CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 26, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Jokinen and Zahn, both of whom were excused.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Transit Master Plan

Mr. Joel Glass, 1652 105th Avenue SE, thanked the Commissioners for the hours put into developing what appears to be a very good Transit Master Plan. He commented, however, that the plan could have some negative impacts for the Enatai neighborhood, particularly the notion of turning church parking lots into park and ride lots. There are several churches along SE Bellevue Way that would attract traffic if made into park and ride lots, and there would be more traffic diverted onto local neighborhood streets. The churches are located in residential zones. The leased lots idea should be eliminated from the Transit Master Plan. Additionally, the conversion of part of Main Street from general purpose lanes to transit-only lanes will add very little to the overall system. There are a number of projects under way that is causing traffic to seek other ways through the area, and by taking away from the limited capacity will

only make things worse. That part of the plan should also be reconsidered.

Mr. Lincoln Vander Veen, with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, praised the staff for working so well with his organization. He also praised the Commission for the work and analysis that went into developing the Transit Master Plan and said the Chamber generally supports the conclusions in the plan. It should be acknowledged that Bellevue is part of an Eastside network of transportation corridors with I-405 serving as the critical link. Transit planning in Bellevue will only be successful if Eastside stakeholders and regional transit agencies are consulted or included and held to account. The Transit Master Plan and the process that created it is valuable and important, but it is not the end of the work. The Department of Transportation and the City should continue analyzing real-time traffic data and work to incorporate the technologies capable of increasing throughput in and through Bellevue without funding infrastructure projects or restricting access to existing transportation infrastructure. Vanpools, flexible carpools and car sharing should continue to be incorporated in the Transit Master Plan. The Chamber is concerned any time useful transportation corridors that can accommodate cars and transit are restricted to only accommodate transit; projects L-5, L-11 and L-13 fall into that category. Transit usage, particularly in the evening peak, could appropriately be given priority in parts of the city with high levels of transit usage. Some Chamber members have questioned the underlying performance projections that some of the Transit Master Plan is based on, including assuming increased public revenue for transit service and paid-for parking. Market-driven transportation infrastructure investments and maximizing commute time efficiencies are of the utmost importance to the Chamber

Mr. Todd Woosley, thanked the Commission and the staff for the good work done in developing the Transit Master Plan and for making sure the public was involved. He said he was present representing the Building Owners and Managers Association of Seattle/King County whose members are very interested in the infrastructure needed by those who live, work or shop to get around. The Association has some concerns about the actual role transit might play and about the assumptions highlighted by Mr. Vander Veen. He said he personally is part owner of some properties in the Bel-Red corridor that have retail uses and has no

intention of charging patrons for parking even though that is assumed in the Transit Master Plan. The idea that there will be increased transit funding is also suspect, particularly in light of the results of Proposition 1. Wrong assumptions, even if only slightly wrong, can result in being way off course in the future. Adjustments are needed to end up with the most accurate transit ridership projections possible.

Mr. Patrick Bannon, president of the Bellevue Downtown Association, acknowledged the efforts of the Commission, staff and the public that went into developing the Transit Master Plan. The importance of a fact-based, carefully designed and implemented transit plan cannot be overstated. The assumptions included in the study should be carefully reviewed going forward. Job growth and the economic health of the City and the region will be tied to transit service. Both large and small employers chose the downtown because of the access benefits transit provides. The BDA generally supports the Transit Master Plan but has some concerns. It is too early to commit to the capital projects listed for the downtown, especially those that call for the conversion of general lanes and rights-of-way. The construction of East Link will over the next few years heavily impact the downtown; all of the transit agencies will need to work together to make sure there will be a smooth flow of transit into and out of the downtown. A policy statement with regard to rideshare operations is needed though it should not be developed on the fly.

Mr. Will Knedlik, president of Eastside Rail Now, commended the Commission for focusing on an absolutely quintessential issue. He said as a teacher at Harvard he was a notoriously soft grader but would give the Transit Master Plan an F. That is because the underlying numbers that are sine qua non for everything that follows are so unreliable that no junior high school student could accept them. The minutes of the June 13 meeting make it clear the Commission does not know if there will be 60,000 transit riders per day or only 30,000. The goose that lays the golden egg in Bellevue, namely Bellevue Square, is a carriage trade business with a fundamental necessity for free parking. The Seattle City Council appears bent on making the competitive advantage of Bellevue Square even greater and they are succeeding. Bellevue will not have the transit usage the report blithely assumes it will have. Once the report is handed

over to the City Council, the City Council will understand why the Commission deserves an F. He said during his tenure as chair of the Revenue Resources Committee in the state House the issue of sales tax inequities was studied. It was clear that no city in the state has the sales tax bonanza Bellevue has, and the reason for it is Bellevue Square, something the report disregards. The report is a disgraceful effort. It should be taken back and made into something responsible.

Mr. Bruce Nurse with Kemper Development Company, 575 Bellevue Square, said most of his work focuses on transportation. He said he has carefully followed the work of the Commission in developing the Transit Master Plan. The draft plan is comprehensive, carefully thought out, and professionally assembled and produced by the Commission and staff. The most positive part is that it is a Bellevue transit plan; it certainly is time to begin looking at Bellevue as a subregional city. The Eastside collectively has a population greater than that of Seattle and things are changing. The plan provides perspective by indicating that by 2030 eight percent of the total person trips will be by transit, and that 84 percent of the person trips will be by car. That information should set the stage for the planning process. The assumption that retail parking fees will be instituted and set at $9 per hour and $27 per day in the downtown area by 2030 seems to drive a significant number of additional transit riders. The parking fees, however, are a fatal flaw. Kemper Development Company sincerely believes that parking fees drive away retail customers, and that retail customers are far less likely to take transit to shopping places. Commuters have a different motivation from retail shoppers, the latter of which are far more flexible. If parking fees for retail are not in fact implemented as assumed by the report, the number of transit riders will be reduced along with the need to dedicate lanes to transit and the need for transit signal priority infrastructure. The assumptions that serve as the base for the Transit Master Plan should be reconsidered.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald announced that the Council's second public hearing on the budget, originally slated for July 21, has been rescheduled to July 7.

With regard to an email comment received about the Bellevue Way SE HOV project, Mr. McDonald provided the Commission with information describing the public outreach for the process. He said the flyer was produced to address recurring questions that have been encountered in the course of public engagement with Enatai residents looking at the impacts of East Link construction. The flyer explains that three segments of the HOV roadway are planned: Bellevue Way SE from 112th Avenue SE to the South Bellevue park and ride; Bellevue Way SE from the park and ride to I-90; and the I-90 two-way transit/HOV project. The Bellevue Transit Master Plan proposes projects to add HOV segments on Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE to the north of the Y. The flyer was mailed to approximately 600 addresses in the vicinity of Bellevue Way SE, and to leaders of the Enatai and Belcrest neighborhood associations for distribution to their email lists. The project manager is Senior Transportation Planner Mike Ingram.

Commissioner Lampe noted the Enatai neighborhood is concerned about losing the vegetation in the median on 112th Avenue SE. Mr. McDonald said most of the East Link alignment is on the east side of 112th Avenue SE and as such is unlikely to touch the median. The schematic the Belcrest neighborhood is reacting to shows the entire median will be lost when in fact it may only be narrowed to accommodate the HOV lane.

Mr. McDonald said a number of staff in the Transportation Department collaborated to submit an application for a Walk-Friendly Communities designation. Such designations are awarded to cities on a scale ranging from bronze to platinum in consideration of their commitment to improving and sustaining walkability and pedestrian safety. The application is being pursued in part because feedback from the review committee will be informative as the City initiates the update of the pedestrian/bicycle plan.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bishop reported that he attended the presentation made by Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz to the Chamber of Commerce. Transportation Director Dave Berg was also there.

7. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and it carried unanimously.

9. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Transit Master Plan

Mr. Loewenherz noted that on June 2 Chair Simas and staff presented the draft Transit Master Plan to the City Council. All of the Councilmembers were appreciative of the Commission's dedication throughout the two-year endeavor and were generally in agreement that the plan is ready for adoption.

Chair Simas said Mayor Balducci made a comment about not wanting to lose sight of the idea that transit is a lifeline for a great many people. She said the abundant access philosophy that is incorporated in the report is a critical element.

Commissioner Bishop said he heard Mayor Balducci wonder if there is room or a need for adjusting number four in the strategies. Mr. Loewenherz said the words "who need or want" have been added to number four on page 58 to indicate that people who are without vehicles and rely on transit for most or all of their travel are in the lifeline category.

Mr. Loewenherz sought from the Commission two actions: approval of the Transit Master Plan report document, and action on the transmittal memo.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that Bellevue College has strongly endorsed the plan, particularly in relation to the Bellevue College connection project. The college also wants the City to continue advocating with King County to retain Route 271 service through the campus rather than realigning it onto 148th Avenue SE.

A strong statement of support was also received from King County Metro acknowledging their active engagement throughout the plan development process. The agency desires to continue working with the City as they initiate their long-range transportation planning effort.

With regard to the concerns voiced by Belcrest residents about potentially eliminating the median, Mr. Loewenherz said there are a number of segments related to the Bellevue Way corridor. The reality is a consultative process is already under way so striking it from the plan document would not necessarily alter that course of action. It is not a foregone conclusion that the concept will turn into a CIP project.

Commissioner Larrivee asked for comment regarding the concerns raised by Mr. Glass about leased lots. He asked looking at the surrounding neighborhoods for traffic calming actions and parking restrictions could be part of the leased lot issue to limit or mitigate problems. Chair Simas said it was his understanding that leasing lots can only be done by first obtaining a permit. He suggested that most concerns could be addressed in the permitting process. Mr. McDonald said the land use issues would likely be decided through the conditional use approval process. The initial permit process would gather public information and development a conditional use permit with conditions of approval, and to secure the neighborhood from spillover parking, the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Control program could, if needed, implement additional measures.

Mr. Loewenherz said the context for considering leased lots flowed from direction given by the Council. There is a clear deficit in certain locations in terms of commute parking availability sufficient to accommodate the demand. The travel demand model projections came up with projected deficits in both the I-90 and I-405 corridors. A number of options on the demand and supply sides have been reviewed, including technology alerting people to the location of available parking and expanding existing park and ride facilities. During the Commission's briefing regarding leased lots there was the sense that the approach offers a good way to ensure access to the Frequent Transit Network from the neighborhoods. The Council appeared to be very receptive to the idea when it was presented to them. The Council will have the prerogative to direct the Planning Commission to examine the issue in greater depth and to consider what if any course correction might be needed relative to the existing administrative conditional use permit process.

Chair Simas asked if the City will proactively seek out lots that could be leased, or if the City will sit back and wait for property owners to start the process. Mr. Loewenherz said the answer to that question will depend on the situation. During the interim construction period for the East Link project during which the South Bellevue park and ride will be closed for up to five years the need to facilitate access to transit by car will be great. Leased lots may become a fast-track answer to meeting the need. It is, however, too early to say whether or not the city will actively seek locations.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested that regardless of how the leased lot situation plays out, traffic mitigation for the surrounding neighborhoods should be addressed proactively as part of the permitting process rather than reactively. Mr. Loewenherz said during the June 2 Council meeting Councilmember Chelminiak offered some personal accounts of ditching and riding efforts he has undertaken in the past. Whether or not the practice is allowed, it is likely to happen.

Chair Simas concurred with Commissioner Larrivee and encouraged the City Council to adopt a proactive process of reviewing where the needs are going to be, identifying potential places,

and working with the community in deciding what steps would need to be taken to prevent problems. He agreed with the comments made by Mr. Glass about taking steps to avoid disrupting local communities but pointed out that there are community wide needs that must be addressed. Taking a proactive approach will put the City in better stead for doing it right.

Commissioner Larrivee said the Commission recognizes the very real possibility of shrinking resources. The network outlined in the report accounts for that. He stressed that the conceptual projects that are identified in the report are only relevant to the extent that the network and the funding for it increases. He added that there is a lot more work to be done before any of the conceptual projects can move forward.

Commissioner Lampe pointed out that under the reduced funding scenario transit ridership in 2030 is projected to only drop from 140,000 to 110,000, which is not a tremendous difference. With regard to the concerns about paid parking, he noted that between 2003 and 2013 transit ridership doubled, all under current conditions that include a lot of free parking. The caution about making bold assumptions related to parking rates is well taken and is something the Commission is well aware of.

With regard to the validity of the numbers on which the Transit Master Plan is based, Chair Simas said he has no way of knowing what the right numbers are going to be 15 or 30 years into the future. The numbers in the report serve as good starting points. As things move forward and better information is in hand, adjustments can be made to the plan. He agreed with Commissioner Larrivee that the much of what the report calls for will remain theoretical until there is money in hand to pay for it; with stable or shrinking resources, a number of the things will simply never get done. While it could easily be argued that the numbers are wrong, it could just as easily be argued that the numbers are good enough to begin moving forward.

Chair Simas said he received an email from Councilmember Robinson in which she talks about the character and feel of Old Bellevue and expressing a desire to see it expanded eastward

along Main Street. That ties into the notion of expanded sidewalks and making Main Street less of a major car street and more of narrower bike and pedestrian friendly area. While the money to expand Old Bellevue to the east may not be immediately available, the idea certainly is intriguing.

Commissioner Bishop said he would support the Transit Master Plan in spite of having a few reservations. The process of developing the report has been detailed and extensive. The level of detail used to determine the proposed Frequent Transit Network for the City was impressive and staff put an incredible amount of time into identifying options that would work for the City. There are nine different scenarios included in the report that reflect different levels of funding at different times. The BKR travel model has been revised and utilized specifically to identify ridership projections in Bellevue on a specific proposed network with a projected level of funding that translates to a level of annual service hours to be applied to the system; it is likely the first time in the region that approach has been used and represents a significant step forward in the evolution of the transportation planning process for transit systems. The BKR model is now a tool that can be tweaked as time goes forward.

Continuing, Commissioner Bishop commented that the BKR model estimates transit ridership based on assumptions made from the model. The staff demonstrated to the Commission that bus ridership estimates are very sensitive to the parking rate assumptions for the downtown and in the other dense centers. It is known that the retail parking rates in the BKR model are artificially high in that they assume all retail parking in the downtown will involve a fee by 2030. The imposition of retail parking fees, even by 2030, is unlikely. Accordingly, the technical analysis to justify the conversion of existing travel lanes in the downtown to HOV lanes or transit lanes is based on artificially inflated ridership numbers. The Transit Master Plan calls for a detailed technical analysis for all of the proposed transit capital projects prior to their approval, design and implementation. The analysis of all proposed transit capital projects should be based on real near-term assumptions fed into the BKR model.

Commissioner Bishop said the projections based on population and employment growth

indicate that by 2030 there will be an additional half million trips on the Bellevue transportation system. Where currently only three percent of the total trips are made on buses, the Transit Master Plan suggests that by 2030 up to eight percent will be made on buses. Bus trips will be concentrated by location and time of day, but even so eight percent is a very small part of the big transportation picture. For the benefit of the whole system, ridership estimates need to be realistic.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. McDonald said the downtown plan is silent with respect to private transit operations. Taxis are discussed and there is a recommended policy to accommodate them in taxi stands, but the decision was made to not specifically address private ride services such as Uber and Lyft as it did not appear to be a problem in search of a solution.

Mr. Loewenherz said over the last several days he has had a running conversation with Microsoft about the topic of private transit service. He said he encouraged the company to communicate its feedback on the topic to Mr. McDonald and the Commission ahead of the July 10 Commission meeting where the focus will be on Comprehensive Plan policy.

Chair Simas commented that cultural change in the current generation and the next one is a topic the Commission has not discussed and has no objective way of analyzing. Recently there was an article in the *Seattle Times* about the internships that Amazon and Microsoft are offering and the perks they are giving, which includes rental cars when they want to travel outside of town. Nationwide there is a trend among the young people away from desiring personal vehicles. That is a cultural shift that needs to be tracked. There will undoubtedly still be a lot of cars on the road by 2030, but it is also believable that the projected bus ridership numbers will be achieved. The cost of parking is only one factor that will impact transit ridership in the future.

Commissioner Lampe concurred. He noted that options such as Uber and Lyft have come about fairly quickly and going forward it can be expected that other innovations will arise. The

Transit Master Plan is within the band of where it needs to be. It is a very well thought-out document, it is comprehensive, and it covers a lot of territory. He said he fully supported it.

Commissioner Tanaka commented that Uber and Lyft are part of a very complex issue in that it falls under a regulated industry. There are policy issues the Commission is not familiar with and to bring the Commission up to speed would require a lengthy discussion. The process of producing the Transit Master Plan has been long and involved a great deal of detail. The work of the Commission and the staff is to be commended and it is good to see the Commission have a level of satisfaction regarding the outcome of the process.

Mr. Loewenherz called attention to project Q-5 on Table 10 on page 129 of the report and noted that the project title should read "northbound" instead of "southbound." He noted that the project description was correct. There was agreement to make that correction.

A motion to recommend to the Council adoption of the Transit Master Plan was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bishop and it carried unanimously.

With regard to the transmittal memo, Commissioner Lampe proposed incorporating the concept of abundant access. Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that the Frequent Transit Network is the outcome of the abundant access philosophy. He noted that as such he used that term in the memo instead. The term also sounds more service and capital oriented as opposed to more policy framing. Commissioner Lampe agreed.

A motion to approve the transmittal memo was made by Commissioner Larrivee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Loewenherz informed the Commission that when the Transit Master Plan comes up before the City Council on July 7 it will be during their regular session, which starts at 8:00 p.m. He said he would welcome having Commissioners join staff for the presentation and to offer

feedback during the opportunity for boards and commissions to address the Council.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Simas noted that a nomination for Commissioner Lampe to serve as Chair had been made. The nomination carried unanimously.

Chair Simas handed the gavel to Commissioner Lampe.

Chair Lampe said the nominees for Vice Chair were Commissioner Bishop and Commissioner Zahn.

Commissioner Bishop said he would like to serve as Vice Chair. He said transportation planning is his passion and has been for 45 years.

Commissioner Zahn was elected Vice Chair on the strength of a 3-2 vote.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop regarding the Downtown Park project, Mr. McDonald said the intent is to complete the circle, the result of which will be a displacement of some of the existing parking. Alternative parking locations are designated for other parts of the park.

Commissioner Simas said it was his understanding that once the project is complete there will be a net loss of parking stalls associated with the park. He added that the final act of the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC with regard to parking was to communicate to the City Council that a more comprehensive parking study be done. Collectively there is a sufficient

number of parking stalls in the downtown to handle the projected need, but they are not all in the right place. The CAC was clear about the need for more parking in the downtown and a long-term strategy for achieving it where it is needed, either public or private.

Commissioner Bishop asked if the Commission should play a role in the process. Mr. McDonald said the park planning process is being handled by the Parks and Community Services Board and staff. The recommendation of the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC to conduct a comprehensive parking analysis is primarily focused on off-street parking separate from the recommendation of the Commission for additional on-street parking. The role of the Commission with respect to parking lies in the area between the curbs. The Planning Commission, which is charged with developing recommendations relative to land use issues, would likely take the lead relative to off-street parking.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed the calendar of upcoming meetings and agenda items.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lampe adjourned the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Kevin McDonald — 9/25/14

Secretary to the Transportation Commission — Date

Kent Lampe — 9/25/14

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission — Date