

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 27, 2005
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bell, Vice Chair Young, Commissioners Glass, Holler, Northey, Wendle

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Yuen

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Eric Miller, Jen Benn, Kristi Oosterveen, Jin Ren, Judy Clark, Kris Liljeblad, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Yuen who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Franz Loewenherz called attention to the memo from Rick Logwood, Capital Projects Manager, regarding the reasons behind the decision made to not include ped/bike facilities with the new NE 10th Street overcrossing when it is constructed.

Mr. Loewenherz informed the Commissioners that the meeting touting the benefits of rubberized asphalt is scheduled for October 29 from 10:00 a.m. to noon in City Hall. The presentation is sponsored by the Eastside Citizens for Responsible Development in combination with several communities.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Glass reported on his attendance at the initial Bel-Red Corridor Project steering committee meeting earlier in the day. He said staff laid out for the group the scope of the study, and one of the consultants presented an initial analysis of the economics of the corridor. An open house event is planned for November 9.

Commissioner Glass said he also attended the last Ped/Bike Citizen Advisory Group meeting. There was discussion regarding the fact that there is no good crossing over I-405, and disappointment with having no facilities associated with the new NE 10th Street overcrossing.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Grant Candidate Prioritization Process

Grants Administrator Jen Benn explained that no two grant programs are the same, so there is no set process for prioritizing projects. There are timing issues that sometimes give staff only a couple of weeks to prepare an application; at other times the application deadline is months away. Some grant programs provide specific criteria, while others do not.

Comprehensive Plan Policy TR-105 provides the basis for seeking outside grant funding for transportation projects. The policy is broadly written and allows the city to go after funding for every component of the work of the Department of Transportation, including safety, maintenance, operations and capital projects.

Ms. Benn said there are four steps to the process, beginning with a notice of grant availability. That is followed by casting a wide net to capture all of the candidate projects that might be eligible for the particular grant program. Once the candidate project list is compiled, staff works to prioritize the list. Finally, a decision is made with respect to which applications are to be made.

In order to be successful in applying for grants, it is necessary to keep in mind the funder. Funders reward grants to projects that will help them meet their own objectives. If a project does not accomplish that task, it will not be accepted regardless of how much it is needed or how much it will improve the transportation picture locally.

In casting the net to generate a candidate list, staff is careful to keep the universe as wide as possible. Projects on existing prioritized lists are considered first, including the CIP and TFP. Projects on other lists are considered as well, including the TIP and long-range planning studies adopted by the Council. Emerging safety needs are not typically highlighted in any of the project lists, so staff is consulted and asked for recommendations; past community input on

file is also reviewed. The funder's perspectives and priorities are then compared against the city's perspectives and priorities; often that highlights matches.

Commissioner Young asked if an existing funded project can be eligible for a grant. Ms. Benn allowed that they are, provided that the work has not already been started. She added that funded projects are the city's top priorities in seeking outside funding.

Ms. Benn explained that where a grant program has specific criteria associated with it, the criteria are objectively applied to the list of candidate projects to see how each stacks up. Research is also done to determine how the funding agency historically has rated things and what their recent trends have been. In some cases staff meets with representatives of the funding agency to get more specifics and input.

Projects must have policy support; they must be in the Comprehensive Plan or be related in some way to a current initiative. Ms. Benn commented that if a high-scoring project along the Bel-Red corridor were to come in, it likely would be given a low ranking because the area is currently under review and it cannot be said what will come out of that study. Projects must also have community support; projects that have been subjected to public scrutiny and have generated general support are given a higher priority. The work load of staff must be considered as well; grants should not be sought for projects that staff will not be able to address for some time. The availability of local funding is also a very important part of the project ranking process.

Projects that are currently in the CIP with either full or partial funding are given the highest priority. If funds are received for projects that are fully funded, CIP dollars can be freed and shifted to other projects. Projects with programmatic funding are given the next highest priority; that allows for drawing any matching dollars required by the grant program from program funds. Unfunded projects from the TFP that have scored well and which have no direct link to programmatic elements are last in line. Careful consideration is given to whether or not an unfunded project should be advanced, because doing so forces the hand of Council to change the budget and adopt the project as a priority should a grant that does not fully cover the project be awarded. The NE 10th Street extension project is a good example of a project that has been elevated in status and for which grants have been requested because of an important emerging need.

Commissioner Young asked if a project could be given a higher ranking because it is eligible for grant funding and then have its grant applications turned down, leaving in the CIP a project that otherwise would not have been funded. Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller said that occurs with some regularity. So long as the projects are in the CIP, applications for other grants can be made.

Continuing, Ms. Benn said once the prioritization and mock scoring exercises are completed, the data is brought before a set of key decision makers. Out of that review comes the

department directive to apply for specific grants for specific projects. There are times, however, when applications require the signature of the City Manager or approval by the City Council.

Ms. Benn walked the Commissioners through the typical steps taken once a directive has been issued to apply for grant dollars, the program highlighted was the TIB Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Program. She noted that the program is focused on building sidewalks that create safer pedestrian environments and on making critical connections. Staff scored the CIP, TFP TIP and long-range planning studies for projects that might qualify; a total of nine candidate projects were identified. The nine projects were then prioritized, first based on the funder's priorities and then based on the city's priorities. Three projects rose to the top: Bel-Red Road between NE 24th Street and NE 30th Street; NE 24th Street; and NE 8th Street. The first two received the top scores and the departmental direction given was that both should be submitted for grant funding. In scoping the Bel-Red Road project it was found that it would trigger the water retention requirements; that more than doubled the preliminary project cost, which made the required match more than the Pedestrian Access program can bear. Accordingly, the project was pulled out of the application process. However, because the project scored so well it was added to the list of projects for consideration in the TFP. The NE 24th Street project was submitted, and on November 18 the city will find out if the grant application was successful.

Ms. Benn said the application process produces results. The city's grant portfolio averages between \$10 million and \$15 million. Funding agencies continue to be impressed with how well Bellevue delivers on grant-funded projects.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Glass, Ms. Benn explained that not every funding agency requires a local match. Mr. Miller said some programs have a minimum match, but if the grant award and the local match will not fully cover the cost of the program, the city must identify funding for the balance, in essence making the city's match far greater than the minimum.

Commissioner Northey observed that the adopted long-range plans generally include an enormous number of projects. It is precisely because the city's resources are limited that the exercise to develop the CIP and TFP project lists is undertaken; the projects that make it onto those lists are the projects that have scored the highest. She expressed concern over casting the net too widely in seeking projects that might be eligible for grant funding; in doing so, projects may be elevated in priority simply because they are eligible for a grant.

Commissioner Wendle noted that consideration is being given to applying for funding for planning studies for the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project. Ms. Benn said the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project is very large and the city will not be able to plunk the full cost down on it. With grant dollars received for planning, the project can be brought to the 50 percent design stage, the point at which it is possible to identify project segments which individually may be easier to fund and proceed to construction. Mr. Miller added that projects

at the 50 percent design phase are more attractive for construction grants.

B. TFP: Review Project Scoring

Kristi Oosterveen, CIP Coordinator, provided the Commissioners with copies of the scored project lists. She noted that Attachment 1 contained the roadway/intersection projects, Attachment 2 the pedestrian/bicycle projects, and Attachment 3 the maintenance and alternative analysis projects. She explained the criteria weighting changes directed by the Commission on October 13 have been integrated, adding that the projects on Attachment 3 are not subject to the scoring criteria.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Young, Ms. Oosterveen explained that the projects on Attachment 1 and Attachment 2, which were designated with two asterisks, are those that were scored against both the roadway/intersection and pedestrian/bicycle criteria. That was done because the projects have elements of both and there was a desire to know how they might score in each category.

Mr. Miller said the staff-recommended prioritized candidate project list will not be compiled until after the November 10 open house.

Referring to Attachment 1, Commissioner Young asked what the adjusted raw score columns indicate. Ms. Oosterveen said they represent the adjustment made for the criteria weighting. The raw scores were developed by staff.

Commissioner Northey suggested that knowing where the financial cut-off line is would narrow the number of projects to be discussed. Commissioner Glass allowed that while that might be true, bigger projects like West Lake Sammamish Parkway will not make the cut because of their size and therefore will not be on the table for discussion. Commissioner Young said that is an argument in favor of funding planning studies that make it possible to know how to break down the larger projects into manageable components. Mr. Miller agreed and said the argument can be made in favor of including placeholders in the TFP to get design work to the 50 percent level and to provide seed money for grants.

Chair Bell asked if there would be any advantage in having the planning studies listed separately. Mr. Miller said that approach could be worked into the staff recommendation. He added that as far as West Lake Sammamish Parkway is concerned, the project has already been through the study phase and needs money for implementation.

Commissioner Northey suggested that it would be helpful to have the list reduced to some degree for the benefit of the public at the open house. She proposed pulling off the lowest third of the projects to make it a more workable size.

Commissioner Wendle said he would be reluctant to take that course without knowing what the

costs are for each project, noting that some of the projects may have relatively small price tags. He suggested that the some of the columns of the attachments could be eliminated to show just a single score. He said it will be helpful for the public to see the list of candidate projects and to understand that not all of them will make the cut.

Ms. Oosterveen said columns with estimated project scores and costs is not typically included at the general open house because it can lead to the public thinking prioritizing projects is based solely on those criteria. Commissioner Wendle disagreed with that premise. He said the opinions of the public are vitally important, including how they would rank projects based on cost. Ms. Oosterveen said staff will display the data at the open house in whatever format the Commission desires.

Commissioner Young supported the comments of Commissioner Wendle. He said the scoring data, including price, is valuable information and helpful in determining which projects are most important. The project descriptions are important, but that should not be the only thing shown.

Commissioner Glass said he could see the advantage in not showing the project scores in that people may not even bother to stay and comment when they see their favorite project received a low score.

In a straw vote, the majority of Commissioners agreed the projects should be portrayed at the open house in ranked order with their adjusted scores shown for the different categories, and also by project number order.

Commissioner Glass asked why West Lake Sammamish Parkway was given a zero for the regional score, noting that the roadway connects regional bicycle and vehicle routes. Ms. Oosterveen said the roadway is not shown in any plan as a regional facility. As written, the criteria has little to do with how a route works within the region.

Chair Bell suggested that West Lake Sammamish Parkway is one of the most important regional routes serving Bellevue and the area. He said the criteria should be revisited. Mr. Miller noted that the scoring exercise is only one step in the overall process. There will be opportunity to zero in on West Lake Sammamish Parkway and decide what its importance is irrespective of how well it scores against the criteria.

Commissioner Wendle proposed just throwing out the scores related to the regional criteria instead of taking the time to rescore the entire list.

Commissioner Northey had similar concerns with the LOS methodology. She claimed the criteria is not working as expected in that intersections that are projected to operate well continue to receive high LOS scores; such projects do not need to rise to the top because of their high LOS scores.

Mr. Miller argued against making a lot of changes to the criteria. With regard to the regional score, he noted that there are projects that scored well that should have scored well, especially in the BROTS area. No scoring system will work perfectly in every situation; every capacity project is different and has a different effect on levels of service both locally and throughout an entire MMA.

Chair Bell concurred. He allowed that minor tweaks to the criteria will not drastically affect the outcomes. The Commission should go to the public with the available data and hear what they have to say. During the next phase the Commission and staff will both have opportunity to argue in favor of or against projects regardless of their scores. Where adjustments need to be made, they will be made.

C. Concurrency Report

Modeling and Forecasting Manager Jin Ren explained that the city annually updates its transportation concurrency model and produces a concurrency report. Development in the city is on the rise, and it is necessary to stay on top of things to make sure the transportation system performance will continue to meet the concurrency standards. New completed capacity projects are added to the model along with capacity projects planned for the six-year horizon. Existing conditions are then compared against the previous year's conditions to mark pattern changes and to determine how completed CIP projects are helping with the performance of the traffic system.

Mr. Ren said the Growth Management Act requires every jurisdiction to provide infrastructure that will support land use growth and to establish standards of traffic operation. Bellevue's standards are based on the volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio for a total of 104 system arterial intersections in 14 established Mobility Management Areas (MMA). The V/C ratio is determined by measuring the two-hour PM peak traffic flow.

At the program level, the concurrency model tests how well the concurrency standards are being met citywide, both with and without the CIP projects. The model is then used to test individual development projects as they are submitted. Land use applications are approved or rejected based on part on how they will impact concurrency. All funded CIP capacity projects are included in the model assuming that they will be constructed within six years.

Mr. Ren said the MMA boundaries were drawn to define highly commercial areas, mixed commercial areas, and residential uses. Each has a different standard; in the highly commercial areas the standards anticipate and allow greater congestion, whereas in the residential areas the standards allow far less congestion. Development projects can be denied if they will cause the standards for a particular MMA to be exceeded.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Young, Mr. Ren said the two-hour PM peak

period represents about ten percent on average of the daily trips. The increase in PM peak period flow was about two percent between 2003 and 2004. The number of intersections where existing traffic failed to meet the LOS standard was four in both years. In the Downtown MMA where the bulk of Bellevue's future construction is planned to occur, there was a reserve capacity of 32 percent at the end of 2004; that was up two percent over 2003 owing to the completion of Access Downtown projects.

Ms. Clark shared with the Commissioners a map showing by geographic area where new development projects were brought on line between January 1, 2005, and June 30, 2005. She also showed a matrix summarizing the same information.

The Commissioners were shown a matrix comparing concurrency system intersection LOS snapshots for 2003 and 2004. Mr. Ren noted that overall the number of failed intersections in the city fell from four to three. Despite land-use growth, the V/C ratio for most MMAs declined primarily because of capacity projects.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Northey, Mr. Liljeblad said changing to the two-hour averaging method for the PM peak bought the city the benefit of about eight percent additional reserve capacity over the one-hour approach. In designing for worst-case conditions, the one-hour approach is still often used. Mr. Ren explained that a peak hour factor of 1.0 is used in the modeling, which assumes the traffic flow during the two-hour peak period is constant; the factor of 1.0 returns better results than a lower factor would.

Without the CIP capacity projects, traffic overall would still have increased due to increased land development. Growth in Downtown retail and multifamily would continue, and all MMAs but Newcastle would have had reserve capacity. With the CIP projects, the number of failed intersections falls from four to three, no MMA exceeds its LOS capacity, and eight of the MMAs see their V/C ratios decrease because of capacity projects. Contributing factors include traffic redistribution because of completed capacity projects, signal design, channelization and improved signal timing for operational efficiency.

Mr. Ren concluded by saying all MMAs meet their level of service standards; Downtown land use growth is supported by the transportation infrastructure; the 2005-2011 CIP projects improve system performance overall; and congestion management will continue to be a challenge.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Young, Mr. Ren said Bellevue is continuing to manage and use the BKR model through interlocal agreements with Kirkland and Redmond. The model contains the transportation system and land use patterns and projections for all three jurisdictions. He allowed that Bellevue has no control over land use activities in other jurisdictions, however, and traffic that occurs there can impact Bellevue.

Mr. Liljeblad added that for concurrency purposes Bellevue focuses on its own land use

patterns and CIP projects. The base model is, however, calibrated against the traffic counts from the entire system, including other jurisdictions. Whatever occurs on the ground is folded into the base model in conjunction with the other modeling partners.

Commissioner Glass asked if Bellevue would take into effect a call by Microsoft to add 10,000 employees over the next six years in looking at intersections along 148th Avenue NE. Mr. Liljeblad said it would depend on the context of the change. If Microsoft was applying for a permit to develop a use that would employ 10,000 persons, a concurrency test would be conducted. Non-Bellevue impacts, however, are anticipated by incorporating them into the horizon year forecasts.

Mr. Ren said the base year model is updated every year, and that includes the number of employees Microsoft has announced it intends to have within a set timeframe. To that extent, Bellevue does take into account growth outside its borders.

D. 119th Avenue SE – SE 60th to Lake Heights Street Project Update
– *Memo Only*

Chair Bell questioned the action to shift funds around within the CIP. He said he would not want to see the city get into the habit.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Referring to the memo from Rick Logwood explaining why bicycle facilities will not be included in the NE 10th Street overcrossing project, Chair Bell said the detailed response explains the particulars very well. He suggested forwarding the memo on to the Ped/Bike Citizen Advisory Group.

Commissioner Wendle noted that a similar response was made concerning the new NE 8th Street bridge. It seems possible to find reasons why specific projects should not include ped/bike facilities. Facilities will be included on NE 10th Street, but that is not in as convenient a location. It would be reasonable to investigate making the sidewalk on NE 10th Street wider to be shared by pedestrians and bicyclists. That position should be made known to whoever is working to design the facility.

Chair Bell agreed that Mr. Logwood should continue to keep the Commission informed as the process moves ahead.

Commissioner Wendle said he has been contacted by a number of persons who were impacted by the NE 4th Street overlay project.

Commissioner Glass commented that at the Ped/Bike Citizen Advisory Group meeting there was a discussion about the intersection at 148th Avenue NE and NE 29th Street. The focus was on the fact that the ramp in the sidewalk for wheelchairs and bicyclists is constructed so as to direct people into the intersection instead of the crosswalk. He asked staff to take a look at the design.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jim Hunt, 12817 97th Avenue NE, Kirkland, commented that there are no bicycle facilities in Downtown Bellevue, and there are none on the list of candidate projects. The 106th/108th one-way couplet in the Downtown should include bicycle facilities; if it does, the description should include that indication. As the streets in the Downtown become more and more congested, there is less and less room for bicyclists to ride, and the riders must rely on the goodwill of the motorists.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 8, 2005

Commissioner Northey called attention to the word “favorable” in the first paragraph on page 8 and noted that it should read “favorably.”

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

B. September 22, 2005

Commissioner Northey observed the need for a comma between “Jen Benn” and “Eric Miller” in the list of staff present on the first page.

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

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A.

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

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date