CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

August 18, 2010
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Glass, Lampe, Larrivee, Northey, Simas
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioner Jokinen
STAFF PRESENT:	Paul Krawczyk, David Berg, Eric Miller, Department of Transportation
GUEST SPEAKERS:	None
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Glass, who arrived at 6:02 p.m., Commissioner Northey, who arrived at 6:15 p.m., and Commissioner Jokinen who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS – None

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

Mr. Bernie Hayden, 2622 134th Avenue NE, called attention to two projects on the CIP recommendation, NE 2nd Street and Main Street, which is very important to the downtown area and the new waterfront park, and the Transit Now circulator, which seems to come up every other year but never gets funded. The new NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor project should be put on hold to free up funds. With the cross street improvements added in, the total project cost is close to $100 million, which coincidentally matches almost exactly with the total unfunded high- and medium-priority projects, all of which serve present day needs.

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

8. STUDY SESSION

B. 2011 –2017 CIP Plan Recommendation

Deputy Director David Berg sought feedback from the Commission on the list of projects recommended by the leadership team panel/results team; key points to be made in a memo to the City Council on the CIP in general; and comments on the unfunded list of high- and medium-priority projects that were identified by the leadership team. He said if the Commission wanted to, it could also work on ranking the list of unfunded projects should additional funding be identified.

Mr. Berg reminded the Commission that the revenue forecast for the 2011-2017 base CIP was $85 million less than for the 2009-2015 base CIP, not including the mobility and infrastructure initiative which is tied to a separate funding source. In a normal CIP cycle there would be about a $50 million increase. To make up the shortfall, programs had to be reduced and projects had to be removed.

The role of the cross-departmental leadership team panel/results team was to recommend a CIP that would move forward through the budget process. Their work was accomplished during the months of June and July. The list of criteria used was different from what the Commission has used in the past, which was based on a scoring, weighting and ranking process. The panel relied on a set of guiding principles and their own professional judgments in developing a project list that fit the financial constraints.

Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller said most of the transportation projects were submitted to the improved mobility results team under the Budget One process. The leadership team panel became the results team for all capital proposals across all outcome areas.

Referring to Attachment A of the memo from the leadership team panel to the Budget One steering team, Mr. Miller reminded the Commissioners that the staff pulled together a recommendation to consolidate some ongoing programs. For example, the suggestion was made to combine the overlay program with the curb/gutter/sidewalk rehabilitation program. Where in the past there have been some 15 ongoing programs, the recommendation from the panel combines them into only six under the improved mobility outcome and one under the innovative, vibrant and caring community outcome. The improved mobility ongoing programs totaled just short of $46 million.

The list of projects shown to the Commission in April and May were all prioritized projects selected from the adopted Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP). The panel reviewed those projects and adjusted the scopes with the dollar numbers to develop a list of discrete projects aimed at improving mobility with a total price tag of just over $101 million.

Commissioner Simas stressed the importance of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project in the Bel-Red corridor, but allowed that the economic circumstances have changed. He asked if the panel reviewed the reasonable timeframe in which the various projects should occur. Mr. Miller said the panel absolutely did that in the case of the 120th Avenue NE project. Segment 1 is proposed for full funding in their recommendation. Moving north, the project is divided into two segments, from NE 8th Street to NE 12th Street, and from NE 12th Street to Northup Way. The proposal would fully fund the design phase for Segments 2 and 3 and combine them into a single project. Grant applications for the corridor projects will be submitted, and having the

design work funded will help to advance them. The original $299 million package of projects under the mobility and infrastructure initiative would have fully funded the segment of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street project between 116th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE; the segment to the east out to 130th Avenue NE was unfunded and is not part of the panel's proposal. The recommendation would fully fund the design phase. Of the $32 million recommended for the project, almost $30 million is anticipated to come from projected impact fee revenues. Acquisition of right-of-way along the corridor will require the lion's share of those dollars. The project as recommended represents the smallest unit of project development that needs to be done to keep the project moving forward at a proper rate, and to position it for grant dollars.

Mr. Berg pointed out that the project's total cost of between $70 million and $80 million cannot be funded in any one CIP cycle without significant external resources. However, being able to advance key right-of-way acquisition ahead of redevelopment occurring will be vitally important.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lampke, Mr. Miller said the grant application being readied for the 120th Avenue NE corridor project is for $30 million.

Commissioner Northey pointed out that the Parks acquisition piece of the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street was not recommended for funding by the panel. The heart of the proposal was to build a community around a park, but absent the park there will only be a large transportation project. Mr. Miller said the Council received a presentation on August 2 relative to the various cross-section options for the corridor. They talked about the specific lane configurations on different segments, but they did not focus on the landscaping and park elements. Those conversations are yet to come.

Mr. Miller said the NE 4th Street extension project has a rough cost estimate of $40 million. Paying for that project will require a complicated package of funding strategies. As currently outlined, the package includes $7 million in state local revitalization financing; $5.6 million in federal grants, $2.3 million of which has been approved; $5.5 million from a local improvement district for the Wilburton connections area; $8 million from a Public Works Trust Fund loan; and $1.2 million from the mobility and infrastructure initiative limited term general obligation bonds based on the property taxes approved to date by the Council. Additional general fund dollars will be required to fully fund the project.

The list of recommended projects include $4.7 million to fund the first phase of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project from I-90 to SE 34th Street. The $8 million for the Northup Way project between Bellevue Way and NE 24th Street assumes a WSDOT contribution that is not yet secured but is being talked about with the state.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Larrivee, Mr. Miller said the $150,000 for the project to advance the vision for the Pedestrian Corridor is a placeholder amount for pre-design work aimed at furthering negotiations with the property owners along the corridor. Mr. Berg added that there have been discussions with some of the property owners about early implementation of their portions of the corridor. The visioning work needs to be done in advance.

Commissioner Larrivee asked what the East Link analysis and development project is expected to yield. Mr. Miller said the proposed $6.2 million will be used to coordinate with Sound Transit, to analyze various issues, and conduct traffic modeling and station-area planning work.

The intent is to give the city some local control rather than just handing everything over to Sound Transit.

Commissioner Northey asked why the panel chose not to fund the neighborhood traffic calming program, a program that has a significant level of community support. Mr. Miller said there was a lot of discussion about the various programs. Their recommendation was to eliminate the funding for the Phase 2 measures. Commissioner Northey said the move goes against the promises made by the city to protect neighborhoods from the overflow resulting from increasing capacity on arterials. Mr. Miller suggested the issue is one the Commission may want to comment on in its memo to the Council.

Commissioner Larrivee observed that the proposed list of projects includes essentially no transportation investment for those living in about 80 percent of the city. He said one could argue that most of the projects are aimed at improving mobility for people coming from outside the city.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Mr. Miller said impact fees all flow into a fund that can be used in any part of the city. The past approach involved a number of different districts, but the impact fees could be allocated to any of those districts. In practice, however, an attempt was made to spend the funds in the areas where they were collected. Over the history of the 15-year program, impact fees have generated about $1 million per year. The rate has been adjusted periodically, and the currently adopted rates are much higher than they have been in the past.

Commissioner Glass referred to the proposed allocation of $2.4 million for the public art program and asked if that amount represents a decrease or preservation of the historic level. Mr. Miller said the proposal represents a decrease, but he said he did not know the specific amount.

Commissioner Northey commented that over the years the Commission has developed a well-thought-out project selection and weighting strategy that is well balanced and keeps in mind the city's long-term vision. She said she could see no rationale for why that approach was not adhered to by the results team. The criteria they used do not look at outcome functionality of the system or geographic distribution. It is also very difficult to compare the list to past CIP recommendations. The move to expand the downtown across the freeway is questionable and has not been subjected to a great deal of public discussion. It would be better to focus on supporting the neighborhoods by providing sidewalks and addressing safety issues.

Commissioner Larrivee asked to what extent the NE 4th Street extension project will improve mobility issues in the Wilburton area. Mr. Miller said funding the project will trigger an upzone for a number of parcels in the area, some that front 116th Avenue and some that front 120th Avenue NE. Additionally, the extension will improve traffic flow from the downtown through the Wilburton area and into the Bel-Red corridor, providing a lot of relief to the NE 8th Street corridor.

Chair Tanaka said it all comes down to a policy call. While it is certain the Council will say it would like to spend more money in the neighborhoods, they also have to decide what is best for the economic vitality of the city. The Commission is free to express concerns about the allocation of funds.

Commissioner Simas pointed out that there are more people who work in Bellevue than live in Bellevue. If the city waits until there is a need for the NE 4th Street extension, it will be 15 years too late. City leadership has made a policy decision and the role of the Commission is to provide comment on how best to make that vision a reality. If the Commission sees that a critical element is missing, or can identify viable alternatives, it should by all means make those points known. The projects on the recommended list all will need to be done, though not necessarily all up front. The city should do all it can, however, to further each project in a way that will make it a good candidate for outside funding.

Commissioner Northey said the Council appears to be thinking that it can continue to do all the things that are important without providing additional financing. Moving ahead with the mobility initiative projects without increasing property taxes, relying instead on developing an LID and impact fee revenues, cannot be sustained. Where revenues are reduced and growth slows, implementation of the vision should be tempered as well.

Commissioner Glass said he would like to see the Commission's transmittal memo voice a concern about the level of assumed impact fees in the budget and whether or not it is realistic. As the economy improves growth will resume, but it takes years for big projects to ramp up.

Commissioner Northey commented that a healthy transportation infrastructure helps to keep up residential property values, which attracts families, keeps neighborhoods strong, and provides for a good tax base. The degree to which programs have been combined makes it very hard to know to what degree the overlay program, for instance, has been trimmed, if it has been cut back at all. Mr. Berg said the overlay program is proposed to be reduced by about 20 percent per year. That reduction, however, is predicated on the fact that the city's own pavement ratings in the residential areas and arterials are very high. Scaling it back for a couple of years will not be problematic.

Commissioner Northey proposed including in the transmittal memo a request to reinstate the neighborhood traffic calming program in the budget. She said she would like to review all of the unfunded programs and projects against the established criteria to determine a ranking order.

Mr. Berg pointed out that the process of applying the criteria used in the past is a staff-intensive effort for which there is insufficient time to work through prior to the Council receiving the preliminary budget in September. Mr. Miller added that the process would have limited value given the short list of unfunded projects.

Commissioner Simas asked what purpose would be served by having a prioritized unfunded list in light of the fact that there is limited funding available. He suggested that if unforeseen funds were to be identified, it would be just as efficient to have the Commission go over the entire list of unfunded projects and formulate a recommendation for how to allocate those funds based on circumstances at the time. Mr. Berg said that approach could have merit. He argued, however, that if the Council identifies additional revenues it will want to know what the citizens of Bellevue will be able to buy with it. If they are going to raise property tax rates, for instance, they will need to be able to show the public clearly what they will be getting in return. A large unprioritized list of projects does not yield that information. The transmittal memo could let the Council know the Commission's willingness to take on the task of prioritizing the list of unfunded projects should the Council feel that would bring some value to the table. Commissioner Simas said clearer instructions from the Council would be helpful.

Commissioner Glass said it was his understanding that the circulator project had been eliminated because King County Metro was to be a primary funder for it but they had dropped their funding portion. Mr. Miller said the city has an agreement with the county to fund the Transit Now initiative; their funding is essentially locked up by that agreement. The bigger issue for Bellevue is that the demand for the service given the current economic conditions is not as high as it was when the program was initially set up. In time the demand may increase and when it does there will need to be a negotiation between the city and Metro with regard to funding.

Commissioner Glass asked where the city is currently using the Transit Now dollars it is receiving from Metro. Mr. Miller said the downtown circulator was part of the initial package. Also in the package are bus rapid transit lines which are moving forward, especially the Overlake transit center line that follows NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE. The funds cannot be reallocated to other projects.

It was agreed the Commission would review and finalize the transmittal memo at its first meeting in September.

A. Election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair

Motion to nominate Chair Tanaka to serve as Chair was made by Commissioner Simas. Second was by Commissioner Northey.

There were no other nominations.

The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Simas to serve as Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Larrivee.

There were no other nominations.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. Commission Retreat Recap

Mr. Krawczyk noted that Councilmembers Lee and Balducci spoke at the retreat about their priorities. He suggested the Commission should have a discussion regarding what the Councilmembers had to say and develop a list of priorities.

Commissioner Northey thought it would be useful for the Chair to work with staff to develop a bullet point summary to help focus the discussion. Chair Tanaka said he would be willing to do that.

Commissioner Glass said he would like to see the Commission discuss ped-bike issues, specifically the need for bicycle safety and awareness education programs. He said lately there has been increased angst against cyclists on the part of motorists.

Chair Tanaka asked if the increased level of angst would show up in the number of police

reports filed. Commissioner Glass said where there are accidents involving injury there are police reports, but cases of close calls do not result in police reports.

Mr. Krawczyk said senior transportation planner Franz Lowenherz will be coming back to the Commission to discuss the ped-bike plan update. He should be able to provide some updates with regard to how other jurisdictions are handling the situation.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Lampe said it was his understanding that the light rail best practices committee talked about the formation of a citizen advisory panel to serve as a follow-up to their work. He asked if anything has ever come of that suggestion. Commissioner Northey said she remembers the committee talking about the need for an ombudsman while construction was under way. Mr. Krawczyk said he would provide Commissioner Lampe with the links to the work of the committee and its outcomes.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

13. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

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

B. Public Involvement Calendar

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Paul Krawczyk — 12/9/10
Secretary to the Transportation Commission — Date

Tom Tanaka — 12/9/10
Chairperson of the Transportation Commission — Date