CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 13, 2007 | Bellevue City Hall
5:30 p.m. | City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Wendle

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Maria Koengeter, Kris Liljeblad, Kristi Oosterveen, Eric Miller, Mike Ingram, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Carol Hunter, Washington State Department of Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 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 Holler, who was excused, and Commissioner Wendle.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald provided the Commissioners with copies of a communication from David Plummer regarding the Bel-Red corridor project, and copies of a memo from Transportation Planner Mike Rodney discussing transportation improvements in the Tam O'Shanter and Bretonwood areas.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass said he attended and participated in the July 24 Best Practices Committee meeting along with Commissioner Northey. He said the meeting was focused on getting the process started and did not cover anything of substance.

Chair Yuen said he attended the Meydenbauer Bay park open house on September 8. He said the weather was great and there was a good turnout. The project has gotten a lot of feedback from the community, many of whom are concerned about what the city intends to do with the properties on the upper side; they are opposed to the notion of the city constructing highrise buildings and retail uses, though the steering committee is not moving in that direction. The Department of Transportation will have a major role to play in planning for the roadway needs serving the park.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. I-90 Corridor Plan Update

Transportation Planner Maria Koengeter introduced Carol Hunter, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) project manager for the I-90 corridor plan. She said the plan is focused on the freeway section between Eastgate and North Bend and seeks to identify both medium- and long-term projects. The city through its studies have highlighted several projects that will feed into the plan.

Ms. Hunter explained that when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) gave the state approval to construct the Sunset interchange it was contingent on conducting a corridor study. WSDOT works closely with FHWA which has jurisdiction over interstate systems, particularly with regard to safety and mobility.

Ms. Hunter said WSDOT received $2 million in the 2005 transportation budget for the corridor study, though the study kickoff was delayed for a while to allow Initiative 912 to play out. In the meantime a study focused on constructing a new interchange at SR-18 and I-90. When Initiative 912 failed, the full corridor plan analysis was ramped up.

There is a lot going on between Seattle and North Bend on I-90. WSDOT recently established the I-90 corridor office within the larger office focused on building urban corridors. The office has been given jurisdiction over the I-90 corridor study and the two-way operation project. WSDOT is co-lead with Sound Transit on the East Link project. The I-90 components between Bellevue and Seattle will have a large impact on the eastern portion of the freeway corridor.

The outcome of the corridor plan will be an integrated analysis of the transportation needs and issues between Seattle and North Bend. The study will be used to identify some near- and long-term safety and mobility investments in the study area between Eastgate and North Bend. The importance of the corridor cannot be overemphasized; it is one of three interstate highways in Western Washington, all of which are interconnected. Currently, there is about $3.5 billion in regional and state projects either under construction or planned in the corridor

between Seattle and North Bend.

The I-90 freeway is the only interstate system in the state that crosses the mountains. Accordingly it must be understood that the congestion and safety issues associated with the Seattle/North Bend portion of the freeway have a decided impact on moving freight and other vehicles between the east and west sides of the state. I-5 serves commuters and freight as well as transit. The critical connections for I-90 are at SR-18, I-405, I-5 and SR-519.

Ms. Hunter said WSDOT has been actively involved in public outreach regarding the I-90 corridor. Some very thoughtful comments have been offered. Not surprisingly, a large number of the comments have been about the interchanges. I-405, though not technically included in the study area, is in the analysis area for the study and has an obvious impact. Eastgate is within the study area and has been the focus of a large number of comments from the public about the weaving and merging movements there. The issue is that significant growth took place after the I-90 freeway was designed and constructed.

In the Issaquah area, the public seems most concerned about SR-900 and Front Street. The Snoqualmie Tribe is building a casino at Exit 27, and many believe traffic will be impacted as a result. There is only a half diamond interchange there now, and the needs of that area will be included in the study. A great deal of support for getting light rail out to Issaquah has been voiced along with a desire for more local transit.

The need to move freight and goods quickly and efficiently has been mentioned often by the public, especially the business interests. The study will seek to gain a better understanding of how goods cross the mountains, how SR-18 is used to serve the Green River valley, how I-405 is utilized, and how goods make it to the Port of Seattle via I-5 over the I-90 floating bridge.

Quite a lot has been heard about where the westbound HOV lane terminates. Ms. Hunter explained that years ago when congestion was not nearly as bad as it is now, WSDOT saw an opportunity to extend an HOV lane by converting a general purpose lane; it operated quite well until three or four years ago when growth in the area exploded. The study will look at extending the HOV lane further to the east.

The corridor study will also deal with wildlife crossings. The Issaquah and North Bend areas have developed where the natural migration area of native elk and other species is dissected by I-90. There have been injuries and fatalities of both animals and people as a result.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Ms. Hunter explained that SR-519 is the connection with I-90 that provides access from the freeway to the Port of Seattle and the area around the stadiums in Seattle. The odd little ramps are very important connections and are relevant to the study in that they serve cross-mountain freight movement.

Chair Yuen suggested one way to deal with the movement of freight would be for the Port of Seattle to construct a distribution center on the east side of the mountains and utilize the rail

lines to move goods to and from Puget Sound. Ms. Hunter said that would be a good approach. She said WSDOT is hearing from companies like Costco and Safeway that are moving out largely because of congestion. Trucking companies have indicated that if they could avoid driving during peak hours they would, but the fact is that meeting the demands and schedules of their customers means they cannot do that.

Commissioner Tanaka suggested that the Port of Seattle will most likely support having a distribution center on the west side of the mountains, probably within five miles of the waterfront area.

Commissioner Tanaka asked how the truck traffic generally accesses the Kent valley where there are a number of distribution facilities. Ms. Hunter said they utilize both I-90 and SR-18 seeking the route of least delay. Gravel haulers actually hire people to go out and scout traffic then report back to indicate which areas should be avoided. Many of them elect to violate the HOV laws and factor in the expected tickets as a cost of doing business. The estimate is that 7500 trucks use the I-90 corridor between Seattle and North Bend every single week day, and that there is a two to three percent annual growth rate in that figure. The number of general passenger vehicles using the freeway is also steadily growing in the study area.

Ms. Hunter said the planning horizon is being pushed out to 2040. According to the Puget Sound Regional Council forecasts, the area can expect to see another 1.3 to 1.4 million people living in the four-county region by then.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked how the possibility of imposing congestion pricing on the western portion of I-90 could impact the eastern portion of the freeway. Ms. Hunter offered some background on the urban partnership. She explained that WSDOT has received only about $1.69 million of the $134 million total because the legislature has to approve legislation by 2008 or 2009. They have the option of sending that money back. A couple of studies have looked at the issue of establishing tolls. The SR-520 study has assumed tolls as the only way to pay for rebuilding the bridge. Some studies have assumed tolls on I-90 because of real possibility that having a toll on SR-520 will cause traffic to divert to I-90, though other studies have refuted that premise on the strength of the argument that SR-520 traffic cannot easily get to I-90. It will be up to the legislature to figure it all out. The study will not include a formal analysis of hot lanes or tolling on I-90, and will not assume any toll facilities on I-90.

Commissioner Northey asked if the study is to be conducted under an MOU signed by all stakeholders, and who signed off on the scope of the study. Ms. Hunter said there is no MOU; if there is an agreement, it would be between the R8A project and Sound Transit. Commissioner Northey said she would encourage the city to push to have an MOU for the study so that Bellevue can have some more influence on the scope; the study will be a big deal for the city.

Commissioner Northey suggested that the fact tolling will not be included is a major oversight

and asked how the city could go about pushing for a scope that does include tolling. Ms. Hunter said the scope for the study has been set, but there may be an opportunity to revisit the scope. The city could make its position known by sending a letter to David Dye in the WSDOT I-90 corridor office.

Commissioner Northey suggested the issue of sound walls in Eastgate should be included in the study as a mitigation measure.

Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said the City Council has given staff no direction to support any form of tolling in the region. The city has expressed to WSDOT some significant concerns about tolling and some principles that address how to deal with I-90, I-405, SR-520 and I-5 as a whole system. It is anticipated that the City Council will spend a significant amount of time on the issue in early 2008. The urban partnership grant requires legislative action by 2009 at the latest; the word on the street is that the legislature will begin working on the issue in 2008 and will take action in 2009.

Continuing, Mr. Sparrman noted that a legally binding agreement is already in place for the segment of I-90 to the west of I-405 between Bellevue, Mercer Island, Seattle, King County Metro, Sound Transit and WSDOT. The agreement is very specific with regard to what the signatories will and will not support in the corridor. However, to the east of I-405 there is no formal agreement in place. Staff is comfortable that the position of the city has been heard by those who need to hear it.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Ms. Hunter said the study will include on the list of possible improvements for the Eastgate area things like auxiliary lanes. She went on to say that the state does not have a lot of money, even in light of the recent gas tax increases. The revenues from the 2003 nickel tax and the 2005 gas tax increase are already committed to projects, some of which actually need additional funding. That leaves only pre-existing funds which over the next 16 years might generate between half a billion to one billion dollars for the region, and there will be a lot of competition for those dollars.

B. Transportation Commission Calendar Review

Mr. Sparrman said the recent direction provided by the Council regarding the role of the Commission will allow staff to focus more clearly on bringing forward items of substance and meaning to the Commission. He commented that a number of very complex issues have been handed to the Transportation Department, and the next two to five years will prove to be very interesting; much of what has been studied over the past few years is coming to a head and it is time to make things happen. The Bel-Red corridor study has wrapped up and the time to develop an implementation plan has come; the Commission will have a role to play in determining projects, policies, phasing and financing.

Mr. Sparrman said the Transportation Department is under a great deal of pressure as a result of the increased workload. Some areas of the department actually have seen staff reductions

over the past few years as a consequence of the economic downturn experienced a few years ago. Internal conversations are being held focused on how to address the upcoming challenges in light of the upcoming mid-biennial budget negotiations and the full budget process that will be undertaken in 2008. The Transportation Department will be looking at how to organize and staff the key priorities as they are selected by the City Council; a part of that will be how to best support the Transportation Commission.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said there has often been a placeholder agenda item aimed at identifying upcoming study issues along with a calendar. Too often, however, staff has not given the Commission an opportunity to engage in the conversation in advance regarding various agenda items. Questions are often raised by the Commission regarding upcoming work and the workload.

Mr. Liljeblad said the responsibilities of the Commission were set out in 1989 at the time the Commission was formed. At that time the Council was very anxious about growth management generally. There was no history associated with implementing levels of service and concurrency, and there were questions about how to make it all work. The Commission was charged with providing advisory policy recommendations to the Council, to hold public hearings in the Council's stead, and to pay careful attention to the implementation of the Traffic Standards Code. In addition, the Commission was directed to look at short- and long-term funding programs for transportation facility improvements, short-term planning studies, the CIP, transportation improvement programs, implementation of the ped-bike system, construction and design standards, and other Council-directed activities. The Commission was also to coordinate broadly with other boards and commissions. All of those activities remain the core of the work of the Commission.

In 1993 the Council added long-range transportation planning to the list of Commission priorities and acknowledged that there was a certain amount of push and pull with the Planning Commission. It was clarified at that time that the Planning Commission would continue in the role as keeper of the Comprehensive Plan. The Council also clarified that the Planning Commission was not to get involved in managing the transportation system.

More recently, the Council tackled the issue of how to deal with matters that concern more than one commission. They took a look at the roles and responsibilities of all boards and commissions. For the Transportation Commission, the direction given was to review the annual concurrency report produced by the Department of Transportation and forward any recommended changes to the Council. The Commission was also directed to look at grant candidate projects and to potentially weigh in on funding applications and financing strategies, and to engage with ongoing travel demand management programs. The Commission was also directed to take a very proactive role with regard to the ped-bike plan, and to eliminate from its responsibilities any role in determining construction design standards.

The primary role of the Transportation Commission is to be advisory to the City Council. However, because of the long-range planning component, the Transportation Commission

must also serve in an advisory capacity to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Liljeblad briefly reviewed the Commission calendar through the end of the year and highlighted the items to be covered.

Commissioner Northey said it would be very helpful to have flow charts showing the major milestones of the Commission review process to help clarify which policy issues will be dealt with and in what order they should come before the Commission. Mr. Liljeblad agreed that each project should have an overall calendar associated with it. He agreed that the policy issues involved should be made clear as each project is brought forward.

Noting that the Commission has been asked to play a more active role with regard to the ped-bike plan, serving in place of the CAC, Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked if the task should be tackled by the Commission as a whole or by forming a subcommittee. Mr. Liljeblad said the level of content to be addressed is being worked out with Franz Lowenherz and Kevin O'Neill. It is always a challenge for staff to break down the specifics into a form that can be digested by the Commission. It is made more difficult when there is no CAC in place to do some of that work. The plan calls for setting aside some Commission meetings in which the primary content will be the ped-bike plan.

Commissioner Tanaka said the formation of a subcommittee of Commissioners would need to be structured so as not to violate the Open Meetings Act. He asked how a subcommittee would work. Commissioner Van Valkenburgh suggested the subcommittee would have the time to drill deeper into the specific issues and then report back to the full Commission. The Commission has only a limited amount of time to give to the issue, less than what would be needed to do a complete analysis.

Chair Yuen proposed that the work of boiling down the issues into their component parts should be done by staff. As staff brings the matters forward, the Commission may decide that more information is needed and direct the staff to work on it. Individual Commissioners who think they need more information can always elect to meet one-on-one with staff.

Mr. Liljeblad said a lot of work has already been done on the ped-bike plan, and the Commission will have a better understanding of where things lie following the briefing scheduled for September 27.

Mr. Liljeblad said the proposed joint boards and commissions meeting to discuss the Bel-Red Corridor Project slated for October 10 is unprecedented. By meeting together, each group will be brought up to speed at the same time, and each group will get the same message about the content of the project plan.

Mr. Sparrman said the Commission will be soon be getting a briefing regarding the Department of Transportation strategic plan. He said the department has not had an official strategic plan for some time. There has always been a desire to pull together the various pieces

into a single cohesive plan. The accreditation process the department is currently undergoing with the American Public Works Association requires a strategic plan.

Mr. Liljeblad allowed that scheduling meetings around the time of the holidays is always difficult. However, with the current workload it will be very important for the Commissioners to make as many of the meetings as possible.

Answering a question asked by Chair Yuen, Mr. Liljeblad said the content of the Bel-Red corridor implementation plan is quite substantial. There are questions to be answered about phasing and the mechanisms that can be put in place to make sure land use and transportation investments proceed in a concurrent way. The Transportation Commission will have nearly as many difficult decisions to make as the Planning Commission.

Chair Yuen asked if the meeting slated for December 27 could be moved over to the first meeting in January. Mr. Sparrman stressed that the Commission controls its own schedule and can make that decision. He explained that there is a desire to have the broader implementation program largely finished by the end of the first quarter of 2008, which may in fact prove to be over ambitious.

Commissioner Northey questioned how much weight the recommendation of the Commission will have with the Council, noting that the Commission could invest a great deal of time without having much influence on the outcome. She expressed reluctance to commit such a huge amount of time without even knowing if the Council wants the Commission to weigh in on the policy issues. Mr. Sparrman said it is not possible to read the mind of the Council in advance. What is known, however, is that the Council has been very clear about laying out the roles for each of the city's boards and commissions, and the proposed work item fits within the Commission's charge. The Council is set to receive the final Bel-Red corridor steering committee recommendation on September 24, and to act on it on October 1. The assumption is that the Council will elect to send the steering committee recommendations to the respective boards and commissions to begin the process of developing an implementation plan.

Commissioner Northey questioned whether it will be possible for her to attend meetings on both October 10 and 11. She asked if the meeting on October 11 could be rescheduled. Mr. Liljeblad allowed that the Commission could elect to carry the October 11 agenda items over to another day of the month, but he stressed that each of the items to be covered is important.

Mr. McDonald said the reason the Bel-Red corridor issue is on the agenda the day after receiving the official charge is to keep the momentum going and to fit within the direction to have the implementation plan ready by the end of the first quarter of 2008. He added that because the October 10 meeting will be hosted by the Planning Commission, theirs will be the only Commission required to have a quorum present, but stressed the need for as many Commissioners as possible to attend. Mr. Liljeblad said another approach would be to hold a separate Transportation Commission meeting on October 10 either preceding or following the joint meeting. Mr. Sparrman said staff will accommodate the Commission however necessary.

Chair Yuen urged the Commission to move ahead with the meeting schedule as proposed.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh asked if the joint meeting could be televised. Mr. Liljeblad said that would have to be explored.

No motions were made to amend the schedule of meetings.

C. Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) Update

Capital Programming Coordinator Kristi Oosterveen explained that the TFP has a couple of different elements to it, one of which is the project list. She explained that the list is used as the basis for the impact fee program and the Environmental Impact Statement.

Ms. Oosterveen explained that the TFP is the city's 12-year intermediate planning document. Projects that come out of the various long-range plans, as well as staff-recommended projects, make up the candidate project list for the TFP. Projects on the final approved list are then used as candidates for the CIP. Adoption of the TFP is required by city code and is updated every other year, usually the off year of the two-year CIP cycle.

The next TFP will be for 2009-2020 time frame. Development of the project list will be spread out over several meetings. The current project list will be reviewed first, and staff will identify new candidate projects for consideration. The public involvement strategy will include Commission meetings, open house events, and use of the web; website has already been launched. The revenue projections will be discussed, the scoring criteria will be reviewed and discussed, and the candidate projects will be prioritized. Finally, the Commission's completed project list recommendation will be forwarded to the Council.

The current TFP includes 67 projects totaling $184.4 million. To date, 14 of the projects on the list have been completed representing $48.8 million. Another 23 projects have full or partial funding. The list of projects that are not fully funded totals $159.6 million.

Ms. Oosterveen shared with the Commission some photos of completed TFP projects.

Commissioner Tanaka asked about the process of ranking the projects on the list. Ms. Oosterveen explained that there is an established scoring system that will be utilized.

Ms. Oosterveen reviewed with the Commission the preliminary TFP update timeline.

Commissioner Northey commented that one of the Commission's ongoing struggles is the percentage of the TFP and/or CIP should be dedicated to ped-bike as opposed to roadway/intersections. Whether that discussion takes place early in the process or not, some time should be set aside for the discussion.

D. Great Streets Update

Transportation Planner Mike Ingram said the Great Streets project has progressed to the point of having draft concept developed for street corridors in the downtown. The project is predicated on the downtown plan which, among other things, points out the need to make the downtown a more accommodating place for pedestrians and a more attractive place to walk. Developers in the downtown area are asking to be allowed to produce different kinds of frontage improvements than the basic standard of 12- to 16-foot concrete sidewalks and street trees every 25 feet protected by iron grates. The downtown plan gives direction for distinguishing the various corridors to match the purposes they serve.

Six public workshops were held as part of the Great Streets project, two in June and two in July. Those who attended the first four workshops were asked for input regarding issues, opportunities and problems. That input was used to generate some draft conceptual designs, which were shared with the public during the two August workshops.

Mr. Ingram said specific corridor plans have been developed for Bellevue Way, 106th Avenue NE, 108th Avenue NE, NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street. Other downtown streets will be addressed through a toolkit of options developers can choose from as they develop their projects. There is existing design guidance already in place for some of the downtown streets, including the NE 6th Pedestrian Corridor and NE 11th Street near the library. The Great Streets project is not seeking to change those guidelines. In addition, NE 2nd Street is the focus of another project that will identify what it should look like as it changes from four lanes to five lanes. Also under way is the initiative to link Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay.

The architecture firm of Mithun was engaged to help with the urban design and landscape architecture aspects of the Great Streets project. They brought in a project artist to participate as part of the team. The notion of Bellevue as a city in a park has been at the core of the project, primarily because the downtown area could be much greener than it is. The downtown plan has a framework for parks and open space; some of the facilities exist, but others remain concepts. The plan envisions a focal point at 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street.

Mr. Ingram noted that the superblock layout of the downtown yields far fewer streets than is common in traditional urban areas. Portland is at the other extreme in that it has small blocks and 42 percent of its downtown in street right-of-way. About 37 percent of downtown Seattle is in street right-of-way, while in Bellevue only 18 percent of the downtown area is in street right-of-way. As a result, each street in downtown Bellevue must work that much harder in accommodating traffic and pedestrians.

The public offered several key messages. They highlighted the fact that the interface with Downtown Park is not at all what is could and should be; it is neither visually nor physically accessible from Bellevue Way. The need to provide for better buffers between vehicles and pedestrians was also called out. With regard to the pedestrian bridges, the lack of accessibility from the street level was mentioned as an issue. Residents living in the north end of the

downtown said their area has fewer pedestrian amenities and noted that pedestrian-scale lighting would help make walking more comfortable.

Mr. Ingram said four concepts for standard treatments of street frontages have been developed as part of the project. The standard treatment calls for an eight- to ten-foot clear zone and a more robust landscape zone. The code standard for all of the sidewalks along Bellevue Way between Main Street and NE 12th Street is 16 feet wide which can accommodate the proposed clear area along with a fairly extensive landscaped area punctuated periodically by elements such as bike racks, artistic elements, and benches. One strategy is to introduce a vertical element to allow for a landscape buffer between moving traffic and seating benches.

Another variation on the standard segment would allow for a clear zone of eight feet and more activities or encumbrances along the building zone, such as planters or outdoor tables for restaurants. The approach may be more appropriate toward the north end of Bellevue Way.

Allowing for individual residential building entries is yet another variation on the standard. While probably not appropriate for Bellevue Way, there are other areas of the downtown where it would be appropriate. The pattern is used successfully in Portland.

Mr. Ingram explained that the neighborhood retail standard treatment requires a wider sidewalk section to allow for sidewalk cafés. Cafés that serve alcohol must include a solid barrier around the outdoor seating areas, something that could not comfortably be accommodated with a 16-foot sidewalk section.

The street rights-of-way in Bellevue are narrow enough that most of them must be used for accommodating traffic. Most of the sidewalks are located on private property secured through easements. As a result, sidewalks eat into the potential building footprint of projects. Developers say their clients are not clamoring for space to put in sidewalk cafés and pay higher rents in order to do so. If the city decides the approach would be of value in select locations, it will be necessary to offer the development community something in return in the form of density incentives.

Mr. Ingram shared with the Commission a map color coded to indicate where each of the various treatments would be appropriate. The map also highlighted where corner treatments are required in the Land Use Code. The code does not, however, specify an exact vision of what the corner treatments are supposed to look like.

Chair Yuen asked if bicycles are permitted to be ridden on sidewalks in the downtown. Mr. Ingram said the city discourages them in the downtown but allowed that it is legal to ride on sidewalks anywhere in the city. The level of bicycle accommodation generally in the downtown area is inadequate. There are designated bicycle routes on 100th Avenue NE, 108th Avenue NE and on 112th Avenue NE. Bellevue Way through the downtown area is not a designated bicycle route, though it is both to the north and south of the downtown.

The Land Use Code requires midblock pedestrian routes through each superblock in the downtown. Some have already been developed; others exist only conceptually. There is money in the supplemental CIP to implement seven midblock street crossings, so staff has embarked on a mission to gather data and evaluate where they might be feasible. By current policy, midblock crossings will not be introduced along auto-biased streets.

There are medians existing at NE 6th Street. Mithun has suggested additional medians were feasible along Bellevue Way. The downtown plan gives direction to prohibit midblock left-turn lanes on Bellevue Way, NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street, so all of the currently existing ones will over time be eliminated, allowing for the potential for medians.

Commissioner Tanaka referred to the handout materials and asked what "celebrated intersections" are. Mr. Ingram said one concept suggested by Mithun and mentioned often by a range of stakeholders is the notion of all-way walk phases on Bellevue Way at NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Van Valkenburgh, Mr. Ingram said the current Land Use Code allows for pedestrian bridges at eight locations in the downtown, two on Bellevue Way, three on NE 8th Street and three on NE 4th Street. Going into the process, Mithun was skeptical regarding the use of pedestrian bridges, but the public voiced support for them as a safe way for pedestrians to cross the busy streets.

Mr. Ingram pointed out that the plan calls for pocket plazas to the north of NE 9th Street. He said they are not currently elements of the Land Use Code. Pocket plazas are required in the core design district between NE 9th Street and NE 3rd Street; the spaces can be either open or enclosed. When Bellevue Square was built out to Bellevue Way about five years ago, the requirement was addressed by constructing the lodge next to Starbucks. Mithune thinks the spaces would be particularly appropriate at the interface point of the midblock pedestrian routes.

The vision calls for the development of an art walk connecting City Hall to the waterfront via the Pedestrian Corridor, Bellevue Way, through Downtown Park and on to the waterfront at Meydenbauer Bay. The art walk is not part of the downtown plan; it was conceived by the Arts Commission in 2006 and has been endorsed by the City Council. The segment along Bellevue Way is within the purview of the Great Streets project and is a key element. As envisioned by Mithun, it would have a ten-foot clear zone, a planting zone, and in addition a more extensive planting area punctuated by feature elements, including art and water, which is one of the key themes of the art walk.

Mr. Ingram said there are a variety of ways by which the theme of water can be expressed along the art walk. One of them is a runnel that would capture storm water from the buildings, channel it under clear glass blocks in the sidewalks, and allow it to flow into a rain garden planting zone. How it will all play out in actuality will have much to do with the developer.

The Parks and Community Services Board would like to see additional frontage acquired to the south of NE 4th Street on Bellevue Way along Downtown Park to provide more exposure for the park. That will ultimately be a function of the park master plan. The concept Mithun had was to acquire the additional property and activate it with vendors and the like.

Mr. Ingram said the one of the public workshops was focused entirely on the NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street corridors. The importance of the landmark tree on the corner of NE 8th and 106th Avenue was recognized, as was the attractive plaza in front of the Symetra building. Residents living to the north and south of the downtown all said they have their favorite way to walk to the downtown, many of which involve the midblock routes. Both NE 8th Street and NE 4th Street were highlighted as barriers to the surprise of no one. Quite a lot of major development is in the works for NE 8th Street, with the Bravern at one end, Washington Square in the middle and Bellevue Place/Bellevue Place/Lincoln Square at the other end. One method mentioned for making NE 8th Street a good place to walk was to require periodic setbacks beyond the standard 16 feet.

The recommendation for NE 8th Street is for a standard frontage improvements for most of the corridor, a potential new pedestrian bridge, medians where feasible, and saving existing trees where possible. The concept includes gateway elements at either end of the corridor, including within the cloverleaves near I-405.

A unique "Green Walk" treatment has been identified for the segment between 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE where the existing buildings have been setback significantly from the sidewalk. The concept is for a through zone on the sidewalk and an area that is further away from the street serving as more of a people place.

The standard typology is envisioned for NE 4th Street as well. On the north side where it has not yet been fully built out the concept is for a terraced treatment elevated above the traffic. The concept was inspired by the One Bellevue Center building design.

Mr. Ingram noted that 106th Avenue NE is designated in the downtown plan as an entertainment street. The street is located between the shopping street of Bellevue Way and the commerce street of 108th Avenue NE. Restaurants located along the corridor can serve the business and shopping uses. The street is home to the annual arts fair that requires the street to be closed. The street does not connect with the downtown from the north and the south so it does not handle through traffic in the way some of the other streets do.

One of the key characteristics of 108th Avenue NE is that it connects through to the neighborhoods both north and south of the downtown, which makes it a very attractive bicycle and pedestrian route. The public highlighted the corridor as a place for spontaneous interaction between people from different backgrounds and heritages. It was also recognized that 108th Avenue NE is situated on a ridge and can be readily seen from a distance looking toward the downtown. There is the potential for a wider sidewalk cross section on 108th Avenue NE, especially on the sunny side of the street where redevelopment has yet to occur.

Commissioner Northey questioned putting bicycles on 108th Avenue NE, which serves as a major bus route. Mr. Ingram said the ped-bike plan recognizes 108th Avenue NE as a bicycle route. How to accommodate bikes on the street, however, is still a question being evaluated. Commissioner Northey said it does not make sense to be putting bikes on a road that is a major route serving the transit center.

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh said she saw nothing in the plan from a design perspective about accommodating the downtown circulator. Mr. Ingram said the major impact of the circulator in terms of interfacing with the streets will be the addition of four new bus stops. Commissioner Van Valkenburgh said there may be shelters and other pedestrian amenities needed for the circulator. Typologies in keeping with the work that has been done relative to the circulator should be discussed and shown in the plan.

Mr. Ingram said the Great Streets project offers the city an opportunity to help define the 108th Avenue NE segment. Many who work on the commerce street arrive while it is dark and leave after dark. Introducing unique pedestrian-scale streetlights has been highlighted by Mithun as a way to give the roadway an identity.

With regard to the art component of the project, Mr. Ingram explained that from the beginning there have been planning artists onboard the consultant team. Their charge in going forward was to work with the concepts in the downtown plan and the art walk concept endorsed by the Council while thinking more broadly about how what is characteristic about Bellevue can be expressed through art. There is a fair amount of public art in place in the downtown, but none of it has been brought about under the auspices of a broad framework or vision.

The framework vision developed by the planning artists was presented for the first time to the Arts Commission on September 11. The Commission unanimously endorsed it. The plan involves the identification of a number of circuits of art, including the art walk. Water is identified as another circuit, one which parallels the art walk, expressed both in physical form and as a concept. Water is identified as a theme along NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street and could take the form of water captured and used to feed rain gardens; the topography of those streets would make it possible to express the actual flow of water. Other circuits expressed in the plan include shopping, commerce, entertainment, and civic. Underlying all of the art is the concept of flow.

The Commissioners were shown photos representing how the art concepts could play out.

Mr. Ingram said the next steps will be to further refine the concepts and to develop draft final designs using input from the boards and commissions as well as the Bellevue Downtown Association. Endorsement of the design concepts by the City Council will be sought on November 19. The supplemental CIP money will need to be spent by 2009, so the idea is to get some improvements on the ground in the next couple of years.

Commissioner Tanaka noted that one of the public comments was that people should be encouraged to get out of their cars and walking around. He asked to what degree parking is an issue in accomplishing that. Mr. Ingram said it was surprising that parking did not come up as an issue in the process. He said over the course of the years the need for more parallel parking has been raised. Introducing parallel parking in the off-peak hours would benefit the pedestrian experience. If the 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE corridors were to operate as one-way couplets, fewer travel lanes would be needed and more parallel parking could be created.

Commissioner Northey commented that there are 16-foot sidewalks in the downtown because of an anticipation of growing numbers of pedestrians. While those predictions have not come true yet, an eight- to ten-foot sidewalk cross section clearly will not be adequate. She cautioned against allowing narrower sidewalks, especially if the end result is pedestrian benches placed adjacent to very busy arterials. The Commission should stress the need to maintain sufficient sidewalk capacity and function. Options for on-street parking should also be considered.

It was agreed Commission should be allowed to see the final plan and offer amendments as appropriate.

Commissioner Glass said he supports the idea of planting more landmark and street trees. He suggested, however, that the significance of landmark trees could be lost if too many of them are planted. Mr. Ingram explained that the trees are a legacy of Bellevue's past. A large number of trees have been lost to development and redevelopment, and the concept is to use the Great Streets project as an opportunity to introduce for the future something that will become a landmark, especially at key intersections along the 108th Avenue NE ridgeline.

Commissioner Glass asked if the bulk of the improvements will be done through incentives or requirements. Mr. Ingram suggested the standard treatment could be implemented as a requirement given that it is consistent with the Land Use Code. Anything beyond the standard treatment would have to be brought about through incentives.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Northey encouraged the Commissioners to read Mr. Plummer's letter. She noted that he has raised some issues about the Bel-Red corridor planning process that are of concern and should be addressed.

Commissioner Glass said he signed up for the email notification for the Transportation Commission and Planning Commission agendas but has not received them. Mr. McDonald said he will look into that.

Commissioner Glass asked what the process of the city is where construction projects take up rights-of-way. Mr. McDonald said he would research the issue and provide the Commission with an answer.

Commissioner Northey said she recently had occasion to ride on the new pervious surface pathway on the west side of 140th Avenue NE. She noted that two of the sections are still dirt and gravel without signage to let riders know of the change. Mr. McDonald said the intent is to have a paved surface for the length of the pathway, all of which exists on public right-of-way.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 14, 2007

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Northey and the motion carried unanimously.

12. REVIEW CALENDAR

A. Commission Calendar and Agenda

The Commission reviewed the items scheduled for discussion in upcoming meetings. Mr. McDonald noted that the joint boards and commissions meeting scheduled for October 10 will begin at 6:00 in Room 1E-113.

B. Public Involvement Calendar

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Northey and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Yuen adjourned the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

_____ _____

Secretary to the Transportation Commission Date

_____ _____

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission Date