

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 12, 2007
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Yuen, Vice Chair Northey, Commissioners Glass, Holler, Tanaka, Van Valkenburgh, Wendle

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Kris Liljeblad, Jen Benn, Franz Loewenherz, Paul Krawczyk, Kevin O'Neill, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Dr. James Mekemson, Starodub, Inc.

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Yuen who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Northey who arrived at 6:43 p.m.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald announced that King County Metro is seeking volunteers to serve on its Rapid Ride advisory panel.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Wendle said he attended the most recent open house for the SR-520 project. He said the information presented was not new but the update was helpful.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. ADA Transition Plan Update

Grants Coordinator Jen Benn explained that the Americans With Disabilities Act is one of several civil rights acts with which the city of Bellevue gladly complies. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Title II of the Act focuses specifically on government agencies and transportation facilities. The law requires each agency to conduct a self-

evaluation of its programs, services, facilities and activities, and to track and maintain improvements toward positive outcomes. The transition plan lists all of the projects and issues identified through the self-evaluation process, describes the solutions to be used to bring those issues to full compliance, and also describes how the projects will be funded and in what time frame.

Ms. Benn said it is important for the city to maintain its culture of compliance. About 15 percent of the population has disabilities of one kind or another which are tracked by the Census. The city has a long history of complying with the ADA, which was passed in 1990. The city immediately set out to conduct various self-evaluations, though they were limited in scope based on policy or focused on specific buildings. In 1992 the city formed its first ADA task force, and in 1993 Parks & Community Services conducted a self-evaluation of all city-owned buildings open to the public.

In nearly all of the early efforts, the component that was missing was transportation facilities. In 2004 the Department of Housing and Urban Development surveyed City Hall and determined that it was in full compliance, with a few minor exceptions. In 2006 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began requiring ADA compliance, particularly with regard to sidewalks and curb ramps.

Ms. Benn said the city has moved forward with documenting and bringing together the disparate parts of ADA compliance. The citywide team has been reinvigorated and has formalized the grievance policies, improved accessibility on the city's website, and has been looking specifically at citywide programs, services and activities. A limited contract is about to be let to conduct some assessments of city buildings, particularly Parks buildings and assets. That assessment will form the basis for determining what it will cost to assess all 300 city-owned buildings in Bellevue.

Throughout 2007 the work to document the city's activities relative to ADA compliance will continue. In addition, there will be an effort to document those areas in which the city could do even better. The work will culminate in the development of a single citywide transition plan.

Mr. Loewenherz said in the Title II documentation reference is made to the need to make sure all individuals are included in programs, services and activities. Through numerous court cases, refinement has been made to include pedestrian facility areas as an example of a program. The pedestrian environment includes trails, sidewalks, crosswalks, paved shoulders and parks. In Bellevue there are 336 sidewalk miles, all of which must be assessed. There are also a number of dimensional and ramp features that need to be taken into account. For instance, approaches to driveways must have level landings; fixed or movable obstructions that represent a barrier to an accessible pathway must be removed; the cross slopes for each curb ramp must be evaluated, and ramps on both sides of each corner need to be in place; the transition points between the ramps and the streets are flush; diagonal ramps must have suitable bottom landing areas to keep people from being forced out into the area where cars are passing; all instances of sidewalk heaving in excess of one-quarter inch must be addressed; the location of pedestrian signal poles along with the height and orientation of the push buttons must be evaluated; steps must be taken to make sure there are tactile warning surfaces on all curb ramps; and each curb ramp must have a top landing place. In all, there are some 100 data points that must be assessed for all 336 miles of sidewalks in the city.

Mr. Loewenherz said the federal government has provided some guidance for how to go about the assessment process. However, to conduct the according to their outline would take a very

long time. The cost would be anywhere from \$200,000 for a cursory assessment to excess of a million dollars.

The objective of the staff team is generate very accurate data as expeditiously as possible. To that end, staff are working with the Office of Pavement Technology at the FHWA to utilize an ultra-light, slow-speed inertial profiler (ULIP) mounted on a Segway Human Transporter. The device operates at about ten miles per hour and performs laser measurements of pavement surfaces; an on-board computer collects the data. Also mounted on the vehicle is a camera system with GPS encoding that will enable staff to click on the mapping system and zoom in on the exact coordinates of discovered sidewalk defects. The dimensional aspects of all systems will also be recorded.

One key component of ADA compliance is the requirement to engage with the disability community. Staff will be reaching out and engaging with those communities in establishing a prioritization method.

Mr. Loewenherz introduced Dr. James Mekemson with Starodub, Inc., which is contracting with the FHWA to develop the ULIP. He explained that the ULIP was created at a cost of \$120,000 and is being loaned to the city free of charge. In exchange, the city must prepare a research paper and submit it to the Transportation Research Board.

Dr. James Mekemson said the FHWA is interested in the ride quality of highways after construction and how they age over time. A number of standard methods are utilized. Development of the ULIP allows for assessing fresh pavement and sidewalks. Because the Segway pitches forward and backwards while ridden, a gyroscope was added to the system. The ULIP has proven to be very accurate.

A short video of the ULIP in action was shown to the Commission.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tanaka, Mr. Loewenherz explained that the displacement laser onboard the Segway captures 10,000 records of data per second. All of the information is collected automatically by the computer. The dimensional aspects at all corner intersections will be recorded separately using a handheld GPS unit. Ultimately, all of the data will be merged in the GIS.

Commissioner Glass asked how wide a scan the ULIP makes of the sidewalk. Mr. Loewenherz said the ADA requires jurisdictions to assess the accessible pedestrian pathway to a width of 36 inches, which is what the ULIP measures. The survey will not be concerned with the frontage zone or planting strip, only the narrow passageway defined as the accessible pathway.

Commissioner Glass asked if the Segway and ULIP systems work on steep terrain. Dr. James Mekemson allowed that they does.

Commissioner Glass suggested that the survey will point out flaws that it will be very expensive to fully address. Mr. Loewenherz agreed and pointed out that there is no requirement for jurisdictions to have a specific window in which to achieve all of the fixes; the only requirement is to document the issues and develop a schedule. A list of priority fixes will be developed in conjunction with the disability community, and those fixes will be addressed first.

B. Ped/Bike Plan Update

Mr. Loewenherz said the public name of the 2007 ped/bike transportation plan is Walk n Roll.

It fits within the broader context of the city's bicycle and pedestrian policies and programs. The city has a historic commitment to non-motorized transportation as reflected in a number of policies, plan and standards documents. The 2007 update will be the third update to the ped/bike plan that was originally adopted in 1993.

The walkway/bikeway projects in the current CIP total some \$20 million, or about 15 percent of the overall facilities investment pie. To some degree, the total commitment is under-represented in that figure because often sidewalks and bikeways are often included in roadway projects and are not separated out in the cost allocation model; the actual figure is likely closer to 18 percent. The city has a number of education awareness programs, including the Ped Bee program that is taken to schools within the city; the bicycle map; and coordination with regional projects, including the Mountains To Sound Greenway and the BNSF rail corridor.

There are a number of benefits associated with non-motorized systems. They are important to livability; help improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system; contribute to a multimodal system; help to improve air quality and public health; and is a great economic stimulus. For many, the non-motorized system is the only way they can get around, which is why accessibility for people of all ages and abilities is so important.

About 58 percent of the pedestrian system projects have been completed, along with about 37 percent of the bicycle system projects.

Mr. Loewenherz said the work to update the plan to date has included a needs assessment; review of collision information; and an online survey and focus group. The main part of the ped/bike planning is just getting under way. The intent is to have everything summarized in a plan document with a detailed description of how to get from here to there, and a list of projects and when they should be done. The plan will specific facility typologies appropriate in different locations throughout the city. The Transportation Commission will serve as the primary CAC for the process, but the Parks Board and Planning Commission will also be kept in the loop.

The Council reinforced the community involvement philosophy when the plan update was presented to them. They highlighted the need to engage all different kinds of user groups in both the pedestrian and bicycle systems and the outreach has included BTV, newsletters, the website, an email list-serve, six different focus groups, and working directly with various stakeholder groups. Staff have been going to community events to get their word out as well.

The online survey was live for only one month; during that time there were 919 bicycle survey respondents and 405 pedestrian survey respondents. The focus groups looked at the survey respondents and segmented them by gender and frequency of system utilization. Each of the six sessions lasted two hours and all of them were videotaped.

The groups highlighted facility enhancement needs as well as the need to better educate the broader public. Staff is working through all of the survey responses and the comments made at all of the focus groups and linking them to the ped/bike projects being considered. That will yield detailed documentation regarding how many people are requesting specific improvements at specific locations. The mapping exercise undertaken with the focus groups helps identify where the problems are and what the top priorities are. Input from the Commission will be sought later in the year for what criteria should be used for prioritizing the long list of project improvements.

Facility typologies were not identified in past updates to the ped/bike plan. Where a specific

project is called for, the 2007 plan will include cross sections of what the projects should look like. Four, two-and-a-half hour internal roundtable discussions have been held, and the next step will be to focus on how all the various projects and typologies interconnect. A tie-in to e-CityGov.net will bring into play a web-based mapping tool that will permit users to zoom in on each project segment, get a detailed project description and cross section, and submit comments.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked to what extent the city has been able to engage the elderly population. Mr. Loewenherz said the internal organization called the Network on Aging operates out of the Parks Department. The group has been briefed and engaged and will remain a viable part of the process. In addition, events will be slated at the community centers frequented by seniors. The web is not the best way to reach out to seniors; the poor response rate from the 65 and older age group to the online survey is evidence of that fact.

Commissioner Northey voiced concern that there appears to be more emphasis on the bicycle system than on the pedestrian system; she noted that there were four focus groups for bikes and only two for pedestrians. She observed that there also appears to be more of a focus on principal arterials rather than neighborhood streets. Mr. Loewenherz explained that all of the people on the focus groups were Bellevue residents. He said the number of focus groups was determined based on the results of the online survey in which the number of responses concerning the bicycle system was twice the number of comments regarding the pedestrian system. To some extent that may be tied to the fact that a much higher percentage of the pedestrian system has been completed. Commissioner Northey said she does not want the pedestrian system needs to be lost or overlooked.

Mr. Loewenherz said he will be back before the Commission in October to review the technical corridors assessment. At that time the focus will be on the recommended network system. The work of prioritizing projects will come later in the process.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked if the process will include correlating pedestrian facilities with bus stops to ensure a connection between walkability and transit ridership. Mr. Loewenherz answered that when the transit plan was created several years ago a lot of time was spent in creating a very robust mapping presence with transit data. All of the bus stops are included in the mapping. All daily boarding information for every bus zone in the city has been tracked for the past seven years; it is known how many buses serve each stop, and how many different routes there are. All of that data will be merged into a single transit data file and heavily relied on throughout the process.

****BREAK****

C. Northup Way Improvements Project

Senior Engineer Paul Krawczyk outlined the boundaries of the Northup Way project and provided the Commissioners with a video tour and explained that staff is interested in utilizing natural drainage practices where possible. The roadway is narrow and there are a number of driveways, which increases the difficulty.

Because the project provides for good connectivity for the ped/bike system and improves safety, the project was scored quite high by the Commission. The roadway intersects with the BNSF corridor and can be coordinated with the regional SR-520 bike route.

The 1996 corridor study identified Northup Way for a five-foot bike lane, five-foot sidewalk

and four-foot planter strip on both sides of the roadway, along with a two-way left-turn lane.

Mr. Krawczyk said the total project will need between \$15 million and \$20 million to complete. The \$1.5 million in the current CIP is sufficient to address interim safety improvements identified by a design report. The key objectives for the project are improved bicycle access and safety, continuous bicycle lanes, improved access for pedestrians, public transit and area businesses, improved traffic operations along Northup Way, improved corridor landscaping and aesthetics, and improved site access to area businesses.

Over the next two months staff will be conducting public outreach. The information gathered from the various stakeholders will be shared with the Commission. Surveying and the collection of existing data will kick off very soon, all of which will be fed into a preliminary recommendation.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked if there will be a continuous left-turn lane along the entire project. Mr. Krawczyk said the previous study looked at a five-lane configuration, but at the time the idea did not go over very well because of the associated impacts. The initial focus will be on bike lanes, sidewalks, and a two-way left-turn lane for the entire project length. There will also be a need to include pedestrian crossings.

Commissioner Wendle said he uses the corridor in his vehicle and for running and biking. The section near the pediatric clinic presents a problem; including a two-way left-turn lane there could preclude adding facilities for pedestrians and bikes. The biggest problem with the corridor is the lack of accommodations for pedestrians and bikes. Mr. Krawczyk said the intent of the design report will be to highlight current conditions and issues.

Commissioner Northey pointed out that the bike portion of the project will connect to the SR-520 trails. Accordingly, WSDOT should be willing to step up and help fund the project. Mr. Krawczyk said Bellevue staff are very interested in working with WSDOT to coordinate the SR-520 plans with the city's plans for Northup Way.

Commissioner Glass asked how the number of lanes for the road section relates to what is being discussed as part of the Bel-Red corridor study. Mr. McDonald explained that the Bel-Red modeling included a three-lane configuration for Northup Way. Commissioner Glass asked if the braided ramps on I-405 and SR-520 will impact any part of the Northup Way project. Mr. Krawczyk said the braid will impact Northup Way just after 116th Avenue NE and could present the city with an opportunity to gain some funding from WSDOT for the Northup Way project.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Wendle asked for an update regarding the traffic impact fee recommendation. Mr. Liljeblad said the feedback from the Council indicates more time needs to be spent on the issue. A consultant study will need to be queued up to generate and analyze a list of options, review the approaches taken by other jurisdictions, and to develop a recommendation.

Commissioner Glass noted that the Commission made no formal recommendation to the Council regarding the downtown circulator. The comments of the Commission were not in fact passed along to the Council. Mr. Liljeblad said there was an effort on the part of staff to let the Council receive the facts and make their own informed decision.

Commissioner Glass said the conclusion of the Commission was that at a cost of \$5 to \$6 per

rider the circulator would be too expensive to operate. The Commission felt that the issue should be tabled until the new highrises in the downtown are built and occupied. Mr. Liljeblad pointed out that the Council direction to proceed involves only the submittal of letters of interest. The outcome would then be a further fact-finding between the county and the city; the decision to fund or not is theirs to make. There were some comments from the downtown business community that were opposed to the circulator, but there was no opposition from the Commission expressed to the Council.

Commissioner Wendle stressed the need for staff to keep the Commission informed regarding when issues will be forwarded to the Council.

Commissioner Northey suggested that the work program for the balance of the year should be reviewed by the Commission with an eye on identifying the nature of the input to be provided by the commission for each item. Mr. Liljeblad said staff will be happy to do that.

Commissioner Northey proposed changing the start time for Commission meetings to 5:30 p.m.

Motion to change the Commission meeting start time from 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Northey. Second was by Commissioner Wendle and the motion carried unanimously.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Wendle reported that he intends to attend the August 14 joint Bellevue Downtown Association/Chamber of Commerce transportation committee meeting.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

12. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

The Commission reviewed the items scheduled for discussion in upcoming meetings.

B. Public Involvement Calendar

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yuen adjourned the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date