driveway, however, is right-in/right-out only from Bel-Red Road. With one less lane and a sidewalk on only one side, the opening for the roadway can be narrowed, decreasing the tree loss. Left turns into the neighborhood from Bel-Red Road are still allowed, there is a crosswalk on the north leg of the intersection to address pedestrian concerns, there is room for a planter island, and there is no left turn from Bel-Red Road into the campus. In the view of the neighborhood, left turns into the campus should in fact be accommodated at the Bel-Red Road/156th Avenue NE intersection, not at the Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection.

Alternative 3 satisfies all of the Comprehensive Plan policies, reduces the number of trees that will be lost by creating the campus driveway, and still coordinates with PW-I-70. Microsoft considers the proposed NE 30th Street access to be a minor access point for the campus.

Mr. Poch said both Microsoft and Redmond are seeking resolution and certainty. The NE 30th Street access point is important to Microsoft, but they have indicated a willingness to go along with the staff recommendation. The Bellevue City Council is set to review the issue on April 18.

Chair Bell opened the floor to comments from the audience.

Mr. Bill Serr, 1412 153rd Place SE, said the left turn into the Microsoft campus from Bel-Red Road at 156th is already insufficient. The problem is the need for better access to and from the campus, and the proposed alternative does not solve the problem. Forcing traffic to use the 156th entrance near where Group Health has a hospital will only compound the problem. All three alternatives should be thrown out in favor of taking another look at the 156th location.

Ms. Linda Lowe-Sheedy, 15923 NE 27th Place, noted that the Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection was studied eight years ago during the BROTS update. At that time PW-I-70 was brought forward on the project list but was ultimately removed because of the impacts it would cause for the neighborhood. Staff was asked at that time to come forward with a design for an access point from Bel-Red Road to the Microsoft campus that would address the passthrough issues. The right-in/right-out design that resulted was approved in concept by the BROTS update transportation review group. Access from the campus to Bel-Red Road does not take into consideration signalization of the NE 30th Street intersection. When Microsoft's Exhibit H was presented to the city of Redmond the neighborhood voiced concerns about allowing left-turn movements. The Sherwood Forest neighborhood has historically been opposed to any signalization of the Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection, but it recognizes that the staff recommendation will offer protection for the neighborhood while still allowing Microsoft an access point on Bel-Red Road, though not a major access. She urged the commissioners to approve staff-recommended Alt. 3.

Ms. Cathy Vinateri, 16255 NE 26th Street, said she is very concerned about the level of cut-

through traffic on 164th Avenue NE. The majority of that traffic is speeding, something that should be curtailed. She voiced support for eliminating left turns from Bel-Red Road onto NE 30th Street. The survey sent to the neighborhood was mailed to current residents, yet there are in the area a large number of rental properties; the survey did not reach the homeowners, those who are in fact most affected by lower property values resulting from increased traffic volumes.

Chair Bell highlighted the need to have a recommendation from the Commission in writing to the Council by April 18.

Commissioner Wendle commented that once a new access point for Microsoft is created it will not be able to be taken away. Accordingly, it is necessary to get the design right the first time. He asked if the projected growth figures for the campus, as well as the proposed new access point, are included in the traffic model. Mr. Poch said the model does include the projections for full buildout. He went on to say the modeling done for the various Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection alternatives were focused on the PM peak period, and the modeling showed heavy right turns out of the campus during that time. While the AM peak period was not specifically modeled, it can be assumed that there will be a demand for left turns into the campus at that time. The main protection mechanism to prevent passthrough trips in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood is the barrier in the middle of the intersection.

Mr. Liljeblad added that the Microsoft consultants allocated all campus trips to the various driveways. Because there is no current access at NE 30th Street, they had no usage patterns on which to rely. They predicted that only about five percent of the trips will use the new access point. Bellevue staff ran the BKR model to see what the demand might be and concluded that usage could be as much as double what the Microsoft consultants allocated to it, especially during the PM peak. If the access is right-in/right-out only, the single lane coming out of the campus onto Bel-Red Road will tend to stack up, and that will have a bearing on how attractive the access is to Microsoft employees.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Yuen, Mr. Liljeblad said one of the reasons the Sherwood Forest neighborhood has opposed the left-turn movements to the Microsoft campus is that it essentially adds capacity at the intersection for the purpose of serving the campus. The right-in/right-out is a relatively modest change to the intersection and does not make the access point a major one for Microsoft. That is an important reason why staff is recommending the third alternative.

Commissioner Wendle asked if any traffic calming measures for the neighborhood have been suggested but not implemented or prioritized. Mr. Poch said speed cushions were recently implemented on both NE 30th Street and 164th Avenue NE, but in a modified fashion to better accommodate emergency vehicles. It is possible that additional work could be done to lessen the amount of cut-through traffic.

Commissioner Yuen suggested that if left turns into the Microsoft campus are not permitted at the Bel-Red Road/NE 30th Street intersection, the traffic generated by the additional two

million square feet of development will go up on 156th Avenue NE, adding to the congestion there. Mr. Poch noted that the development square footage proposed for the campus was anticipated with the BROTS update. The BROTS projects were formulated specifically to address the anticipated growth of the area. He allowed, however, that the BROTS update did not assume any access at all from Bel-Red Road at NE 30th Street.

Mr. Liljeblad informed the Commissioners that Microsoft is seeking a commitment from Redmond to take most of the remaining land use capacity available under the BROTS cap that was established for the 2012 forecast period. Of the 2.4 million square feet of capacity still available, Microsoft is seeking to take 2.2 million square feet. Microsoft's traffic analysis looked at how trips associated with the expansion will distribute across the network and outlined how the impacts should be mitigated. The model showed that the projected volumes on the arterial streets around the Microsoft campus are within the limits of what was in the BROTS EIS that was published in 1998. The development agreement between Microsoft and Redmond has been under consideration for about three months, and Redmond has some requirements regarding expedient process that are reaching their limits. Microsoft has done its due diligence, and Redmond may not have the flexibility to ask for more time. Bellevue has provided feedback expeditiously and within the established timeframes, and Microsoft would like to have the access point issue resolved as soon as possible and within the context of the development agreement.

Commissioner Wendle said he would like to have in hand some analytical data with regard to the number of cars that would use the new access point to the campus and the nearby intersections.

Motion to recommend Alternative 3 as proposed by staff, and to forward it to the Council along with the comments regarding the need for additional traffic calming measures, was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Matthew and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Rockeries Update – Memo Only

Answering a question by Commissioner Young, Project Manager Steve Costa explained that an inventory of the rockeries throughout the city was conducted a few years ago. The inventory was followed by a process in which the rockeries were ranked by degree of need. After the rockery in the Yarrow Bay neighborhood is complete, there will be no rockeries in urgent need of repair.

E. Lakemont Wetland Mitigation – Memo Only

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. NE 24th Street Funding

Mr. Liljeblad explained that the city has obtained a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality

(CMAQ) grant in the amount of \$1 million for the NE 24th Street project. However, there remains a funding gap of \$750,000 that must be closed before proceeding to construction. The gap can be closed by reallocating money from some other project, or by applying for a Public Works Trust Fund loan; the latter is not something the city does very often, preferring instead to pay cash for projects. Public Works Trust Fund loans are offered at an interest rate of a half percent over a 20-year timeframe. Borrowing the funds to close the gap would cost the city only \$39,375, which is ten percent or so less than the inflationary cost would be if the project were postponed for eight or ten years.

Continuing, Mr. Liljeblad said the city has identified the opportunity but has yet to apply for the grant. He added that it is unlikely that the loan request will be turned down.

Chair Bell noted that at its retreat the Commission urged staff to be more creative in finding alternative means of funding for projects. He said the proposed approach is a good one.

Motion by Commissioner Matthew to recommend to the City Council that application be made for the Public Works Trust Fund loan as proposed by staff; second was by Commissioner Young and the motion carried unanimously.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

A. Public Involvement Calendar

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bill Serr, 1412 153rd said the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project as recommended by the Commission is not safe. The project should be divided into two parts: maintenance that needs to be done right away, and reconfiguration, which should be put off to a later time. He noted that the 150th/SE 36th Street project has been on the agenda since 1996 even though most of the land area is not in the city limits; no money should be committed to the project until the property owners agree to annex into the city. He suggested that the economic profile work undertaken by the city recently represents a waste of time and resources. The funds should have been used instead to make safety improvements in the city. Too often the city allows its citizens to vote on safety projects; the city should always act to make sure safety is a top priority.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. December 9, 2004
- B. January 13, 2005
- C. January 27, 2005
- D. February 10, 2005
- E. February 24, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes collectively was made by Commissioner Matthew. Second was

by Commissioner Young and the motion carried unanimously.

12. REVIEW OF CALENDAR

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Young. Second was by Commissioner Matthew and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date