CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
TRANSIT MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP
MINUTES

October 17, 2013
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Lampe, Larrivee, Tanaka, Zahn
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioner Jokinen
STAFF PRESENT:	Paula Stevens, Franz Loewenherz, Kevin McDonald, Transportation Department
OTHERS PRESENT:	Jay Hamlin, Planning Commission Diane Tebelius, Planning Commission Dallas Evans, Parks and Community Services Board Michelle Hilhorst, Planning Commission
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. WELCOMING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Simas who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Chair Simas reminded the Commissioners that at the October 10 meeting Commissioner Bishop raised concerns with one aspect of the "Abundant Access" vision statement approved by the Bellevue City Council on May 20, 2013, namely the latter part of the definition of "Abundant Access" which read "Efficient, useful, attractive service for most people, to most destinations, most of the time, serving maximum ridership and providing effective competition with the car." He urged the Commissioners to focus on multiple modes of transportation within the Bellevue area and having those modes connect to the regional hub and beyond. While all modes are in competition with each other, there is no attempt to pick winners and losers. The need is for other forms of transportation beyond just the single-occupant vehicle to further the goal of moving as many people as possible. The number of streets and intersections in the city and the downtown is limited, which means only so many automobiles can be moved through the system.

Chair Simas said he sought from a couple of Council members their opinion about the

statement to which Commissioner Bishop objected, particularly whether or not the statement is to be considered set in stone. The Councilmembers replied that the important thing to keep in mind is the philosophy inherent in the statement, namely that the city needs to maximize the throughput of people via all modes of travel. Eliminating the last four words of the statement would not change the focus of the statement. Chair Simas said he would continue to pursue the issue of how the statement is worded.

Commissioner Bishop said he would be comfortable letting Chair Simas do the legwork. He reiterated his concern that as worded it could be concluded that negative things will be done to the vehicle systems for the other modes can come out better. The fact is the majority of trips into the city are by automobile. Chair Simas said he would welcome alternative language.

Parks and Community Services Boardmember Evans suggested "...effective alternatives to the car." Chair Simas said he would consider that suggestion.

3. PRESENTATION ON TRANSIT MASTER PLAN DRAFT CAPITAL-ORIENTED STRATEGIES & MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz noted that much of the work done on the Transit Master Plan since September 2012 has been focused on the service element. An extensive amount of research has been put into understanding how the current network is performing, and understanding the attitudes and preferences that drive traveler choices. Additionally, a lot of travel demand modeling has been done with an eye on the city's evolving land use and the coming of light rail to the city.

Mr. Loewenherz said the work led to the development of an overall vision statement focused on abundant access supported by six service-oriented strategies, which in turn led to the development of nine different service networks. The bridge between the service element and the capital element is the frequent transit network. The focus of the November 14 meeting will be on current and future conditions, and an evaluation of the costs and benefits.

Commissioner Tanaka asked how to deal with the fact that things like bus service are out of the city's control. Mr. Loewenherz said when the city developed its vision for a route network, staff worked closely with Sound Transit and King County Metro and stayed within the financial parameters given by both providers
Mr. Loewenherz said at the end of the day the document will be a consolidation of both the service-oriented strategies and the capital-oriented strategies. Changing the words of the abundant access vision statement will not change that fact. There are four elements of the capital-oriented strategies over which Bellevue has some influence: development lot, pedestrian/bicycle environment, transit stops, and transit running way. The policy element is not a separate document; it will in fact be integrally related and informed by the service and capital work.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Loewenherz said the Transportation Commission ultimately has purview of the work product. To what extent it gets massaged into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, however, is the purview of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Loewenherz said there are a lot of steps involved in transitioning from concept to project. Things always change in the design phase. As a result, all project lists include disclaimer language.

The direction the city is moving in with the strategies is congruent with the strategic plan and service guidelines adopted by King County Metro. The document states that the city intends to direct resources in the most cost-effective way possible by earmarking the majority of resources on the most productive routes. In some cases that will mean some services will be eliminated entirely in unproductive areas. The Council is cognizant of that fact and has bought in to the approach with an eye on making sure the most productive corridors will not be compromised. King County Metro and Sound Transit share that viewpoint.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if there will be a process for looking at the evolution of land uses in the areas that will be losing transit availability. Mr. Loewenherz answered that it must be recognized that there are tradeoffs involved in delivering services. A big part of the workshops with the city's boards and commissions leading up to the service-oriented strategies dealt with those tradeoffs. Generally speaking, attempting to provide some level of service throughout the city would compromise the effectiveness of the routes that are needed most. While no one wants to see services dropped for people living in outlying areas of the city, but the reality is unproductive routes simply cannot be maintained with limited resources.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that light rail as an element of an overall transit system has the advantage of creating predictability. Developers along the route can design and build to accommodate uses that can rely on transit services. The same is true to some degree for bus routes, particularly along priority corridors. What is needed is a meshing of the efforts to plan transit systems and land uses. Mr. Loewenherz said the first capital-oriented strategy speaks to the topic of development in recognition of the fact that while the transportation network is there to support land uses, land use plays a critical role in informing how productive the transit network will be.

Mr. Loewenherz said the plan document will be responsive to whatever might happen in the future. In establishing the scope of work, Council did not want to end up with a visionary document that would be obsolete on Day 1 just because of the financial picture. The nine different service visions are responsive to the growing, stable and reduced funding scenarios. The worst-case scenario includes a funding dip in 2014 as a result of losing the $20 license fee that is about to expire and not finding an alternative at the legislature. The next hit is in 2023 when East Link comes online and results directly from the financial strategies of Sound Transit that say when light rail is in place some bus routes will be taken off line and the allocations for

them will not be reinvested in bus service. It is within the purview of the city to say the financial policies do not ring true and that regardless of whatever network comes online the needed service connections need to be taken into account.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius commented that once light rail is in place its alignment is set and cannot be easily changed. The network for buses can, on the other hand, be moved quite easily. The Puget Sound Regional Council is projecting that by 2014 less than six percent of all trips will be by transit. If the transit agencies decide to cut bus routes, the problem will only grow. Mr. Loewenherz responded by saying that in developing the service scenarios, the overall abundant access framework and the service strategies were applied and compared against the funding scenarios for the near, mid and long term. The message from Sound Transit continues to be that by adding light rail the overall level of transit service will be increased even as some bus routes are removed. The reality is that light rail systems can only succeed where there is a connective route structure. Planning Commission Chair Tebelius suggested the city should advocate for what it needs instead of just accepting what King County Metro and Sound Transit says it will provide. Mr. Loewenherz concurred that that would be a prudent course of action.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that the worst-case scenario will play out only if advocacy efforts fail. It would not make sense, however, to take the worst-case scenario off the table given that it is one possibility the city must be prepared for. Mr. Loewenherz said the city has the opportunity to engage with the Sound Transit board to change their approach. In hoping for the best, the city must prepare for the worst. The growing funding scenario has an increase of about 47 percent over where things are currently and it is informed by Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 which projects what will be needed to meet the transit demand in 2030.

Mr. Loewenherz said the daily ons and offs have been projected into 2030 for the various Mobility Management Areas in the city. Currently there are a little over 50,000 daily ons and offs in Bellevue. Under the growing resources scenario, a tripling of that number is projected with about a 47 percent increase in service hours. The 2030 reduced scenario, however, has areas with no bus service at all, including Northeast Bellevue, Somerset and Lakemont. Even so, a sizeable increase in transit usage is forecast to occur because of the judicious placement of resources, about 80 percent of which is by bus.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that as bus routes are removed, people who are accustomed to using those routes will drive somewhere they can access transit, and their cars will impact the areas in which they choose to park. She asked if the future planning includes looking at that problem. Mr. Loewenherz said the capital element includes a commuter parking element. He said the process is aimed at generating a travel demand forecast of the anticipated need for commuter parking stalls in the three major corridors of I-90, SR-520 and I-405. It is hoped that the data will prompt some regional discussions about what needs to be done to improve access to transit. Commuter parking does, however, represent a fairly small percentage of the total

on/off activity in the city at about 16 percent; the majority of boarding and alighting occurs on city streets.

Answering a question asked by Parks and Community Services Boardmember Evans, Mr. Loewenherz said a large part of the service design process has involved looking at the 2030 travel demand lines, and all of the assumptions are built into the forecast. The modeling looks at population as well as the projected transportation infrastructure that will be in place in 2030 as well as a variety of other factors, and it is in line with the Puget Sound Regional Council's forecasts for population and employment. Growth in the city will be focused on those areas where transit is and will be most successful.

Mr. Loewenherz said the growing resources scenario is the bridge to the capital element. He said the scenario envisions short wait times for buses after alighting from light rail. That will make it very appealing for people to make transfers and will help to create a connective network. The frequent transit network is derived from frequent local, frequent express and frequent rapid routes, and the capital element builds on the frequent transit network in determining where investments in speed and reliability improvements should be made.

Mr. Loewenherz stressed that the draft language conforms stylistically with the Council-approved service-oriented strategies. Language used by peer cities was reviewed and grouped into broad categories and includes statement of inclination, which conveys an intent to improve without a target or definition of success; statement of principle, which describes clear targets or conditions of success; and statement of impact, which describes particular situations where transit should have a priority. The Council-approved service-oriented strategies and the draft capital-oriented strategies gravitate toward the statement of inclination. The strategies also take into account information derived from Council actions and policies, current Comprehensive Plan policies, information drawn from the workshops, and the four areas over which the city has the greatest influence on the public's decision to ride, namely land use and development, the pedestrian/bicycle system, transit stops, and the transit running way. If the city does its part, and if King County Metro and Sound Transit do their parts, the result will be a well-connected and efficient network.

Mr. Loewenherz said the first draft strategy, "Use urban design and development regulations in Bellevue's major activity centers to support transit use," builds on language already in the Comprehensive Plan. It speaks to making sure the surrounding land use in the major activity centers is successful in encouraging transit use.

Commissioner Larrivee said the one thing missing is any reference to the network itself. The strategy speaks to connecting nodes, but what is significant is development along the corridors growing in parallel with development of the transit system. Mr. Loewenherz said staff highlighted the same issue in their discussions. However, the conclusion reached was that that would be overreaching from the perspective of the Planning Commission in terms of dictating land uses along the corridors. As drafted, the strategy is limited to the activity centers.

Planning Commissioner Hamlin said he liked the statement but was confused by the illustrative example. Planning Commission Chair Tebelius agreed and also cautioned against saying a single approach can apply to every major activity center. Mr. Loewenherz said he would give some thought to how to better illustratively convey the idea of each strategy.

Mr. Loewenherz said the second draft strategy, "Design transit facilities to enhance accessibility, connectivity and user comfort," fits with the Bel-Red plan, the Eastgate/I-90 plan, and work that is under way at the South Kirkland Park and Ride. Each of those is an area where effort is being put into creating facilities that are easily accessible and attractive. He pointed out that the term "transit facilities" includes the full range from transit center park and ride lots to individual bus stops.

Planning Commissioner Hamlin questioned use of the word "comfort." He said it is not readily apparent what the word means in the context of the strategy. It could mean anything from a shelter with a heater in it to an easy chair. Commissioner Larrivee said the word conveyed to him facilities with places to sit while waiting for a transit ride. He added that there is a comfort associated with the notion of safety as well. Mr. Loewenherz said that is exactly what was intended by the word.

Commissioner Zahn suggested the word "comfort" could be replaced with "experience" to get the point across. Mr. Loewenherz agreed.

Mr. Loewenherz said the third draft strategy, "Invest in transit priority measures along Frequent Transit Network corridors," capitalizes on the idea of putting money where it will do the most good. Since the 2003 transit plan hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in priority measures in Bellevue, and those actions are directly responsible for the 129 percent increase in transit usage in the city. The strategy is focused on the transit running way and is aimed at making sure buses will enjoy the speed and reliability they need to make them an attractive option for the community.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius commented that Eastgate is considered to be a Frequent Transit Network corridor, and noted that the plan for the corridor includes additional housing and commercial development. Planning Commissioner Hamlin said housing is needed because Bellevue College is nearby, and office development is seen as appropriate because of the corridor's central location and ease of access. Buses are integral to the Eastgate transit hub; light rail was not on the table during the development of the Eastgate plan, though there was a general recognition that someday it will go all the way to Issaquah and will pass through Eastgate.

Commissioner Larrivee said the exercise undertaken at the transit workshop highlighted the fact that some corridors will ultimately be given priority over others based on a number of factors. He said what is needed is a method for figuring out which corridors should be

prioritized. Mr. Loewenherz said the fourth draft strategy, "Employ best practices and context sensitivity when implementing transit priority measures along Frequent Transit Network corridors," was intended to address that issue. He said the strategy came directly from the discussions at the workshop where there was a clear comfort with being context sensitive in making choices that involve scarce rights-of-way space.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius asked what is meant by the term "context sensitive." Mr. Loewenherz said roadways are used by a variety of travel modes, and the surrounding land uses are varied as well. In making context sensitive choices, all of those factors are taken into account. A big part of context sensitive design involves checking in with the community to make sure the best fit possible is identified.

Commissioner Larrivee added that the new trolley line on Broadway in Seattle is an excellent example of not taking context into account. The line runs past the hospitals and it took out just about all of the patient load/unload areas that are so needed at medical facilities. Those facilities are now struggling with the aftereffects of a context insensitive approach to prioritization. Parks and Community Services Boardmember Evans suggested the Surrey Downs Park is another case in point in that the East Link light rail line will pass through the neighborhood and essentially cut off the park from 112th Avenue SE. The park is being converted to a community park and new sports facilities are being created at Hidden Valley to make up for the loss. City policy is to buy as much land for park development as possible, but a transportation system essentially is taking away a park that was heavily used.

Commissioner Zahn said being context sensitive is critically important and is all about considering diverse interests. She suggested some other language could be used in the strategy to convey the notion of considering diverse interests.

Commissioner Lampe pointed out that the need to preserve roadway capacity is one of the issues to which the city needs to be sensitive. Commissioner Bishop concurred but suggested that issue is in line with the best practices statement in the third draft strategy.

Commissioner Zahn stressed the need to leverage innovation. She said none of the draft strategies talk about innovation. Best practices are often tried and true and are used because they are known to work, but they are not innovative. Additionally, balancing interests could be implied in being context sensitive, but nothing specific is said about collaborating. Mr. Loewenherz suggested that in the end what is being called for is an individualized approach to each corridor, not just a cookie cutter approach. Mr. Loewenherz said he would work with Chair Simas on incorporating the ideas highlighted ahead of meeting with the Council on November 12.

With regard to measures of effectiveness, Mr. Loewenherz reminded the group that one of the Council's project principles for the Transit Master Plan is to "Develop measures of

effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress." He said a lot of data has been generated by King County Metro and Sound Transit relative to transit activities and in the opinion of the staff there is no reason to recreate the wheel in producing a new performance measurement system the city would have to monitor with limited time and resources. Commissioner Bishop said the problem is the system yields for the city only half the transit service from King County Metro for the taxes put in. He said he would not be comfortable signing off on their methodology without first seeking to better understand it. Mr. Loewenherz said he was not suggesting the city should simply trust King County Metro and Sound Transit to do right by the city. There is an ample amount of data the city can draw from and analyze, and that makes it easier for the city to be judicious about its workload.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius suggested it all comes down to how the numbers are read and interpreted. That is why the methodology is so important. If the Council and the city's transportation staff agree with the practices in place, all is well. If they do not, however, and they want a different way of assessing the impact of the dollars being spent, then a new methodology must be identified. Mr. Loewenherz said the Service Vision Report identifies what service frequency connections are required between activity centers at the route level. What needs to be tracked is the progress made toward achieving the identified service frequency connections between activity centers.

Commissioner Bishop said there is no doubt that King County Metro collects data. What matters to the city is how the data is applied.

Commissioner Zahn agreed and added that data is just data until used to paint a picture showing that the city is moving in the right direction, the wrong direction, or is standing still. Mr. Loewenherz said Bellevue's vision is encompassed in the Frequent Transit Network. It outlines what connections are wanted and progress toward accomplishing the vision will be informed by the data that is generated by King County Metro.

Mr. Loewenherz said the draft measure of effectiveness reads "Measure person throughput by mode on Bellevue's Frequent Transit Network corridors." The intent is to be mode neutral while being cognizant of how many people can be moved along the roadway segments.

Commissioner Larrivee voiced his support for the draft measure of effectiveness as worded. He said person throughput is exactly what needs to be measured.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius said it cannot be assumed that public transit is more efficient than private automobiles. For one thing, it is assumed that everyone using the corridors are commuters heading to or from work when in fact many of them are parents taking their kids to or from school or are persons undertaking errands that could not be done by bus. Mr. Loewenherz explained that the city's current metric of success is vehicle throughput as determined by level of service calculations made during the evening peak period. The city's transportation infrastructure investment decisions are predicated on that metric. There is,

however, a growing recognition that level of service represents a rather limited viewpoint. The purpose of mobility is moving people and the proposed measure of effectiveness is intended to be aligned with person throughput rather than just vehicle throughput.
Planning Commission Chair Tebelius pointed out that by accepting the language the group will be making a policy statement. Chair Simas countered that the Council is the body charged with making policy; the city's boards and commissions are charged with implementing the policies adopted by the Council. To change a policy requires making an argument to the Council. The policy has already been set.

Commissioner Bishop disagreed. He agreed with Planning Commission Chair Tebelius that the recommendation of the Commission to accept certain language will be carried to the Council and the result, if adopted, will be new policy. Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that the draft measure of effectiveness is a performance measure, not a policy. It is intended only to gauge how well the city's roadways are moving people. Current city policy is to measure vehicles only, and the proposal is to add to that a measurement of person throughput. The result will be alignment with regional and state policy, both of which measure and annually report on person throughput.

Commissioner Bishop argued that the state's HOV program is an utter failure. Billions of dollars has been spent building the HOV system with the idea of creating carpools and improving efficiency, when in actuality there are no more carpools now than there were 20 years ago. He said he was not comfortable aligning the city with a failed WSDOT policy. He said he did not buy into the policies adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council either.

Commissioner Tanaka cautioned against losing site of the fact that the proposal simply would implement a measuring device aimed at determining the effectiveness of corridors. Determining the effectiveness of a water pipe is done by measuring how many gallons of water can move through it in a given time. The proposal involves people as the unit of measurement irrespective of the mode they choose to use to get around. The HOV system may in fact be a failure, but that is a different issue entirely.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius said her concern was that measuring person throughput alone cannot indicate the effectiveness of a corridor. In addition to how many are passing through, a measure of how long they must wait to get through would be telling about the effectiveness of a corridor. If a single measure is instituted, it in fact becomes the policy; if there are several measures, each is only one of many.

Mr. Loewenherz said the context setting narrative of the Mobility Management section of the Comprehensive Plan calls for providing services and facilities to support all modes of travel while balancing resources to ensure reasonable travel choices. The approach "...maximizes the people-carrying capacity of the system and encourages use of alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle." The city currently does not have a metric to assess that position. The proposal is to create a metric that will align with the existing Comprehensive Plan policy.

Other metrics could certainly be introduced, including person delay.

Commissioner Tanaka asked if the metric is based on person throughput per hour. The answer given by Mr. Loewenherz was that measurements typically are made during the evening peak period and involve throughput during a limited period of time.

Commissioner Larrivee said the Council project principles direct the Commission to develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress. He agreed there could be any number of measurements developed of which ridership certainly is one, as is person throughput.

Commissioner Bishop said if the measure is intended only to gauge transit investments he would have less of a problem with the proposal. He suggested, however, that the measure will ultimately inform the city's CIP. It will put significant emphasis on transit and have a negative impact on the ability of the city to maintain the capacity of the arterial street system needed to accommodate automobiles.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Zahn, Mr. Loewenherz said a number of other jurisdictions have gone down the same path. He said the proposed metric would not have been introduced if it had not already been demonstrated in other settings.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius asked if the resistance to adding other measures are that it would cost additional staff time. Mr. Loewenherz said he was not opposed to adding more measures, though he allowed that there is a limit to the amount of resources staff can put into making measurements.
Chair Simas pointed out that there are already other metrics in use by the city, including intersection level of service. Adding person throughput as a metric does not preclude using data from other measurements. Mr. Loewenherz agreed. He said the person throughput metric appears to resonate most closely with the goal of getting more people to use transit on the Frequent Transit Network corridors.

Commissioner Zahn offered her support for the proposed measure of effectiveness. It will help to establish a baseline benchmark.

Commissioner Larrivee pointed out that measuring the effectiveness of a corridor will not give the city authority over the amount of service provided by the transit agencies. One metric would be the level to which investments in systems are commensurate with the amount of transit service provided. Mr. Loewenherz said dollars invested in the corridors could be tracked to see to what extent King County Metro is making good on the expectations the city has in terms of service. It could be a complicated assessment for a variety of reasons, but it could help to identify the quid pro quo for the city's team efforts.

Commissioner Zahn suggested it would be helpful to see examples of metrics in use by other

jurisdictions.

Chair Simas pointed out that the metric could work either for or against mass transit. If the measurements are taken and it is determined that person throughput is less than expected for a given corridor, it will be necessary to dig deeper. It could then be discovered that the reason is the buses are only ten percent full, which could change the ultimate strategy for where to focus dollars. He suggested the concern is not with the measure but with what the measure may drive in terms of policy.

4. NEXT STEPS

Mr. Loewenherz said he would return to the November 14 meeting and introduce the Commission to the preliminary capital element project list.

Planning Commission Chair Tebelius informed the group that the Planning Commission has launched a series of talks by community leaders. The first talk was by Kemper Freeman who talked about the history of Bellevue Square and the downtown and it was very informative. All of the city's boards and commissions as well as the presidents of every community organization are being invited to attend the presentations, some of which will be held away from City Hall.

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Kevin O'McDonald — 11/14/13

Secretary to the Transportation Commission — Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission — 11-14-13 Date