

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 11, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Hybrid Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Helland, Commissioners Kurz, Magill, Rebhuhn

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioners Marciante, Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Stash

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Paula Stevens, Department of Transportation; Kate Nesse, Department of Community Development; Kathy Gerla, City Attorney’s Office

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Nieuwenhuis

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Vice Chair Helland who presided.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Stash.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to amend the agenda to move Agenda Item 9a to Agenda Item 2a and to approve the agenda as amended was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Approval of Bylaws

City Attorney Kathy Gerla reminded the Commissioners of the proposed amendments to the Commission’s bylaws that were discussed in December. At that meeting the Commission directed staff to return at the first meeting in January to take final action on the bylaw amendments.

Kathy Gerla briefly reviewed the proposed amendments with the Commissioners.

Vice Chair Helland asked if the proposed amendment regarding Section VII, paragraph E, decorum, was needed in order to comply with Council rules or with a city ordinance. Kathy Gerla explained that everything in Section VII, paragraph E, is to comply with city code. The same applies to all city boards and commissions.

Commissioner Magill asked if “motions” and “actions” as used in Section VIII of the bylaws

are synonymous. Kathy Gerla said a motion is how the Commission takes action. In order to vote, someone must first make a motion. The vote is the procedural mechanism used to take an action.

Principal Planner Kevin McDonald relayed on behalf of Chair Stash a question about reducing from three minutes to two minutes the time allowed for each member of the public to address the Commission during oral communications when there are a large number of speakers. Kathy Gerla said the Commission has the ability under the bylaws to suspend the rules by a majority vote. The three-minute rule could thus be changed to two minutes.

A motion to approve the bylaws as amended was made by Commissioner Magill. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ting and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Maryia Frost, transportation director for Kemper Development Company, noted having submitted written comments with suggestions and concerns regarding six of the policies in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Many of the proposed changes the Commission is set to review are substantive and require meaningful debate and public engagement. The Commission should take the time to carefully review and discuss each proposed modification in the context of the entire Transportation Element. Preserving existing arterial road capacity is essential to accommodating Bellevue's current transportation needs and future residential and employment growth while reducing traffic congestion. Policy TR-2 is the only policy in the Transportation Element that directly addresses the importance of aggressively reducing traffic congestion, expanding multimodal opportunities, and improving the quality of the travel experience for all users. The policy should remain at the beginning of the Transportation Element. Changing the policy's number and relegating it to the multimodal and technology category would degrade the significance of the policy and create the implication that the policy is only about simply managing congestion, not reducing it. Policy TR-63 allows for the repurposing of travel lanes for other uses, such as parking, transit, or pedestrian and bicycle facilities where excess vehicular capacity exists, and or to optimize person throughput along a corridor. The provision should be deleted because Bellevue does not have excess vehicular capacity on its arterials. If the policy is retained, a definition of "excess vehicular capacity and optimizing person throughput" should be provided. The plain language of the terms should not require additional definition, and no reasonable person should interpret them to allow for a road diet of Bel-Red Road, the very thing that has been proposed by Bike Bellevue. Additional clarity is needed so everyone will understand the impacts on the city's ability to function and accommodate future growth. Absent that clarity, all that will be left will be a policy statement allowing the repurposing of travel lanes without adequate justification.

Nicole Meyers commented on having reviewed the FAQ slides following the additional Bike Bellevue meeting in December. Slide 10 addresses the Spring Boulevard alternative, which is expected to be a safe and comfortable route at or close to LTS-1. Unfortunately, it was pointed out that the middle section is unfunded and likely to take many more years to accomplish. Given that context, Slide 14 is particularly interesting because it says the No Build future year model network is based on the 2033 TFP network with the addition of a pedestrian grand connection between Eastrail and the Downtown light rail station, and the Spring Boulevard extension between 124th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE, and the SR-520 eastbound half interchange at 124th Avenue NE. That means the travel times for vehicular traffic, the impacts of taking away the arterial capacity along Bel-Red Road and Northup Way, were calculated as if all the expensive projects listed have been completed. It is possible the projects will have

been completed by 2033, but without funding identified that cannot be said for sure. Hopefully the full Spring Boulevard segment will be built out before 2035 to accommodate the projected growth. The model network should be recalculated without the Spring Boulevard extension and the Grand Connection over I-405 to determine what the traffic impacts will be if those projects are not in fact completed. One item on the agenda for discussion by the Commission addresses the goal of reducing driveways onto arterials and how that might affect both pedestrians and cyclists. The Commission should steer things in ways that will keep bicyclists from being routed onto arterials.

Pam Johnston said the survey for the Comprehensive Plan 2044 included a question about having five lanes in neighborhoods. Nothing was asked about costs or traffic. The Commission needs to look at what Bike Bellevue was meant to be. Bike Bellevue is not a good name for the project; it is an illusion that gives the impression of a big bicycling network. In the budget it is \$4.5 million for approved bike lane infrastructure. The proposal in fact funds a consultant contract to complete the design and implementation of three priority projects by 2024. The Commission also needs to look at the directions given by the Council. On March 27 of last year the Council directed against affecting other mobilities, and talked about completing routes that have holes in them before taking on new routes. Routes that are not safe should not be built. The Mayor called for working with Sound Transit to get open all the bike lanes they have. Bike Bellevue is only one small project. It is not the BelRed/Wilburton/Downtown bike plan. It is not the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. It does not create any policy. It is not a major step forward for sustainability and equitability. It is not a complete design overhaul. The survey only allowed for making tiny comments.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi rats. Critical to all of the city's commissions is the fact that the Deputy Mayor Malakoutian does not display a full name on the nameplate in Council chambers. The name is Mohamed but that is not shown. The Councilmembers all approved not using the full name. Nothing like that has ever been seen.

Commissioner Kurz stated that the speaker was not addressing a transportation topic.

Alex Tsimerman asked the Commission to stop what the Council is doing. It is harassment to Bellevue and to all Americans. It is not surprising all the things the Council is doing only because of Alex Tsimerman. The Commissioners should start acting like normal American people.

Kevin McDonald noted having received a number of written communications with regard to Bike Bellevue, both in support of and in opposition to the program. The communications will be forwarded to the Commissioners. Other written comments received were not pertinent to the work of the Commission and as such were not forwarded to the Commission.

Commissioner Ting asked staff to forward all written comments received concerning Bike Bellevue to the Commissioners as they are received. Kevin McDonald agreed to do so.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, AND MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Councilmember Zahn took a moment to thank the Commission for all the work it does and noted having enjoyed serving as liaison to the Commission from the Council over the last two

years. The work of liaison has been passed to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis welcomed the opportunity to be liaison to the Commission.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Department of Transportation Assistant Director Paula Stevens shared that while Bike Bellevue is alive and well, it is currently on pause while the ethics investigation that was triggered by a complaint filed with the city is still in process. Once the investigation is concluded, Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis will make a decision based on the information about how to move forward with the project and specifically management of the project. During the pause there is no ongoing public outreach, but the time will be taken to check in with the Council about the project and to learn what role the Council would like to play in 2024. The Commission's work on Bike Bellevue will continue in 2024.

Commissioner Magill stated that the staff did a great job with the special meeting on December 14 answering a lot of questions. The question asked was if there will be an opportunity for the Commission to engage on those questions during the pause. Paula Stevens said the intent had been to bring those questions back to the Commission on January 25. The transportation director decided, however, that the investigation process should be concluded before initiating any further work on Bike Bellevue that would involve the Commission. Once the study is again under way, those questions will be on the table for discussion by the Commission.

Kevin McDonald advised the Commissioners that the Power Point presentation that was developed for the December 14 meeting is posted to the Commission's website. It includes the responses to all of the questions.

Vice Chair Helland asked how the ethics investigation will take. Paula Stevens expressed the understanding that the investigation itself has in fact concluded. The transportation director is waiting for written documentation to help inform what, if any, decisions need to be made. The investigation is the result of an ethics complaint that was filed against the project manager with regard to the sharing of information with project advocates.

Commissioner Marciante commented on anxiously awaiting from staff a summary of all the comments made by the public, both at the special meeting and online. Paula Stevens said the public feedback has been rich and varied and it continues to be. The large attendance at the special meeting is indicative of the level of interest. The intent for the December 14 meeting had been to share the information from the Conveo online tool, but Chair Stash determined instead that the Commission should dedicate its time to listening to the public. Staff will come back to the next regular meeting with the Conveo information. Feedback is also being received from city departments, including Police.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Helland, Paula Stevens said it is fair to say that staff needs to assess what came in through Conveo and through the regular public channels. All of that will be provided to the Commission.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked if Bike Bellevue's final version will ultimately be sent to the Council for approval. Paula Stevens explained that the direction given by the Council in March 2023 was for the Transportation Commission to make a recommendation to Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis. The how, what and when of implementation will be up to Andrew Singelakis. Given the public interest in the project, the Council may or may not revisit their

direction.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Transportation Element Draft Policy Amendments

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse, project manager for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, brought to the Commission the revised Transportation Element policies previously seen by the Commission. Action by the Commission on the policies will occur at a future meeting.

Under the Growth Management Act the Comprehensive Plan is required to be updated in a comprehensive way every ten years. City code directs the Transportation Commission to participate in the updating process and to make its recommendations to the Planning Commission, which will in turn make the final recommendation to the City Council. The Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year vision for growth and outlines how the city will accommodate that growth. It guides city policy and all city plans. There are 13 elements or chapters in the plan of which the Transportation Element is one.

Given that the Comprehensive Plan guides the city's actions, it can lead to regulations such as zoning, which in turn can determine what gets built and where. It can also lead to other plans, such as the Mobility Implementation Plan, which integrates all of the transportation investments. It also leads to the development of programs such as the Commute Trip Reduction program which is aimed at reducing congestion.

The Council launched the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process in February 2022 and the Commission's first briefing on the scope of the work was conducted in March of that year. Now that specific policy changes have been drafted, the work to update the Comprehensive Plan is moving toward its conclusion.

Commissioner Ting asked if the Commission will have the opportunity to review the DEIS. Dr. Kate Nesse said the DEIS is a public document. It was published in April 2023 and was subjected to a public comment period. Work on the FEIS is under way based on the preferred alternative; it is responsive to all of the comments made. Some of the recommendations from the DEIS influenced the updates to the policies in the Transportation Element. Most of the mitigation measures in the DEIS are in fact things the city does. There is no plan to present and review the FEIS with the Commission after it is published, but the document certainly can be made available. The FEIS will include all 350 comments received on the DEIS along with the responses to each comment.

Dr. Kate Nesse said there has been a concerted effort to reach out to and communicate with the public. There have been communications with more than 5000 community members, and there has been targeted outreach to underrepresented groups. A statistically valid survey was undertaken, and a strategy team with special knowledge in development or neighborhood matters was convened. All of the engagement takes into account existing and future residents, businesses and employees. A community open house is scheduled for January 20 from 10:00 a.m. To 1:00 p.m. at Jing Mei Elementary, and an Engaging Bellevue survey will open on January 15, focused on the key policy changes.

Late in the process of preparing the policies it has been recognized that due to an error, several

policies were found to be misnumbered and had to be corrected.

Dr. Kate Nesse said there was a request made by the Commission to retain policies that include high-level ideals for street and transit networks. Some of the changes made were to TR-55, TR-67 and TR-80, each of which previously had been recommended to be repealed but which on the recommendation of the Commission have been retained and updated. TR-69 was retained without change.

The Commission also recommended retaining a policy on cut-through traffic. Staff continued to recommend repealing TR-156 because it is redundant with TR-134. Staff also is recommending modifying TR-134 given that it is the broader policy.

The Commission recommended retaining a policy about managing parking for transit use, specifically TR-79. The recommendation of staff is to repeal the policy because there are no plans for future park and ride facilities in Bellevue. TR-6, which directs how to manage the parking with transit agencies, was updated.

With regard to bicycles, the Commission requested including direction for the provision of short-term bike parking. Staff recommends retaining TR-10 without change, and updating TR-97 to become a broader policy incorporating active transportation terminology.

The Commission recommended retaining language that promotes transit ridership. To that end, TR-83 was changed from repeal to modify with broad direction to create transit stations that are a valuable part of the community. Staff also is recommending that TR-84 be retained unchanged.

With regard to noise policies, there was direction from the Commission to retain the policies on noise in the Environmental Protection subsection. Staff have not changed their recommendation to repeal TR-145 because it is covered under the State Environmental Protection Act. For any transportation project, noise is one of the things that must be considered and addressed. There are new noise policies about the impact of traffic noise on neighboring uses; they appear in the Land Use Element and the Climate and Environment Element.

The Commission recommended retaining policies relative to traffic calming and pedestrian safety. The staff recommendation for TR-58 was changed to update the language to be consistent with the Vision Zero strategic plan.

The Commission recommended combining some policies to reduce redundancy and to focus direction. At the direction of Council ways to shorten the Comprehensive Plan have been identified. While five new transportation policies were added, there is a net decrease of 23 policies in the Transportation Element.

Dr. Kate Nesse addressed policy changes made due to additional analysis. The DEIS had many mitigation measures, the vast majority of which are measures the city already takes. The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis was completed since the Commission last saw the policies. The same is true for the Climate Vulnerability Assessment.

While the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis was primarily focused on housing, it did include some recommendations for the Transportation Element in terms of policies that are more inclusive. The old TR-7 was moved to the Land Use Element given its primary focus on land

use. The staff recommendation for TR-111 was changed from remain unchanged to modify with a broader focus that includes all impacts a state highway might have on a neighborhood. The updated language of TR-128 is now recommended to have an additional slight wording change to make the wording more inclusive.

TR-31 was updated to add impacts from climate change as outlined in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Magill, Dr. Kate Nesse said all of the Commission recommendations were from the Commission's November 2022 meeting.

Commissioner Magill pointed out that both Commissioners and the public have often referred to TR-2 and asked if the reclassification of the policy was due to input from the Commission. Dr. Kate Nesse emphasized that the order of policies in the Comprehensive Plan is not an emphasis on the importance of one policy over another. One reason the organization of the policies was reviewed was to have them make sense together and easy to find. Kevin McDonald added that TR-2 currently exists in the transportation and land use section along with three or four policies that describe the relationship between transportation and land use. Staff have recommended moving TR-2 to the sectioned headed mobility management and technology because the content and direction of the policy is related to mobility management rather than land use.

Commissioner Magill suggested some might say that the proposed language of TR-2 puts an emphasis on reducing congestion rather than on managing congestion. Kevin McDonald said the policy direction is clear regardless of where the policy is placed in the Comprehensive Plan, and the better place for the policy is in the mobility management section.

Commissioner Ting asked how often policies get renumbered and voiced concern that renumbering might make it difficult for people to know which policies are referred to. Dr. Kate Nesse said the policies can be changed once per year. As new policies are added, all following policies get renumbered. The fact that TR-2 is currently at the beginning is likely the reason it has not been renumbered. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, which occurs every ten years, offers the opportunity to look at the overall document as a whole and act to make sure its organization makes sense, including the consolidating and renumbering the policies. A check-in is conducted every five years. The Comprehensive Plan can be amended once per year.

Vice Chair Helland suggested that as the policies are renumbered, the public should be provided with a chart showing how the numbers have changed.

With regard to TR-84, Vice Chair Helland asked about the process for the transportation department to have input into land use decision making. Kevin McDonald said park and rides are technically a land use issue, not a transportation issue. Given that, it is governed by the regulations of the Land Use Code. All park and ride uses are a conditional use under the Land Use Code and a specific number of criteria must be met in order for the city to approve a park and ride. There is a public process involved in the siting, the design and access to a park and ride lot. The transportation department's planning input to the location, quantity of parking spaces and so forth is done in collaboration with the transit agency. There are a number of policies in the transit section of the Transportation Element that direct the city to collaborate and work with transit agencies in providing service to the city.

Commissioner Rebhuhn called attention to TR-21, formerly TR-23, and asked what triggered

the language revision relative to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. Kevin McDonald said the reason is nested in the Mobility Implementation Plan, which provides for a bicycle network that is essentially the same lines on the map as the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, but the typology of the bicycle facilities embedded in the 2023 MIP is much different from the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The MIP has a larger pallet of bicycle facility types to work with and the desire was to expand the concept of bicycle facilities beyond the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The MIP could be mentioned in the policy. One rule of thumb employed during the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update was to refer to plans adopted by the Council rather than administrative plans. The MIP was adopted by the Council and it is referred to in other policies with respect to the Performance Management Areas, the performance metrics and the performance targets. Staff did not believe the MIP needed to be mentioned every time it comes up in the context of a policy.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked when it can be known when there is a complete and connected transportation network. Kevin McDonald explained that when reading a policy, the recipient of the policy direction is the city. Where a policy says to incorporate ped/bike facility improvements into roadway projects, the city staff will refer to the MIP when carrying out the dictates of the policy. Dr. Kate Nesse added that the MIP is referred to when talking about meeting performance targets. Where there is a more general goal, like a complete street network, staff does not necessarily refer to the plan.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ting, Dr. Kate Nesse noted that the two Commission meetings in November 2023 were taken up in reviewing all of the policies in the plan. The recommendations made resulted in the changes just outlined.

Commissioner Ting observed that in some of the policies there are lists included, while in other policies lists are not included. The question asked was how staff was making the call as to whether or not to include a list of actions. Dr. Kate Nesse said the problem with lists is that they are often viewed as being exhaustive when in fact the list might just be indicative of a few options. Where the latter was deemed to be the case, the associated list was removed. There are occasions, however, where a policy does not make sense without a list, even where the list is not exhaustive, and in those cases the list has been retained.

Commissioner Ting noted liking the practice of including in Comprehensive Plan policies a goal or understanding as to why the policy exists. It usually takes the form of "...in order to achieve...."

On the question of how excess vehicular capacity is defined, Vice Chair Helland referred to TR-56. Kevin McDonald said the legacy policy has been in the Comprehensive Plan for two periodic update cycles. The best example of how the policy is manifest are a couple of locations in the Downtown where the transit or bicycle facilities were embedded within the existing curb-to-curb space by taking out a travel lane, but only have it had been determined that the travel was not needed for moving vehicles. The process for calculating vehicle capacity is well known. When the numbers indicate there is more capacity than demand, the conclusion can be reached that there is excess capacity. The policy allows for awarding excess capacity to some other use, such as a bicycle lane, a transit lane, or on-street parking.

Vice Chair Helland commented that for the sake of transparency, some reference should be made in the policy to how excess capacity is determined, particularly for the sake of those who do not engage in transportation planning for a living. Dr. Kate Nesse said where there is consensus among the Commissioners to make a change, the change will be made to the policy

before the Commission makes its final recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Ting asked if a one percent excess in capacity would satisfy the policy. Dr. Kate Nesse said the policy gives the city the option; it does not direct that where there is excess capacity it is to be converted to another use.

Commissioner Ting asked if the policy actually adds anything to the authority the city already has. Dr. Kate Nesse said the policy only introduces the possibility of converting excess capacity.

Commissioner Marciante voiced the understanding that the policy acts as a guardrail by stating that only in places where there is excess capacity can the city convert a travel lane to another use. Another way to approach it would be to have the policy call for considering the capacity needs of the corridor, making capacity a factor to be considered before making any changes. Dr. Kate Nesse said TR-56 does call for optimizing person throughput, which by definition means to get as many people as possible along a corridor. The policy gives the city the option of repurposing travel lanes when there is excess capacity.

Dr. Kate Nesse clarified for Commissioner Magill that the language of the policy has not been changed.

Commissioner Kurz suggested the policy actually highlights where excess vehicular capacity exists and/or to optimize person throughput. The policy could be understood to mean there does not have to be excess capacity in order to make a change.

Commissioner Rebhuhn agreed and said under the policy the city would have the authority to take away a vehicle lane even where excess capacity does not exist. A street having excess vehicle capacity is operating well within the performance target. Taking away capacity could push the roadway toward exceeding the performance target.

Commissioner Marciante commented that as Bellevue becomes more of a multimodal city, there will need to be decisions made in favor of making one mode more efficient to increase the number of people who can be moved through a corridor. The technical analysis will need to happen corridor by corridor. The repurposing of a travel lane would be done to optimize person throughput.

Commissioner Ting asked if the reference to throughput is in regard to actual or theoretical. Kevin McDonald said the policy is focused on the potential throughput capacity.

Commissioner Ting voiced a desire to also look at actual expected usage. Dr. Kate Nesse said there are policies that are related to meeting the performance targets. Kevin McDonald clarified that there are no performance utilization targets, rather there are targets based on the performance of the system in terms of the metrics in the MIP, specifically the V/C ratio at system intersections, the corridor travel speeds along arterial segments, the bus transit times between activity centers, the completeness and connectedness of the bike and pedestrian networks. The number of people on a bus is not measured by the city.

Commissioner Ting concluded that there is no metric that tracks the proper utilization of facilities, in other words how facilities are actually being used.

Commissioner Marciante said utilization is not something traditionally measured in the

transportation space. Facilities that get built are considered in terms of a system. The focus is on how traffic moves throughout the system. The performance of the system is measured against the adopted metrics.

Commissioner Ting allowed having both a familiarity with and understanding of the metrics before stressing the importance of ensuring that facilities that get built are used. If facilities that get built are not used, the city has an obligation to act in ways that will see those facilities used.

Commissioner Ting asked for clarification as to whether or not the throughput referenced by the policy is actual or theoretical. Commissioner Marciante suggested it is both. Any corridor analysis looks at both the actual traffic, pedestrian and transit counts and models the facility into the future using certain assumptions.

Dr. Kate Nesse noted having heard in the discussion two possible options, the first of which would be to either strike the phrase “where vehicular excess capacity exists” entirely or changing it to read “consider excess vehicular capacity.” The second option would add a clause about measuring the use the changes after the fact.

Vice Chair Helland said planning and performance are two different things. The policy in question involves planning. If there are policies regarding performance, they would be the place to measuring use.

Commissioner Marciante called attention to old TR-32, new TR-28, and noted it is the performance policy.

Commissioner Ting pointed out that that the “performance of all modes” does not capture the utilization of a bicycle lane. In the MIP, the metric for bikes is based on the quality of the facility rather than on actual usage.

Commissioner Marciante voiced support for the metrics that are in place. The policy TR-56 is not the place to add new performance metrics.

There was no consensus to make any particular edits to the policy. There was agreement to allow staff to consider any wording changes and bring it back for additional discussion at a future meeting.

Kevin McDonald pointed out that the issues being debated have been debated before by the Commission. The issues were debated during the development of the MIP at which time there was concurrence to adopt the performance metrics, that subsequently were approved by the Council, without tagging on a utilization metric for which the city has no control. The city has control over the performance of the four modes adopted in the MIP, but not over how those modes get used, whether it be by people riding on a bus, the number of people walking on a sidewalk, or the number of people in a car. The Commission should hesitate to tag a performance metric onto a policy that has been vetted by the Commission and approved and adopted by the Council.

Commissioner Kurz said the city cannot say that just because a bike lane was built it has to be used. If a facility is not used after it is built, the city can decide to do something different. Commissioner Ting agreed that the future cannot be predicted. However, future utilization should be considered.

Commissioner Ting called attention to TR-23 and asked why the focus was only on arterials, suggesting that Complete Streets should be applied to the entire city. Kevin McDonald explained that the Complete Streets network as measured in the MIP applies to arterials, not to local residential streets. With development proposals that include building new streets in residential areas, or with redevelopment proposals along existing residential streets, the question of whether or not the add bike lanes always comes up. The notion of a complete street does not apply to all streets, but it does apply to arterial network upon which multiple modes of transportation can be implemented through development review or capital investment projects.

Commissioner Ting voiced the opinion that Complete Streets is a general safety principle that should be applied to the entire city. If it exists, any documentation that states Complete Streets only applies to arterials should be shared with the Commission.

Dr. Kate Nesse asked if there was consensus among the Commissioners to remove “arterials” from the policy.

Vice Chair Helland said the question is whether or not Complete Streets is in fact restrict just to arterials. Staff can decide that.

Commissioner Rebhuhn referred to TR-129 and asked if the policy as written lumps in electric cars that do not increase greenhouse gases emissions. Kevin McDonald said there are really two parts to the policy, with the portion about greenhouse gases emissions being legacy policy language that should be retained given that it is still within the interest of the city to reduce greenhouse gases emissions. The addition of per capita vehicle miles traveled is also important because it is a metric in the environmental sustainability plan that is embedded in the Transportation Element to allow for working through land use, transportation and environmental strategies to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled, though not total vehicle miles traveled. In a growing city with a lot of origins and destinations, it is potentially not a reasonable policy direction to pursue reducing total vehicle miles traveled. The number of miles a person travels in a day by car can be addressed through a number of ways, such as providing better ped/bike connectivity, investing in transit service, and implementing land use changes that provide better mixed use neighborhoods.

Commissioner Magill asked where the notion of reducing the per capita vehicle miles traveled came from. Kevin McDonald said the MIP has a per capita vehicle miles traveled reduction target. Within the environmental sustainability plan there are a number of tools and goals for different ways to be more environmentally sustainable, including reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled.

Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that the policy could be divided and become two policies.

Commissioner Marciante said it is state policy to reduce vehicle miles traveled to reduce greenhouse gases emissions, so the two issues are tied together at that level. It is hard to have a policy about reducing greenhouse gases emissions without making some specific tie to vehicle miles traveled.

Dr. Kate Nesse said while there are other ways to reduce greenhouse gases emissions, and other benefits to reducing vehicle miles traveled, the two are related. As such, the policy could be made into two separate policies.

Commissioner Rebhuhn agreed and added that having the two concepts in a single policy is

somewhat confusing. Driving an electric vehicle contributes to vehicle miles traveled without contributing to greenhouse gases emissions.

Vice Chair Helland suggested any Commissioners with suggestions for breaking the policy into two separate policies should submit them to staff directly.

Returning to the notion of including an explanation behind the motivation for a policy, Commissioner Ting said one example is TR-33, which calls for considering implementation of a pay-for-current-use program. It would be beneficial to include the motivation behind the policy.

Commissioner Ting also called attention to TR-35 and asked why the other recommendations from the climate vulnerability assessment with regard to transportation were not implemented. Dr. Kate Nesse explained that many of the recommendations in the climate vulnerability assessment are more along the line of action items and not necessarily appropriate for policy. Some also are more appropriate in other sections, particularly the climate and environment section, which was updated based on the recommendations.

Commissioner Ting suggested the notion of system redundancy would make good policy. Dr. Kate Nesse said that is not how the city thinks about the transportation system. It would be problematic to have a policy about it.

Commissioner Ting asked for clarification regarding the addition of the phrase “and prioritize” to TR-29, asking if that meant that is more important. Kevin McDonald said it can be parsed in reference to the MIP and how that plan identifies and prioritizes projects that address performance target gaps, a process that ends up informing the Transportation Facilities Plan. The MIP includes a four-step process of looking at the performance target gaps, the potential project concepts that could address those gaps, running the project concepts through a public process to see which ones are important to the community, and finally moving projects to the TFP where they inform development of a project list that is financially constrained and which can inform the capital facilities plan, which is the ultimate prioritization.

Commissioner Ting asked why “forecast” was removed. Kevin McDonald said it was because the MIP measures the performance as it exists, and the gaps are identified as that measurement occurs in real time. Commissioner Ting suggested forecasting should be included in thinking about the transportation system.

Commissioner Kurz said forecasting is part of the modeling. Dr. Kate Nesse said accommodating the forecast demand is redundant with the performance targets.

Commissioner Ting voiced the understanding that the performance metrics look at current conditions and do not anticipate future conditions. Commissioner Marciante said that is not true given the incorporation of modeling of the TFP projects. Kevin McDonald said the key elements are that the TFP does the work modeling while the MIP does the work of measuring. Dr. Kate Nesse stressed that forecasting is part of the process of identifying the gaps in the TFP.

Commissioner Ting called attention to old TR-97 and noted the removal of the list, adding that it would be nice to include those three points in text as actions and qualities of what might be considered a valued place. Dr. Kate Nesse agreed that everyone wants comfortable, safe access, space that is comfortable for large and small numbers of people, and social interaction.

People might also want cover from the weather and other elements that make a place valued by the community. The definition of a space that is valued by the community may change over time, but having a specific list might limit the policy.

Vice Chair Helland asked about retaining the list and adding “including but not limited to.” Dr. Kate Nesse said that approach has been considered in other elements. Even when that language exists, however, the listed items are given priority.

Commissioner Ting asked when things are included in lists, was it the intent of the authors to indicate which things were valued the most, or the things were intended to serve as examples. In some cases they are in fact examples but not the end goal, but in other cases it seems like some of the things are in fact priorities. One example is TR-97 where it could be said being comfortable and safe is a key priority. Care should be taken in removing things from policies just on the thinking that they are only examples.

Commissioner Kurz questioned the need to uncover all the historical intent in working to create a new document for the next 20 years.

Commissioner Ting noted that in TR-93 “walking and biking” had been changed to “active transportation.” Dr. Kate Nesse pointed out that “active transportation” has been used throughout the document in place of “walking and biking,” except where the specific reference was to walking or biking. Commissioner Ting commented that in other places “micromobility” is also used. The policy language throughout should be both intentional and transparent. Changing Bike Bellevue to be all about active transportation instead of biking, the entire complexion of the program would change.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said it appears the overarching principles of the document are under the header of transportation and land use. From there things drill down into the subcategories of freight and active transportation and so forth. The question asked was whether or not having mobility and technology under the subheading in any hampers the emphasis on the fact that it is a guiding principle that might be listed under the header of transportation and land use. Dr. Kate Nesse said all of the policies in the Comprehensive Plan are important, and all are part of the guiding principles for the city. The placement in a particular element does not reflect the importance the city may place on a given policy. For example, trees are important to the city and the relevant policies are in a section of the Climate and Environment Element around urban forestry. That does not mean Bellevue does not value trees and tree retention.

Vice Chair Helland asked if there will be an index or cross references. Dr. Kate Nesse said one piece of the work with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update involves referencing related policies. For example, the Land Use Element has a section on annexation, and there is a section on annexation in the Utilities Element. Cross references will be included to make it easy for people to find the things they are looking for.

Commissioner Ting highlighted the “Neighborhood Protection” section that was renamed “Residential Safety” and suggested “Neighborhood Projection” is a more accurate description of the section. The neighborhoods are looking for things like livability, and residential safety does not evoke that notion. Kevin McDonald explained that the recommendation to change the title came from the staff who manage the neighborhood protection programs. They are managing a transportation program and the policies describe the intent of that program. Livability issues, while certainly important in neighborhoods, are often transportation related and as such are covered in the policies. Safety remains the paramount intent. Dr. Kate Nesse

added that there are 16 specific neighborhoods in the city, but the policies in question are specifically about residential areas.

There was consensus to use the term “Residential Safety and Livability.”

Commissioner Ting asked what is meant by “proportional” in TR-120. Kevin McDonald said the proportional participation refers to proportional to the benefit derived from the investment.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 14, 2023, Special Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz.

Commissioner Ting pointed out that a “Commissioner Brown” is mentioned in the minutes and the reference should be change to the correct name.

Kevin McDonald said the reference in question appears on page 11. The minutes should be amended to read “Chair Stash” in place of “Commissioner Brown.”

The minutes as amended were approved unanimously.

B. December 14, 2023, Regular Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – None

12. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR

Kevin McDonald took a moment to review the schedule of upcoming meetings and agenda items. It was noted the Commission’s next regular meeting would occur on February 8.

13. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Magill. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn and the motion carried unanimously.



Secretary to the Transportation Commission

February 2, 2024
Date