

Strategy for Public Involvement

August 2011

This project will be a focused update to the transportation section of the Downtown Subarea Plan, adopted in 2004, and will be consistent with the overall vision of that Plan. This effort will consider and incorporate changes in growth forecasts for Downtown population and employment, the planned deployment of Rapid Ride bus rapid transit, East Link light rail, and tolling on SR 520, and the effects of other local and regional land use and transportation plans that were not assumed when the current plan was adopted.

Specific objectives for public involvement will be to:

- Seek ideas and perspectives from the Downtown (and broader) community about the full range of transportation issues they experience, and their suggestions for the kinds of improvements that should be considered;
- Inform stakeholders in and around Downtown about the current status of Downtown transportation, and the challenges that the Downtown Transportation Plan Update will address, including traffic, transit, and non-motorized issues;
- Engage with community stakeholders, particularly the Bellevue Downtown Association, individuals and organizations of Downtown residents and employees, residents in surrounding neighborhoods, and other business and community interests;
- Engage with transit service providers, King County Metro and Sound Transit in particular, to develop plans for future bus transit service;
- Coordinate with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on both planned and potential improvements to the regional transportation system;
- Utilize a variety of traditional and electronic outreach techniques to make it as convenient as possible for stakeholders to participate in the process; and
- Ensure that a wide variety of views are considered and ideas are generated and documented

COMPONENTS OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

To accomplish these objectives, the strategy for public involvement will incorporate a multi-faceted approach, consisting of the following components:

- **Transportation Commission to serve as the advisory body**

The Transportation Commission is appointed by City Council to provide advice on a variety of transportation policy issues and projects. One of the duties that the Commission is charged with in their by-laws is to make recommendations on transportation facility plans. While the Downtown Subarea Plan is not a typical transportation facilities plan, this project is focused specifically on the transportation components of the Downtown Plan. It is envisioned that the Commission will meet monthly or as needed to solicit public comments and to provide input and oversight to the planning effort. At the end of their process the Commission will deliver a recommendation to City Council. The Commission successfully played a similar oversight role with the recent update of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan

- **Briefings with other boards and commissions and the City Council**

While the Transportation Commission will serve as the primary advisory body for the Downtown Transportation Plan update, other boards and commissions will be engaged through periodic briefings. As recommendations from this project will be the basis for potential amendments to policies and projects in the Downtown Subarea Plan, the formal role the Planning Commission plays in that process should be acknowledged. With Council as the client for this work and also the final decision-maker on the subarea plan amendments, staff will provide them with updates during the process, particularly at key project milestones.

- **Engagements with the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA)**

The BDA is a nonprofit membership organization that “leads the continuing evolution of Downtown Bellevue as the economic and cultural heart of the Eastside”. The BDA is actively engaged in a variety of Downtown issues, including transportation. The BDA Urban Planning and Transportation Committee addresses policy issues relating to Downtown growth and development. Staff has briefed this committee on the transportation plan update, and will continue to actively engage with the committee during the process. In addition, staff will collaborate with the BDA to help provide engagement opportunities for the broader business and residential communities.

- **Discussions with the Downtown residential community**

Downtown Bellevue has experienced a rapid expansion of its residential population. According to the 2010 Census, there were over 7,000 Downtown residents (this is up from 2,400 in 2000). Ensuring that the transportation system serves the residents as well as the businesses in Downtown Bellevue will be an important part of the overall outreach and public participation effort. Focused outreach, which could be done along with the BDA, will seek input from Downtown residents on their experience with and expectations for the transportation system. This will include outreach such as neighborhood and homeowner association meetings, coffee shop conversations, and targeted community events for residents.

- **Outreach to the broader community within and around Downtown Bellevue**

As is typical of mixed use urban centers, the number of people in Downtown Bellevue increases significantly each day as workers, shoppers and visitors add their ranks to the residents to create a large Downtown daytime population. Each person in Downtown arrives and departs on some form of transportation and uses roadways, transit, sidewalks and bicycle facilities during the day. All of these people - and the organizations to which they may belong - have a stake in the future Downtown transportation system. Some impacts of the transportation system in Downtown are also experienced by residential neighborhoods and businesses outside of Downtown, so outreach to these stakeholders will also be important. This project will use a wide range of formal and informal methods to help engage them in a conversation about current and future Downtown mobility.

- **Community workshops/open houses**

In addition to the targeted engagements listed above, public workshops and/or open houses will be conducted during the planning process to increase opportunities for participation by the public at large, including residents of adjoining neighborhoods. Staff will orchestrate a wide range of formal and informal opportunities to engage the community.

- **Media/Internet**

Media and the internet will be used for broad and ongoing distribution and gathering of project information. Opportunities for media communications include:

- A project website to provide current information, reports, and notices of upcoming meetings. Through the website and other electronic media such as Facebook, staff will solicit public comment on Downtown mobility in general and on proposed Downtown transportation projects. This two-way exchange of information was utilized successfully during the recent update of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan.
- Project news and information will be prepared and published:
 - It's Your City
 - Neighborhood News
 - Press Releases

- **Other Measures**

As the project evolves, other methods and opportunities for public involvement may emerge that are not noted above. The public involvement process will allow for innovative types of engagement strategies and tools. For example, during the Bel-Red Corridor Project, business and property owner panels were used at various points during the project. Similar types of "focus group" engagements may be useful in this planning process. Surveys may also be used. There will be opportunities to share information at outdoor summer events, perhaps to conduct walking and/or biking tours, and otherwise creatively engage the community in the planning for Downtown mobility.

