

April 29, 2019

Mr. Josh Brown, Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104-1035

Re: VISION 2050 Draft SEIS Comment

Dear Mr. Brown:

This letter represents the City of Bellevue's comments on the VISION 2050 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. Bellevue supports the Transit Focused Growth Strategy as the best alternative to support and encourage vibrant urban centers, provide opportunities for housing and jobs near transit hubs and protect the environment.

The Transit Focused Growth Strategy is the most closely aligned of the three alternatives to Bellevue's present and future planned growth pattern, for the following reasons:

1. The City's current growth strategy adopted in the City's Comprehensive Plan is predicated on locating most of the City's future growth into mixed use centers which include Downtown, BelRed, Factoria and Eastgate.
2. The City has adopted policies in its comprehensive plan which reinforce this growth strategy, including the land use, transportation and housing elements.
3. Large investments in public infrastructure and services are underway or planned that reinforce a transit focused growth strategy. The Eastlink light rail system is the most notable and will link the Bellevue Downtown and Redmond Overlake growth centers to other centers throughout the region. Another is the expansion of bus rapid transit services in and through Bellevue on I-405 as included in Sound Transit 3 (ST3), the ballot measure approved in 2016 to expand high capacity transit and light rail.
4. Many of the Eastlink light rail station areas are planned as mixed-use, transit-oriented development areas, again reinforcing a transit focused growth scenario. The stations include East Main, Downtown, Wilburton, and two stations in the Bel-Red District (Spring District and 130th stations).
5. The light rail expansion projects that will be funded by ST3 include a future light rail line that will connect two other Bellevue mixed-use centers - Eastgate and Factoria - to the regional system.

The Transit Focused Growth alternative directs future growth into more compact, dense development patterns. This has advantages for Bellevue and the region, including the following:

- It leverages the investment in the Eastlink light rail system by increasing the value of the land around stations. This in turn benefits the local economy.
- It uses less land to accommodate future population and potentially reduces development pressures and impacts on regionally significant habitat and other ecosystems.
- It yields less impervious surface than other growth scenarios which is a benefit for controlling stormwater runoff.

- More people will have access to transit which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Overall transit focused development supports more accessibility to parks and recreation. Multi-modal trails, such as the Eastside Rail Corridor, will connect Downtown, Bel-Red, Wilburton and Factoria and the corresponding transit stations.
- The transit focused development potentially benefits public health because more people may choose to walk and bike.
- With increased population comes a greater need for affordable housing. The transit focused strategy could allow increased potential for housing built at higher densities with smaller unit sizes and reduced parking requirements.
- From an environmental justice perspective, the transit focused alternative provides better proximity to high capacity transit, greater access to the local and regional park systems and more opportunity for affordable housing through higher density housing near transit stations. Further, affordable housing in compact development patterns can help reduce per capita energy and water consumption, which helps cost burdened people.

Growth will bring challenges in any of the scenarios and continued regional collaboration will be required to mitigate the potential negative impacts of compact urban growth. Examples of these challenges include increasing land and development costs, increasing cost of acquiring land for parks and recreation in urban areas, funding multi-modal transportation options, and an increasing jobs/housing imbalance.

The City will continue to work with the PSRC to develop meaningful and appropriate policies and actions to support VISION 2050 as well as continue to work with regional partners to mitigate the negative impacts of growth. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Terry Cullen, Bellevue's Comprehensive Planning Manager, at 425-452-4070.

Sincerely,

Mayor John Chelminiak
City of Bellevue