

City of
Bellevue



Transportation Commission Study Session

DATE: January 6, 2022

TO: Chair Marciante and Members of the Transportation Commission

FROM: Chris Iverson, PE, Senior Transportation Engineer, 425-452-6461
civerson@bellevuewa.gov

SUBJECT: Introduction to Curb Management Plan

DIRECTION REQUESTED

No action on Curb Management is requested on January 13, 2022.

Staff will present an overview of the Curb Management Plan and describe future engagements with City Council at this meeting.

_____ Action

X _____ **Discussion/Direction**

X _____ **Information**

PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Project

The City of Bellevue is pursuing the creation of a Curb Management Plan (CMP) for the city, which will establish new policies, principles, and guidance on how curb areas should be planned for, managed, maintained, and operated over time.

Council Direction

On November 15, 2021, Bellevue City Council approved a consultant contract and scope of work with Nelson\Nygaard for professional services to assist with the creation of the Curb Management Plan.

At an upcoming City Council meeting, staff will be seeking Council direction to direct Transportation Commission to lead the development of policies in support of the Curb

Management Plan, as well as the development of the plan itself. Policies will be vetted through the annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) process in 2022.

BACKGROUND

The street curb is where mobility meets access. This crucial area that delineates the edge of a street has historically been used to facilitate vehicle throughput or curbside parking. However, increasing mobility options and land use changes along limited curb space require new approaches.

In recent years, there has been rising urgency to employ more effective and deliberate curbside management practices in Bellevue. Traditional curbside functions like bus transit operations and travel lanes have become increasingly impacted by new methods of travel. The rise of app-based rideshare services (e.g. Uber, Lyft), e-commerce activity, and general freight operations have placed burdens along valuable curb areas. Meanwhile, rapid curbside modifications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the creation of “food priority pick-up” curbside zones and on-street dining areas, have been received positively by the community.

Bellevue staff have worked to optimize curb functionality in recent years. In 2019 and 2020, the city created a digital curbside inventory, identified potential transit layover locations to support future bus transit network expansion, and created a program to manage employer shuttles that operate within the right-of-way at the curbside. In 2020, Bellevue was selected to be one of three pilot cities for the Smart Cities Collaborative, a project led by Transportation For America. Along with Boston and Minneapolis, the three pilot cities sought to launch a curb pilot project and evaluate outcomes. Bellevue chose to focus on testing nascent curbside technologies that could monitor and predict curb usage.

Other city-led planning efforts have also indicated the need to create new curb management programs and solutions. The 2018 Smart Mobility Plan includes a strategy to implement curbside monitoring technology that could encourage the use of designated areas for shared use mobility services. Additionally, the city’s Environmental Stewardship Plan includes a recommendation to explore strategies to effectively manage curbside space for a variety of uses.

The rapid growth in the Urban Core of Bellevue will require new interventions to manage the growing strain on the transportation network. A long-term curb management strategy will act as one tool to help the city manage growth under a changing mobility landscape. Bellevue has the opportunity to lead in creating cutting-edge best practices for this burgeoning field.

CURB MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

Cities around the country are beginning to think about curb management concepts in new ways. To meet the changing mobility and livability demands of the future, Bellevue’s CMP will be guided by several planning principles as proposed by project staff:

- **Curb Equity:** Bellevue’s growth is beginning to place new burdens on traditionally underserved and transportation-disadvantaged communities and travel modes. Recommendations derived within the CMP will focus on equitable outcomes, so that crucial curb spaces can be reserved and managed for all street users.
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Curb spaces should be dynamic and functional for a constantly changing transportation system. Recommendations in the CMP need to be firm enough to inspire positive outcomes, but flexible enough to stay effective as change occurs.
- **User-Friendliness:** The concept of curb management is still technical by nature and has not traditionally captured widespread public attention. Recognizing this fact, curb spaces in Bellevue should be designed and managed with the end user in mind.
- **Decision-Making Clarity:** As development occurs and city-led operational changes are made, recommendations from the CMP should help inform how to design curb space and program curb uses.
- **Adaptability and Resilience:** Curb management solutions in urban areas will be key to facilitating sustainable outcomes. Curb zones may allow for the facilitation of greenery and environmentally friendly travel methods.

COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN

The process to formulate the CMP will include policy development as well as long-range guidance for curb usage in the Urban Core areas in Bellevue, which include Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton, and East Main. This guidance will be established within a curb use prioritization framework and an associated recommendation for a dedicated curb management program.

Policy Development

Staff will be seeking Council action to initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment related to policies for curbside management. Existing policy speaks to curbside usage, but burgeoning curbside functions – such as rideshare, employer shuttles, on-street dining, and mobility hubs – have no policy guidance. The Transportation Commission will be tasked to recommend policies in support of the intended outcomes stated in the final CMP.

Curb Use Prioritization Framework

Since curbside areas can function as both mobility and land use tools, management guidelines are needed to help recommend curbside uses in certain locations. A big component of the CMP will be the creation of high-level curb typologies and a guiding curb use modal prioritization framework.

This framework will help establish curb use priorities for each curb type based on land use context, street geometry, and corridor-specific modal priorities, while factoring currently unmet needs of local stakeholders. Curb use prioritizations may be established onto existing streets as

well as planned streets in the Urban Core neighborhoods (e.g. proposed BelRed street grid). At future meetings, the Commission will be asked to inform this curb use prioritization framework.

Curb Programs and Financial Analysis

Bellevue has historically managed and enforced curbside areas on an ad hoc basis using limited resources. This approach will be increasingly unsustainable as growth accelerates. The CMP will be exploring the creation of a dedicated curb management program for the city that will allow Bellevue to manage valuable right-of-way more effectively.

One component of a curb program is the inclusion of pricing structures for certain curbside zones. Charging for access to the curbside has been cited in numerous studies as a powerful strategy to achieve mobility goals, derive value from limited right-of-way spaces, and incentivize multimodal choices in urban areas. As Bellevue continues to grow, curbside areas will become increasingly challenging to manage and maintain without pricing structures in place to moderate and monitor usage over time and to potentially fund the resources needed to properly manage a curb program.

Bellevue has existing curbside pricing programs through right-of-way use permitting, which charge curbside lease fees for employer shuttles, event activities, construction activity and other similar functions. However, the city does not have programs to charge for on-street parking, parcel loading, curb zone activation, and other short-term curbside functions.

The CMP will include a curb pricing cost/benefit analysis that will highlight potential revenue streams gained with the creation of a dedicated curbside program. Various build-out scenarios will be studied that show the range of revenue outcomes from curb pricing use cases. Part of this analysis will include the range of potential uses of this revenue stream for public benefit.

The Transportation Commission has previously discussed the concept of charging for on-street parking. At the August 8, 2013 meeting, Commission discussed a proposal to create an on-street paid parking program for downtown Bellevue, and recommended adding a policy into the Downtown Subarea Plan to consider launching a pay for on-street parking program in the future.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The curb is a multifaceted and dynamic space that various users access on a regular basis. In early 2022, the project team will be engaging with a broad array of stakeholders to gain feedback on their experiences at the curb, as well as to hear their vision for how curb space can be used and effectively managed. Additionally, a publicly available questionnaire will be launched on the city's EngagingBellevue.com survey platform in February 2022 to garner feedback from the public on curb usage.

In Spring 2022, the project team intends to host a Curb Summit event. This full day workshop will bring various stakeholders and interested members of the public into a single setting to discuss curb management concepts and hear from a diverse range of perspectives.

NEXT STEPS

The CMP will be in development throughout 2022. The Transportation Commission will initially focus on policy development in Q1 and Q2, 2022. Work will culminate in a transmittal of recommended policy to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to the City Council in the 2022 annual CPA workplan.

Once policy recommendations are made, the Transportation Commission will act on pending Council direction to focus on informing the content of the CMP, including the Curb Use Prioritization Framework and the Curb Programs.