

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

July 28, 2021  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Moolgavkar, Morisseau

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice Chair Ferris

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Gwen Rousseau, Department of Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Department of Transportation

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Barksdale

GUEST SPEAKERS: Loreana Marciante, Transportation Commission Chair

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER  
(6:31 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Malakoutian who presided.

Chair Malakoutian stated that the meeting was being held remotely via zoom in order to comply with the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, which prohibits in-person meetings.

2. ROLL CALL  
(6:32 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Ferris who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
(6:32 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Moolgavkar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS  
(6:33 p.m.)

Councilmember Barksdale reported that the City Council held a public hearing on the East Main transit-oriented development on July 26. He said there were some questions asked of staff and an additional study session will be held at a future date.

With regard to the work done by the Transportation Commission on transportation policies,

Councilmember Barksdale stressed that the focus should not be on redoing the work of the Transportation Commission, rather it should be on how their work fits into the bigger picture in terms of how transportation supports land use.

5. STAFF REPORTS  
(6:35 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

Commissioner Morisseau asked what plans the city has for resuming in-person public meetings, and if any thought has been given to allowing for a hybrid model in which Commissioners and the public could participate remotely. Ms. Johnson said things are still up in the air given the Governor's latest recommendations on mask usage. To date there has been no specific direction on what returning to in-person meetings will look like. She said given the ongoing concerns, a hybrid meeting option is likely.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS  
(6:40 p.m.)

A. Oral Communications

Mr. Todd Woosley suggested that there is a fault with the signup process for speaking at the Commission meeting. He said he signed up for the public hearing but was recognized for public comment instead. He added that when he signed up he was told he would receive a notification and a link but that did not happen, making it necessary to find the web link on his own. There may be other members of the community who experienced the same and who could still be waiting for the city to send them a link and instructions.

Ms. Johnson apologized for the inconvenience.

Mr. Victor Bishop said he is a professional engineer in the state of Washington, a resident of Bellevue and president of the West Lake Sammamish Association. He said he formerly served as a member and Chair of the Transportation Commission during which time the Commission took on and approved the MMLOS guidelines report. Unfortunately, the proposal before the Planning Commission does not follow those guidelines. He said he has been in the traffic engineering business for 35 years all over the state of Washington. He said he would be speaking during the public hearing but did not want to take time then to introduce himself and outline his background and perspective.

B. Written Communications

Ms. Johnson acknowledged the receipt of written communications in regard to both the DASH CPA and the transportation amendments. She noted that all of the communications had been forwarded to the Commissioners and uploaded to the pertinent website.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. 2021 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments: DASH Glendale CPA

(6:55 p.m.)

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau said the proposal would amend the Land Use Map designation on two parcels totaling 7.6 acres in the Wilburton/NE 8th Street subarea plan from Multifamily-Medium (MFM ) to Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU). She said the NMU designation would allow for a rezone to the NMU zoning classification which would allow up to four times as many housing units on the site along with neighborhood-serving commercial uses on the first floor, and a doubling of the FAR incentive for the creation of affordable housing to households with incomes at or below 80 percent of area median income.

Ms. Rousseau said the recommendation of staff was to approve the proposed DASH Glendale CPA given that it satisfies all of the Land Use Code decision criteria. It is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other goals and policies in that it would increase the potential for a broad range of housing choices to meet the changing needs of the community; by encouraging housing opportunities in a mixed residential/commercial setting; by encouraging development in an urban area where adequate public facilities and services exist; and by planning for housing that is accessible to major employment centers and affordable to the work force in them. The proposal would also allow for up to four times the number of housing units, thereby helping to meet the increased need for housing citywide, and it would support and leverage recent investments in public transit. The subject property could be suitably developed under the potential zoning classification since the site is surrounded by existing commercial and multifamily uses, and since the multifamily transition zone would apply to the property. The proposal also demonstrates a public benefit and enhances public health, safety and welfare as it increases opportunities for low- and moderate-income households to live where they can conveniently access jobs, schools and frequent transportation service.

Ms. Rousseau said a total of 20 public comments had been received to date, with 18 of them in support of the proposal. One comment voiced a concern about the loss of tree canopy and the resulting impact on air quality. There was also a question asked about whether the proposal would result in a loss of senior housing.

During the previous study session a question was asked by the Commission about why no transportation impacts were anticipated given that the number of units on the site could quadruple. Ms. Rousseau pointed out that only a high-level analysis is performed for a CPA; a more specific analysis will be undertaken in the event a project is proposed for the site. The high-level analysis did anticipate that the proposed increase in density could result in an increase in vehicle trips from approximately 29 peak hour trips to 123 peak hour trips. That volume of additional trips is relatively low and the site is well served by transit, thus no major impact is expected.

Another question previously asked by the Commission was whether the housing shortage could be considered to be a significantly changed condition, and if so, if that could be interpreted as meaning every proposal that comes before the Commission in the future would also be deemed to address significantly changed conditions. Ms. Rousseau said most subarea plans in the city were adopted in 1980s and have not undergone major updates since. As such, the housing shortage is a significantly changed condition that a proposed CPA could address, provided that the proposal addresses housing capacity issues. She stressed, however, that proposals must satisfy all of the Land Use Code decision criteria in order to be approved. The DASH Glendale

proposal addresses significantly changed conditions that are geographically broad in scope, namely the housing shortage and climate change, and significantly changed conditions that are geographically narrow in scope, namely newly increased public transit capacity.

Ms. Rousseau said once the Commission makes a recommendation, the Council will review it and take action before the end of the year.

Mr. Patrick Bannon, president of the Bellevue Downtown Association, registered the support of the organization for the DASH Glendale CPA. He noted that both the Affordable Housing Task Force and the Land Use and Livability Committee of the Bellevue Downtown Association spent time reviewing the particulars of the proposal, and their positions were approved in June.

Ms. Chris Buchanan spoke on behalf of Downtown Action to Save Housing (DASH). She said the non-profit organization was founded in 1991 with a mission to provide affordable workforce housing in Downtown Bellevue. Of the organization's 800 units, one third are located in the Downtown and Wilburton neighborhoods, and they house nearly 500 people. The focus of the organization is to provide permanent affordable workforce family and senior housing close to the Downtown core where there is easy access to transit, services and the jobs that drive the city's economy. She urged the Commission to advance the DASH Glendale CPA to allow for increased density on the site in order to build more affordable housing. The need is great as highlighted in the 2019 Human Services Needs Update and the 2020 Economic Development Plan; both documents identify the high cost of housing as a significant barrier for Bellevue's workers at all income levels. It is known that there is a shortage of affordable housing in the city, and with the proposed CPA, the Commission has the opportunity to make meaningful change. Adopting the CPA is the first step which will allow DASH to step up to the start line and assemble a team to begin designing a new community that will be sustainable and affordable. It will also allow planning the critically important work of ensuring that the current residents will remain housed affordably even as new homes are created for them. The Commission was urged to advance the CPA and to support the vision of DASH for a vibrant, age-friendly affordable neighborhood for Bellevue's working families and seniors.

Ms. Mallory Van Abbema with the Housing Development Consortium of Seattle/King County expressed the strong support of the organization for the DASH Glendale CPA. She said the organization operates within King County to advance the work of its members in the affordable housing sector and is proud to work alongside DASH to push the region out of the existing affordable housing crisis. The proposed rezone will allow DASH to rezone two of its properties at the junction of three targeted growth areas of the city. The resulting redevelopment will deliver sorely needed housing options to low- and moderate-income households, doubling at minimum the number of homes available on the site to residents who would otherwise be potentially priced out of Bellevue's high-cost market. With access to Metro's Rapid Ride and the arrival of new light rail in 2023, the site is well suited to accommodate more residents. The CPA will empower DASH, a proven development partner in the city, to move the city closer to the objectives laid out in the Affordable Housing Strategy. The Commission was urged to support and advance the CPA to the City Council.

Mr. Ron Tarnow noted his support for the work of DASH. He stressed the importance of having enough parking to allow each resident to have a minimum of one car. Many residents are able to use transit to get to their jobs, but some work hours that end when public transit is no longer available. He said he has been a DASH resident for 46 years and has enjoyed exceptional apartment managers. He said he could not think of a single incidence in which there had been a problem with another tenant. The children use the playground and they are always well

supervised. Overall it is a very delightful community. It is too bad that some trees will be lost through redeveloping the site. The managers are currently off site and some residents are taking advantage of that by parking too many cars, and some people are wrongfully dumping things in the dumpster. During the transition, DASH should work to get the management team back on site during business hours.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Moolgavkar. The motion was closed by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that it adopt the DASH Glendale & Evergreen Court amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

B. 2021 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Transportation-Related Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan  
(7:19 p.m.)

i. Transportation Element Multimodal Concurrency Policy

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

Principal Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald said the proposal, as recommended by the Transportation Commission, is to embed multimodal concurrency policy in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan amendment. The proposal responds to direction from the Council. The Transportation Commission has recommended repealing several policies and amending several policies, and adding two new policies, to the Transportation Element.

Mr. McDonald said the ordinances that created the Transportation Commission and the Planning Commission both respond to the need for the bodies to provide input to the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Commission, as directed by the Council, handles much of the technical work with respect to transportation policy, while the Planning Commission in line with its duty to be responsible for the Comprehensive Plan reviews, considers and makes recommendations with respect to amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Element in particular and the Comprehensive Plan in general are living documents that respond to the changing needs of the community.

Continuing, Mr. McDonald noted that the focus of the Comprehensive Plan in 1989 relative to the transportation system was to keep arterials from being too inconvenient, time consuming or unsafe for drivers. After passage of the Growth Management Act in 1993, the policies in the Comprehensive Plan established vehicle level of service (LOS) standards for different areas of the city. The last major update of the Comprehensive Plan was accomplished in 2015, and in that iteration the Council adopted policy to establish multimodal level of service measures, standards and targets. The proposal on the table is to embed multimodal concurrency policy in the Comprehensive Plan. One constant that has remained throughout the evolution of transportation policy is that the transportation system exists to serve land use. As land use evolves and as circumstances and the needs of people in the city change, the transportation system and the policies that drive the decisions made must also evolve.

The Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to make sure transportation supports land use concurrent with the land use demand. Within six years of a land use project, there must be

sufficient transportation capacity to support it. If the city cannot demonstrate that concurrency is met in terms of the capacity of the transportation system being adequate to support planned land use, then the city may not approve new development. Currently the city employs a vehicle LOS concurrency standard. That means the capacity of the vehicle system at intersections is measured against the demand generated by land use. Where inadequate capacity is identified, this may be addressed through intersection capacity projects. The multimodal approach provides capacity for all modes of transportation to meet the concurrency standard. In order to achieve a multimodal approach to concurrency, supportive policy language must be embedded in the Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Commission Chair Loreana Marciante noted that the current vehicle LOS approach is not sustainable given that vehicle LOS is addressed primarily through the widening of intersections, and given that the amount of space to continue widening intersections is limited. There are also environmental and land use constraints that must be taken into consideration. The vehicle network is complete and the city is mostly limited to implementing operational improvements. There are a lot of gaps in the overall transportation system, notably in walking and biking facilities as well as in transit facilities. Providing opportunities for people to choose different modes of travel will help to avoid overwhelming the vehicle transportation system as the city grows.

Transportation Commission Chair Marciante said the Transportation Commission is in the process of developing performance metrics and targets for the pedestrian, vehicle, bicycle and transit modes. The metrics are consistent with the recommended MMLOS approach, and the targets under development are being weighed against the 2030 Transportation Facilities Plan. The goal is to identify a complete system and to set priorities for achieving a complete system.

The Council initiated a Comprehensive Plan amendment in April and directed the Transportation Commission to recommend policy to broaden the concurrency standard to include all modes. To that end the Transportation Commission conducted three study sessions dedicated exclusively to debating transportation policy. All of the Transportation Commissioners are committed to the multimodal perspective. The biggest challenge lies in making sure the issues are communicated simply and clearly so that the changes can readily be grasped by the public. The proposed recommendations retain the vehicle performance targets. There has been some confusion expressed by the public, some of whom have believed the new approach will not address congestion. The fact is congestion will be monitored and managed through intersection improvements and through monitoring vehicle travel time along corridors. The volume-to-capacity ratio is an indicator of congestion at intersections, while the corridor travel time element is an indicator of how long it takes drivers to go from one place to another.

The policy recommendation is to add performance targets for pedestrians, bicycles and transit. There have been concerns voiced about setting targets rather than standards, but the targets will in fact serve to define project priorities for concurrency. The city will have to build facilities going forward that will address and meet the targets. The Transportation Commission is currently working carefully on what the targets should be.

Transportation Commission Chair Marciante noted that on June 10, with a vote of 5-1, the Transportation Commission approved the recommended policies for multimodal concurrency. The policies were submitted to the Planning Commission on June 23 as part of the 2021 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Commission's action responds to the direction given by the Council to prepare a Mobility Implementation Plan.

Mr. McDonald said the Transportation Commission has been working on the Mobility Implementation Plan for a while. Concurrency policy is a subset of their scope of work on the Mobility Implementation Plan. Because of the requirements of the process and the timing of the Comprehensive Plan amendments, the Transportation Commission has largely focused on concurrency policy during the second quarter of the year. The policies were moved on for consideration by the Planning Commission and the Council while the Transportation Commission was still working on the major body of work, which is the Mobility Implementation Plan in which the performance metrics and targets will be housed for all modes of transportation.

Mr. McDonald noted that the staff report contained the detailed responses to each of the Land Use Code decision criteria for Comprehensive Plan amendments. Of the five decision criteria, the most important is the third that relates to significantly changed conditions. As the Planning Commission knows, population and employment growth has constantly changed over the years and a more rapid pace is anticipated in the future. A multimodal approach does a far better job of addressing the mobility needs of people than a single standard focused on vehicles only. The Transportation Commission and staff believe a multimodal approach will best address the changed and changing circumstances within the city to support the planned land use.

Mr. McDonald referenced the written correspondence received from the Bellevue Downtown Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the East Bellevue Community Council, and from the public. Both the Transportation Commission and the Planning Commission has received numerous comments, both oral and written, over the last few months.

Ms. Johnson noted having received a request for additional time from Victor Bishop, who signed up to speak during the public hearing. Per the Commission's bylaws, speakers are limited to a maximum of three minutes unless the Chair or the Commission determines an allowance for additional time. The Commission previously determined that if additional time is to be granted to one person, it must be granted to all.

Chair Malakoutian opened the floor to a motion to increase the time allowed per speaker. No such motion was made.

Ms. Besti Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, said she has regularly attended the Transportation Commission and Planning Commission meeting since 2014. She said she believed the proposed transportation CPA was being pushed through so that the city can accommodate more development than it is actually prepared for. Eliminating the guidelines for congestion relief will help the city comply with the Growth Management Act in letter but not intent. The city is expecting 70,000 new workers to arrive in the next few years. That means about 35,000 new trips in and out every day, and those trips will impact the major intersections and will trigger cut-through traffic through neighborhoods. The Planning Commission has the power to make amendments to the interpretations of the staff of the Council's direction to improve livability and mobility. The Planning Commission should amend the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to retain Policy TR-2, "Strive to reduce congestion and improve mobility" and add "with integrated single vehicle, transit and pedestrian and non-motorized systems." That would retain as a priority the improvement of jammed intersections, and would also include improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Planning Commission cannot make the CPA policy change without completely understanding the proposed Mobility Implementation Plan, which has not been completed yet, and the Mobility Implementation Plan consequences, especially if the Mobility Implementation Plan will affect funding for projects throughout the city. The 2015 Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan has multimodal embedded in it already and is mentioned at least 18 times. If congestion relief at intersections and in

neighborhoods was not important to Bellevue residents, the Bellevue voters would not have approved the special 20-year property tax levy to relief neighborhood congestion. Taking traffic congestion out of the equation will make the evening commute last three to four hours instead of the commonly accepted one to two hours, triggering dangerous commutes for all forms of transportation. The Planning Commission also needs to ask what the difference is between the Comprehensive Transportation Project List and the Transportation Improvement Program list. There are 800 projects in the CIP that have not been built, while new roads and infrastructure has been built in BelRed. Several years ago, Victor Bishop noted that of the \$150 million in the transportation budget, \$100 million was dedicated to the development of BelRed instead of being dedicated toward funding any of the projects that were already on the list.

Mr. Bill Popp, a 45-year resident of Enatai, and of Sherwood Forest for ten years, said he is a transportation planning engineer who has been active in Bellevue transportation planning and design issues for 45 years, most recently serving the communities of Enatai, Surrey Downs and Belcrest with pre-designs and cost estimates for East Link alignments that would not impact the Mercer Slough Nature Park. He said the list of city contracts he has worked on include the NE 4th Street interchange location study, the Crossroads subarea plan, the South Bellevue subarea plan, the Old Main conversion to pedestrian-friendly design, development of the city's first bicycle policy, and its implementation with the design of Bellevue Way SE from SE 10th Street to 112th Avenue SE. He said prior to that he held management positions at the Puget Sound Governmental Conference, now called the Puget Sound Regional Council, and had key roles in defining and selling the plan that defined Metro as the King County transit operator, and in the development of the regional long-range plan for highways and transit that included HOV lanes. He said he was also instrumental in allocating 25 percent of the Federal Way urban system funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a role that is continuing. He said throughout his career he has been a multimodal planning engineer. With regard to removing from Policy TR-2, "Strive to reduce congestion..." he said he could understand the motivation behind the proposal. In mid-2019 there were some 13,000 new parking stalls in the pipeline for the central business district, and about 8000 for the BelRed subarea. In addition, there were major concerns for the east side of the city in that Microsoft planned to add 8500 new parking stalls. The collective total of 30,000 new stalls are estimated to align with having 13,000 new vehicles in motion during the evening peak period. The huge new transportation system demand is equivalent to 12 new freeway lanes or 30 arterial lanes if all were focused in one location. The vehicle space approvals means they are not likely convertible in any significant way to other modes. There are 37 deficient intersections in the 2035 TFP, and updates to respond to the current state of growth remains deficient.

Mr. Patrick Bannon spoke as president of the Bellevue Downtown Association. He conveyed the support of the Board for the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment and the transition to multimodal concurrency. He said the Board reached its conclusion after careful study by the Transportation Commission, a healthy amount of input and feedback from the membership, and careful discussion and action. The shift to a multimodal approach is significant for the city and in reviewing the documentation the committee addressed the concerns around unintended consequences. In working through the process it became clear that the existing concurrency policy is outdated and no longer relevant in that it is not diversified and does not account for the modes people use now and will use in the future. The intent behind the proposal is not to lose focus on the issue of vehicle congestion, rather it is an approach that diversifies the focus on investing in a multimodal system. The BDA would like to see the policy change also consider how other modes will come into play over time, and include a look-back option in ten years to determine the effectiveness of the policy change to the MMLoS approach. He reiterated the support of the BDA for the proposed CPA and the move to a multimodal approach toward



concurrency.

Mr. Steve Kasner, 1015 145th Place SE, spoke as an individual and not as part of any organization he may be part of. He said he has lived in Bellevue for over 30 years during which traffic has been a major issue. He said he did not support the deletion of Policy TR-2. He said he was very interested in the multimodal focus on all the different ways people can move around, but the people who live in Lake Hills and Eastgate face either major or minor gridlock for much of the day. Until such time as that changes, Vision Zero and many other goals will not be reached. There are individuals who are trapped in their homes because they cannot get out of the various entrances to their neighborhoods due to the streets being clogged. To create a multimodal system where concurrency and volumes of traffic are not the primary focus of the transportation system would be ludicrous. In addition, the city is way behind in doing subarea planning. The proposed CPA is a top down rather than a bottom up solution. For the Commission to say the approach is fine is tantamount to holding residents hostage in their own neighborhoods where the traffic congestion is not coming from their neighbors. The proposed CPA should be rejected and the city should complete the subarea planning process that is woefully behind schedule. Those who live in the actual neighborhoods should be listened to before making draconian changes that will only make it worse for people to get around. He voiced his support for Vision Zero and other programs for keeping people safe, but eliminating Policy TR-2 will not do that.

Mr. Victor Bishop said the bottom line is whether or not Bellevue should allow more congestion. The proposed CPA will absolutely allow congestion to explode on the street system. The city conducts an independent survey every two years as part of the budget process and every time for the last decade traffic has come out as the top issue. In 2018, 44 percent put traffic on top, and in the third position at 11 percent was congestion, which means 55 percent highlighted transportation system issues; the next highest concern at 15 percent was affordable housing, which means by a four to one ratio people are more interested in traffic. The Chamber of Commerce's list of the top ten employers in the city adds up to 31,000 employees. That list includes only 2500 Amazon employees, a number that is set to increase by 25,000. Development projects that are underway will house very large numbers of new jobs. The city's own projections show huge numbers of new jobs in the Downtown and in Wilburton. The proposal to scrub congestion relief from the Comprehensive Plan is crazy. The 2017 TFP listed 15 failed intersections, but concurrency was deemed to have been met. The projections show that by 2030 there will be 37 failed intersections along with three Mobility Management Areas. Those projections are what got the city moving toward deciding what can be done. Under the GMA, the city can add capacity, deny permits or change the standard. Clearly the proposal is to change the standard. MMLOS is a new concurrency standard and congestion by design will get worse. That is in fact the plan. Under the city's current approach, the forecast for 2035 shows that by far the most new trips will be by car. Light rail, identified as a savior of transportation, will address relatively few of the overall number of trips. Policy TR-2 should be kept and to it should be added "with proportional distribution of resources to motor vehicle, transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Mr. Todd Woosley, 10633 SE 20th Street, said he both lives and works in Bellevue. He said he supports retaining congestion relief as a goal in the Comprehensive Plan. The debates in decades past over congestion relief as a policy in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan have been around whether it should be the number one priority or just a priority, not whether or not it should be removed. He said he supported the general concept of a multimodal level of service approach. The concept, when presented to the Transportation Commission when he was a member, was a system to recognize the other modes of traffic that occur in Bellevue, but it was also designed to maximize the overall throughput of the system. That should be the city's goal.

The language suggested by Mr. Bishop would accomplish that while maintaining the fundamental policy of striving to reduce congestion. The city should keep the faith with the voters. The Transportation Commission helped to formulate a new property tax to supplement transportation improvements, a part of which is specifically for congestion relief for neighborhoods. Shifting the funding currently earmarked for congestion relief to something else will mean property owners will be paying the higher tax without seeing the promised congestion relief. If congestion relief is removed from being a Comprehensive Plan policy, that is exactly what will happen. It is known that an increase in utilization of the system is coming, therefore the city should look to invest in all modes of travel. Those investments should be made proportionately as a way of optimizing the limited resources. The city still has lots of opportunity for new capacity, including Phase IV of 120th Avenue NE which will expand from two to five lanes and include bike lanes and sidewalks; 124th Avenue NE widening; the NE 6th Street extension, a brand new street connecting 116th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE; and the expansion of Bellevue Way South. There are hundreds of millions of dollars of identified capacity projects on the books that will add capacity. Congestion relief is needed as a policy to make sure those projects get finished.

Ms. Leslie Geller, 15102 SE 43rd Street, said she has sought to understand the work done by the Transportation Commission relative to Comprehensive Plan policies and the creation of the Mobility Implementation Plan. She agreed with those calling for retaining in the Comprehensive Plan a standard for reducing congestion. She said she is one who feels trapped in her neighborhood, adding that she is grateful she has retired and does not have to drive to work every day. However, at any time of day there is traffic congestion to deal with. The Commission was urged not to adopt the CPA as currently written.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Morisseau noted that during the presentation staff mentioned that congestion relief is part of the amendment. She asked where congestion relief shows up other than in Policy TR-2. Mr. McDonald said the Mobility Implementation Plan includes performance targets for each mode, including vehicles. Policy TR-2 provides a prescription for a way to address mobility in Bellevue and prescribes striving to reduce congestion, which is an element of the Mobility Implementation Plan. Congestion will be addressed through intersection improvements and through improvements to vehicle travel times along corridors. The Transportation Commission elected to remove the prescribed modal hierarchy and provide an analytical methodology for identifying and prioritizing projects based on the performance targets for each of the modes. Chair Marciante said it is known there will be a lot more people, and the hope is that they will not all choose to get around in cars. By providing facilities that make it easier for people not to use cars, congestion can be relieved. Bellevue's growth is targeted at specific areas that allow for higher densities, but there are some arterials that will be facing much more significant backups, the result of which will be blocked intersections and residential access points. Currently the only way the city can address congestion is by widening intersections. The multimodal approach takes into consideration all modes of travel. Providing facilities for each mode will ultimately trigger mode shifts which will in turn relieve congestion. Having metrics for each mode will facilitate the process of prioritizing projects to accommodate each mode. There is no intent to remove congestion relief from the mix, rather the focus is on all users of the transportation system. What was very one dimensional will become multidimensional.

Commissioner Morisseau said she could see how implementation of the multimodal approach will ensure a well-balanced system and alleviate congestion. She asked, however, what the harm

would be in retaining a policy that specifically says relieving congestion is part of the focus, especially in light of the fact that congestion relief will indeed be part of the implementation. Chair Marciante said when the Transportation Commission voted on the revised and recommended policies, the one dissenting vote was predicated on a desire to keep the notion of reducing congestion in the policy. An amendment to the policy was proposed and fully debated, but in the end the majority always felt something was missing, that it was too one-dimensional with the primary focus on congestion reduction. Mr. McDonald added that when looking at the body of the policies recommended by the Transportation Commission, to take one policy or one part of a policy out the context does the rest of the body of work a disservice. The Transportation Commission worked very hard to identify policy language that was not prescriptive and which did not predetermine an outcome, allowing the process to play out with each update of the Transportation Facilities Plan, which allows for taking a fresh approach in looking at the existing conditions and identifying a set of projects to address those existing conditions.

Commissioner Bhargava said the elephant in the room is the interpretation of policy and the edited version of Policy TR-2. He commended the Transportation Commission for being comprehensive in thinking about the experience of all users by taking a multimodal approach to transportation. That approach is perfectly aligned with all of the feedback from the public as to where the city should be going. Policies are guidelines that often require interpretation that matches the intent in order for them to be durable. The nuanced approach taken by the Transportation Commission to Policy TR-2 is causing some confusion and strife in the way it is being interpreted. A policy should stand the test of interpretation in order to be effective. He suggested addressing the possible confusion in the way the policy is written given that the intent of the Transportation Commission is not coming through for everyone reading the policy. Chair Marciante clarified that congestion is not going to be reduced everywhere. The Downtown area where the growth is happening will likely see more congestion, particularly at certain intersections. The city's current approach is to average the V/C ratios for intersections within areas. The Transportation Commission did talk about mitigating congestion for the neighborhoods, but there are some factors, such as congestion on I-90, that cannot be solved by the city.

Commissioner Bhargava said he fully appreciated that congestion will not be reduced everywhere as the city grows and density increases. The policy as it currently exists in the Comprehensive Plan does not say that congestion will be reduced, only that the city should strive to reduce congestion. The draft policy as recommended does not give any assurance that congestion will be addressed.

Commissioner Moolgavkar noted that the proposed multimodal approach is aspirational but asked what will happen if in fact the targets are not met and if the policy does not drive the hoped-for change. Things have changed over the last year and the use of public transportation may not return in the desired ways. Mr. McDonald said the Transportation Commission anticipated that the approach would not be carved in stone. Embedded in policy is a process to reexamine the performance targets at each update of the TFP. The entire Mobility Implementation Plan could be looked back upon in conjunction with each major update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Brown said she appreciated the presentation on the work done by the Transportation Commission to examine the full transportation system, not just vehicles. Policy TR-2 as proposed encompasses congestion and the time it takes to get from A to B, but it also encompasses examining the actual decisions people make concerning which mode of travel to use. She agreed that the last year has changed things and it is not yet known if those changes will

be permanent. A multimodal examination of all aspects is an effective way of examining the transportation system.

Commissioner Morisseau asked if the proposal addresses the need for flexibility as called for by the BDA. Mr. McDonald said the Transportation Commission was concerned about engaging the community and evolving the Mobility Implementation Plan as circumstances change. Policy TR-30.2 says “Engage the community to evaluate and modify the Mobility Implementation Plan as needed in concert with each update of the Comprehensive Plan or as warranted by changed circumstances.” If someone invents a flying car, the Mobility Implementation Plan will be able to address the new mode and provide performance targets for it.

Commissioner Brown commented that the best way to get people out of their single-occupant vehicle is to watch the light rail speed by and get there faster. She said she does not want people to have to sit in traffic in their cars, but if they determine there is a better way, they may choose it.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that it adopt the Transportation Element Policy Amendments – Multimodal Concurrency (21 107724 AC) amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar.

Commissioner Bhargava noted his support for the general framework but said he wanted to see some amended language added to keep intact the congestion reduction intent of Policy TR-2.

Commissioner Brown suggested a motion could be made to pass along with to the Council a recommendation to add back into Policy TR-2 the congestion language. Commissioner Morisseau concurred with that approach.

A motion to amend Policy TR-2 to retain the intent of congestion reduction was made by Commissioner Bhargava. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau.

Ms. Johnson asked the Commission if the proposal is specifically to amend the policy language and said if that is the case staff would need to make the changes to the language and circulate it among the Commissioners for review.

Commissioner Brown reiterated the suggestion to simply recommend to the Council that they consider language that includes congestion reduction.

Councilmember Barksdale agreed with Ms. Johnson and suggested the staff would need time to address the possible implications of changing the policy language. The recommendation of Commissioner Brown makes the most sense and is in line with what the Commission has done in the past.

Commissioner Morisseau asked Commissioner Bhargava if he wanted to recommend the Council consider the overall congestion issue relative to the policy, or send it back to staff and the Transportation Commission to make changes to the policy. Commissioner Bhargava said he would be comfortable with the former.

Commissioner Bhargava then made a motion to amend the main motion to include a recommendation to the Council to consider adding language that addresses the congestion reduction intent. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Chair Malakoutian said he would vote against the amendment based on what he had heard from Mr. McDonald and Transportation Commission Chair Marciante. He said it was his belief that the work of the Transportation Commission and their recommendation is what should be forwarded to the Council for action.

The motion to amend the main motion carried 3 to 2 with Commissioners Bhargava, Brown and Morisseau voting yes, and Chair Malakoutian and Commissioner Moolgavkar voting no.

The main motion as amended carried unanimously.

A motion to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

ii. Proposal to Repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List  
(9:00 p.m.)

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McDonald said the proposal to repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List from Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan was generated by city staff. He said the recommendation of staff is to use the Transportation Improvement Program as the one comprehensive, citywide inventory of transportation projects to be considered for prioritization in the Transportation Facilities Plan. The TIP is the correct place to house the inventory of transportation projects because the Council updates it annually as required by law. The Transportation Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council after conducting several study sessions and holding a public hearing. The TIP is therefore kept up to date with the latest subarea planning, corridor planning and engineering studies with respect to transportation projects. Projects in the TIP become eligible for outside funding, which helps with implementation.

Mr. McDonald said his staff report contained the detailed responses to the decision criteria for a Comprehensive Plan amendment.

Mr. Victor Bishop said the proposal to delete the Comprehensive Transportation Project List is simply a convenience for the staff and a great disservice to the public. The Comprehensive Transportation Project List is a published document housed in the Comprehensive Plan and it cannot by design be easily changed. It lists more than 800 projects, all unfunded and all bright ideas that have been identified through various planning efforts for improving the transportation system. It is amazing that the Transportation Commission Chair made the statement that Bellevue is built out and nothing more can be done given the 800 identified projects in the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed action would bury the one public document that is in the plan, and that is baloney and just another nail in the coffin for having the transportation system work in any functional way. The approach represents a comprehensive change to policy to the detriment of the driving public. He urged the Commissioners to study carefully the mode split data he submitted, and to get off the notion that light rail will save the transportation system, because it will not. The 2030 projection, which ranges out six years after light rail is operational, says it will carry only 1.5 percent of the trips, an insignificant number compared to the 75 percent of people who will travel by car. He encouraged the Commission not to adopt the proposed amendment.

Mr. Todd Woosley spoke in support of open government and access to information by the citizens of Bellevue. He called for retaining the Comprehensive Transportation Project List in the Comprehensive Plan. It would be a service to the project to retain the list in the Comprehensive Plan by giving it the strength of adopted policy. The project list will get the fair scrutiny it needs and will be prioritized based on objective multimodal standards. The list should be kept as accessible to the public as possible and keeping it in the Comprehensive Plan is the best way to accomplish that.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McDonald noted that Mr. Bishop alluded to a list with over 800 projects on it. He said that is a misrepresentation of what the Comprehensive Transportation Project List is currently. In the 2015 update to the Comprehensive Plan staff and the Transportation Commission reviewed all of the projects that were scattered throughout the Comprehensive Plan and determined whether or not they should be retained, repealed if they were already built, or redefined in accordance with project studies done. The result was a list with only 89 projects, and they are housed in the Comprehensive Transportation Project List. The list includes a few new projects that were created as a part of the Eastgate Transportation Study in 2019, for which a Comprehensive Plan amendment had to be conducted by the Planning Commission in order to add them to the list. Staff does not believe the projects will be hidden from the public as a result of moving the list from the Comprehensive Plan to the Transportation Improvement Program, for which a public process, including a public hearing, is required to be carried out by the Transportation Commission, with final adoption by the City Council, every single year. The proposed amendment would remove the Planning Commission from the process of updating the project list.

Reflecting on the comment made by Mr. Woosley about prioritizing projects, Mr. McDonald said prioritization does not happen in the Comprehensive Transportation Project List any more than it will in the Transportation Improvement Program. The prioritization of transportation projects, and the subsequent funding of them, occurs in the Transportation Facilities Plan process. The TIP is the inventory of projects. The TFP update process takes the projects in the TIP, applies the metrics and targets from the mobility plan work the Transportation Commission is doing, and identifies a priority list. The prioritized list is cut off at the point where the available dollars runs out.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the prioritized projects not completed flow to the list of projects for the next year. Mr. McDonald said the inventory of projects is reduced annually by removing those projects that have been completed, and the projects that are created through a planning process are added to the list. In every update of the TFP, the Transportation Commission makes a recommendation to the Council with respect to the list of projects that should be funded. It is not necessarily true that a project once it is on a funding list will stay on the funding list forever given that circumstances can change that change the priority of each project, and projects can fall below the funding cutoff line. Commissioner Bhargava asked if it would be fair to say that the priorities are reassessed annually and that the funding line is drawn based on the dollars available to fund projects, and that projects move above or below the line based on those updated priorities or changed conditions. Mr. McDonald said that is the case, except the TFP is updated every two to three years rather than annually.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked what the impetus was for making the proposed change. Mr. McDonald said in the opinion of staff no value was added to the process by having to conduct a

Comprehensive Plan amendment by the Planning Commission to update the list. The TIP is a public process, and a public recommendation is made by the Transportation Commission to the Council which ultimately adopts it annually.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that it repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List (21 107724 AC) from Volume 2 of Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION – None  
(9:20 p.m.)

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None  
(9:20 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
(9:20 p.m.)

A. July 7, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

B. July 14, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Moolgavkar abstained from voting.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None  
(9:25 p.m.)

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None  
(9:25 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT  
(9:25 p.m.)

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Moolgavkar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

*Johnson*

9/22/2021

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Thara Johnson  
Staff to the Planning Commission

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Date

*Malakoutian*

9/22/2021

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Mohammad Malakoutian  
Chair of the Planning Commission

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Date