

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 8, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Hybrid Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Stash, Vice Chair Beason, Commissioners,
Helland, Kurz, Rebhuhn, Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Marciante

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Paula Stevens, Department of
Transportation; Kate Nesse, Department of Community
Development

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Helland, who arrived at 6:49 p.m., and Commissioner Marciante, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Vice Chair Beason. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Principal Planner Kevin McDonald noted having passed along to the Commissioners a written communication from Kemper Development Company, which was a reissue of their correspondence for the November 10 meeting.

Alex Zimmerman, president of Stand Up America, compared the Commissioners to damn Mafia soldiers. Bellevue's Councilmembers are not term limited. Tacoma has half the intellect of Bellevue but does have term limits. Allowing people to serve in the same position for 30 years allows for idiots serving as idiots acting like idiots. Seattle is unique because it does not have freedom of speech like Bellevue and other Eastside cities has. Everyone who speaks in Seattle does not have their face shown on camera, thus no one recognizes who they are when they come to speak.

Craig Spiezle, a resident of the Lochleven community for over eight years, noted having written to the city over a year ago on behalf of a hundred residents regarding Pinnacle North and Pinnacle South developments in the Downtown. At that time, the city acknowledged that a comprehensive traffic study, including the impacts of spillover traffic on the neighborhoods, needed for the curb management plan had not yet been completed. There is a substantial risk

that the development could push Downtown traffic to a tipping point creating sustained and frequent gridlocks. Nearly 18 months have passed since a review was requested regarding the impacts on the residential neighborhoods and the impacts on emergency vehicles, but it has not yet been addressed. With regard to the draft curb management plan, it was noted that online shopping, ride hailing, employee shuttles and delivery services all compete for limited curb space. The lack of clear loading zones creates confusion and further exasperates traffic congestion. While the city's draft curb management plan acknowledges the aggregate impact to traffic, it is unclear how the proposal would address the issues. A solution is needed that will include but not be limited to developers working for the city to help create allocated accessible spaces to help accommodate the services that Bellevue residents increasingly rely on. The curb management plan should offer dynamic curbside management and accommodate the needs of all stakeholders while promoting access without marginalizing the interests of the residents of the city. The Commission and the city should increase community engagement to refine and enhance the draft curb management plan.

Mariya Frost with Kemper Development Company noted that while a number of the proposed changes to the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan are reasonable and intuitive, there are concerns outlined in the letter to the Commission dated November 10 and reissued prior to the meeting. Staff do appear to have agreed with the proposal to retain the language of policies TR-27 and TR-43. Existing policy TR-33 states that the city will plan for transportation system projects to accommodate the forecast demand and to meet the performance targets in each update of the TFP. City staff want to remove "accommodate the forecast demand" and replace it with "address performance target gaps." The original language should be retained. A data-driven approach accommodating the forecast demand and meeting performance targets should remain the priority. If the city wants to address performance target gaps, it should do so separately or in addition to policy TR-33. Existing policy TR-120 states that the city will support high-capacity transit facilities and services on I-90, I-405 and SR-520 that will accommodate the anticipated transit ridership. City staff proposed removing the clause "that will accommodate the anticipated transit ridership." That language should in fact be retained. The purpose of high-capacity transit is to accommodate the anticipated use and that should be stated as a policy priority.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, AND MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION – None
5. STAFF REPORTS

Kevin McDonald informed the Commission that the city received a grant award from the state Transportation Improvement Board. The \$4 million is intended to fund improvements to the 150th Avenue SE corridor between SE 26th Street and SE 38th Street. The project is one the Commission recommended several years ago as part of the Eastgate Transportation Study.

Kevin McDonald also reminded the Commissioners to use their official city email address when communicating with other Commissioners or with the public.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None
7. STUDY SESSION
 - A. Comprehensive Plan Update

Kevin McDonald noted that staff had received a lot of comments after the previous study session, both from the public and the Commission, and said to the extent feasible the draft incorporates those comments into the policy recommendations. Additionally, staff met with Commissioner Ting discussing transportation policy and overall policy structure. The list of policy suggestions and recommendations submitted by Commissioner Ting were addressed by staff and submitted to the full Commission to keep everyone on the same page.

Beginning with policy TR-60, Commissioner Ting asked about the general guidance on referencing external documents, noting that the policy specifically references the Bellevue Transit Master Plan. Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse said city functional plans are mentioned often in many sections of the Comprehensive Plan. That can be reviewed going forward to see if changes need to be made. Commissioner Ting suggested that referencing external documents is less of an issue than delegating authority to external documents.

Kevin McDonald said there are a couple dozen policies that specifically reference plans that are implemented outside of the policy. For instance, Housing Element, policy HO-6 refers to the Housing Repair Program. All information regarding prioritization and implementation details are contained in the Housing Repair Program document. The recommendation to develop a list with hyperlinks to all of the implementation plan references and to include it within the Comprehensive Plan element in which the references are made has been taken under advisement.

Commissioner Ting reiterated the concern of establishing policies that delegate policy authority to other documents. Policy HO-6 is fine, but if something like “implement this plan” is put into policy, anyone could put anything they like into the plan and see it implemented based on the Comprehensive Plan. Dr. Kate Nesse pointed out that all functional plans, like the curb management plan, are vetted. They cannot simply and easily be changed in ways no one ever sees. Commissioner Ting said the bar for making changes to policies in the Comprehensive Plan is quite high. The same is not true for plans outside of the Comprehensive Plan. All specific visions and goals should be captured in the Comprehensive Plan. Nothing in the Comprehensive Plan should call for doing whatever is in an outside plan.

Chair Stash recommended retaining a number of the policies in the transit section that are recommended to be repealed. The Comprehensive Plan sets the vision, but the how is left to ancillary plans, like the Transit Master Plan. Policies TR-61 through TR-65 should be retained because of the visions they establish. Kevin McDonald clarified that those policies would in fact be retained.

Commissioner Helland concurred that the vision is to be outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, while the broad “how-to” strokes are housed in the various implementation plans. Kevin McDonald agreed with the need to keep specific strategies out of the policies, leaving them to the implementation plans.

Chair Stash referred to policy TR-67 and asked why it was proposed to be repealed. Kevin McDonald suggested the policy is not necessary given that the Transit Master Plan is referred to elsewhere. While there would be no harm in leaving the policy intact, the policy intent is expressed elsewhere and the opportunity to streamline is presented. Chair Stash stressed the need to make sure the intent of the policy is either retained or stated elsewhere.

Commissioner Rebhuhn referred to policy TR-72 and asked if it means that over the course of

the Comprehensive Plan there will be no additional park and ride facilities. Kevin McDonald said the city is working with the regional transportation providers to define the alignments and stations, none of which have new park and ride facilities associated with them. Bellevue does not have authority over regional transit providers who provide transit facilities. The city provides input and permits facilities to make sure they are developed appropriately but does not ensure they will be built. The legacy policy should be repealed.

Commissioner Helland suggested that while the relationship between the regional providers and the city is currently strong, it is possible that could change over the timeline of the Comprehensive Plan. Kevin McDonald said it is highly unlikely the relationship would sour to the point of needing to point to policy TR-72 to ensure commuter parking nearby where people need it. Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that policy language could be included to encourage commuter parking facilities located and managed to intercept trips close to the trip origins.

Kevin McDonald said sometimes the city's input to regional authorities is welcomed, but sometimes not. One example is the 130th Avenue NE light rail station in BelRed for which Sound Transit planned a 300-stall surface parking lot, which is inconsistent with the transit oriented development vision the city had. Sound Transit was committed to build the surface lot when an arrangement was made for the city to take over the development of the site instead.

Commissioner Ting suggested retaining the policy, switching out "ensure" with "encourage." The policy would then not require the building of new facilities.

Vice Chair Beason agreed with the call to repeal the policy. The same sentiment is expressed several times in other policies. The better approach would be to take all of the various policy statements and combine them into one that encourages collaboration with the transportation providers to achieve the outcome.

Commissioner Rebhuhn concurred, noting that there is value in shortening the document by condensing things to the degree possible. Kevin McDonald allowed that over the years policies have been added to the Comprehensive Plan without taking a comprehensive look at what was already there. When the high-capacity transit policies were written, the city was in negotiations with Sound Transit over the East Link alignment and the station locations. The light rail best practices report was drafted to give the city a leg up on planning to build a new light rail line through an existing city. Much of the content of the best practices report got adopted as new policies into the Comprehensive Plan to provide for negotiation leverage with Sound Transit. Most of those policies are no longer needed.

Kevin McDonald recommended eliminating the high-capacity transit category and hold all the policies under a single transit section. While a few of the policies are specific to light rail alignment and stations or bus rapid transit alignment or stations most are broadly related to transit.

Commissioner Rebhuhn noted that both policy TR-82 and policy TR-83 are on the repeal list but without any stated reasoning. Kevin McDonald said policy TR-82 specifically references the light rail best practices report, the elements of which have become standard operating procedure. Policy TR-83 calls for maintaining a strong relationship with transit providers. The city already does that and having this policy is not needed

Commissioner Ting agreed with the notion of merging the transit and high-capacity transit sections but stressed caution in making sure the impacts of any substantive changes are

carefully considered.

With regard to the minor modification to policy TR-81, Commissioner Ting suggested the readers may not know what “optimize” means. The text should make the intent clear.

Commissioner Ting asked what the value is of policy TR-87 and specifically what it is telling the city to do. Kevin McDonald said it primarily relates to the alignment and location of stations. It assists the city staff in communicating with the transit service providers in terms of where the city expects growth to occur, the type of growth, and the mix of uses, all of which informs the location of stations and access to and from them. Dr. Kate Nesse said the policy language describes the land use vision that is described in the Land Use Element.

Commissioner Helland asked why staff initially recommended repealing policy TR-84 and subsequently decided to retain it. Kevin McDonald said the policy relates to meaningful, comprehensive and cooperative community involvement, something the Commission previously placed emphasis on.

Vice Chair Beason suggested policy TR-84 is redundant to policy TR-88 and suggested the two could be merged. Kevin McDonald agreed some merging language could be found. Dr. Kate Nesse said the Community Engagement Element in the Comprehensive Plan details a vision for providing opportunity for comprehensive community involvement. Given the importance of community involvement, it is not a bad thing to emphasize it in more than one place. Vice Chair Beason noted that policy TR-91 turns the focus once again to the neighborhoods saying the same things over again. While all of that is great, it could be put all together. Having the same thing all over the place is what is causing the confusion. The impacts on neighborhood is a point that needs to be addressed strongly and with user-friendly language, but without being redundant.

Commissioner Rebhuhn agreed with the notion included in policy TR-88 to include security as an element of transit. Such facilities need to be clean and safe in order to maximize ridership.

Chair Stash agreed and said the same issue is addressed in policy TR-94. Wherever it gets housed, deterrence of crime needs to be included. The specific examples listed in the policy veer toward the how and may not be appropriate policy language. Additionally, policy TR-95 could easily be combined with policy TR-94.

Chair Stash said noise avoidance is a huge issue and concern. It is called out in policy TR-98, a policy staff has proposed repealing. Kevin McDonald said there are processes in place that look at adverse environmental impacts and the policy is needed for the processes to occur. The issue is also addressed in other policies. It was agreed that there could be some additional consolidation without losing the importance of the issue.

Commissioner Ting agreed condensing the policies that address noise and other issues could be a good thing. The thing to be careful of is simply removing things in the spirit of condensing. For instance, cut-through traffic is a major concern for many. Just removing it from the policies by saying it is covered somewhere else would make the topic less of a policy issue. Removing anything should be done intentionally.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the policies should express concern about all types of traffic noise, not just noise specific to high-capacity transit. Neighborhood protection might be the place to address it given that noise is of more concern to residents than to businesses.

Commissioner Ting noted the notion of cut-through traffic had been specifically removed from policy TR-91 and suggested cut-through traffic should at least be called out somewhere given its importance to residents. Dr. Kate Nesse said policy TR-148 is a policy about discouraging cut-through traffic. Given that the policy is earmarked to be repealed, maybe it should be retained instead.

Turning to the policies in the pedestrian and bicycle transportation section, Commissioner Helland asked where active transportation would ultimately be defined. Dr. Kate Nesse said there will be a glossary in the document. It includes many of the new terms being discussed.

Vice Chair Beason suggested that the separation of the transit policies by topic was not necessarily needed. Kevin McDonald said what has not yet been presented is the extensive narrative that describes the context and intent of the policies. Each section has associated narrative.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ting, Kevin McDonald said the long-used term “non-motorized transportation” devolved to referred to pedestrian and bicycle. The term is now being broadened out once again to consider more types of non-motorized transportation than just pedestrians and bicycles and being referred to broadly to as active transportation. Dr. Kate Nesse added that active transportation is an ever-evolving category but generally refers to transportation modes that do not involve buses and other forms of transit. Kevin McDonald said e-scooters would be considered active transportation.

Commissioner Ting commented that in some ways policy TR-103 is redundant with the general notion of addressing performance target gaps. The question asked was whether or not the policy is needed. Kevin McDonald said the policy language informs the implementation of the Mobility Implementation Plan. It is true there already is a policy that talks about the Mobility Implementation Plan. Commissioner Ting said the policy language is fine but may be redundant.

Commissioner Ting referenced policy TR-105 and suggested the reference to short term bicycle parking seemed like a very intentional addition. Kevin McDonald said there is no regulatory mechanism to get bicycle parking on the sidewalks, thus the city installs bicycle parking for short term use in various places. The Land Use Code does require long-term commuter parking within the structure of new buildings. Commissioner Ting suggested the Land Use Code should be updated to include a reference to short-term parking. Kevin McDonald said that could be done. Dr. Kate Nesse said the policy could provide the direction to see that done.

Commissioner Rebhuhn voiced support for the addition, noting its reasonableness. Commissioner Ting agreed but stressed the need to include the reason.

Commissioner Helland said policy TR-104 also appeared to be redundant with the Mobility Implementation Plan. Kevin McDonald said the Mobility Implementation Plan does not describe the standards for construction. The policy directs what to do and says to do it in accord with the current standards. As such, the policy is not redundant.

Commissioner Ting asked if a standard practice needs to be included as policy. Policies TR-82 and TR-83 were recommended to be repealed precisely because they are evoke standard practices. Kevin McDonald said the Commission could recommend repealing policy TR-104.

Chair Stash argued in favor of retaining policies that outline high-level ideals if for no other reason than five to ten years out the city may have different standard practices.

Commissioner Helland said the Comprehensive Plan walks a fine line between too much specificity and redundancy, and establishing a vision. If something is not in the Comprehensive Plan, where will it be.

Commissioner Ting suggested taking the policy out could be tantamount to a statement that the issue is not all that important anymore.

Dr. Kate Nesse pointed out that the minor modification to the existing policy was to add “and guidelines.” Based on the community interaction to date, it could be argued that the community would strongly support retaining the policy.

There was consensus to retain the policy as revised.

Attention was given next to the policies in the State and Federal Highways and Corridors section. Commissioner Rebhuhn referred to policy TR-120 and asked why “anticipated transit ridership” was marked to be removed. Kevin McDonald explained that the main policy intent is to support the high-capacity transit facilities and service on the freeways. The city defers to the transit service agencies to describe how those facilities accommodate the anticipated transit ridership.

Commissioner Ting suggested the policies should be future looking and not just focused on current gaps in performance. If the thinking is that transit will take off and there will be a need for a lot more capacity, that should be stated in policy. The phrase marked to be removed should be retained.

Vice Chair Beason suggested the policy is housed in the wrong section and should be in the transit section instead.

Commissioner Rebhuhn commented that by removing the phrase the policy becomes focused solely on supporting high-capacity transit facilities on the freeways.

Vice Chair Beason pointed out that policy TR-87 specifically addresses optimizing ridership and system performance. That removes the need to include the highlighted phrase in policy TR-120. Kevin McDonald clarified that transit ridership is an outcome, not an input. Transit service exists to support the land use vision and to the extent it is designed and located properly informs the ridership outcome. The city therefore has input to ridership through the land use vision, but not necessarily as an input to the transit system in terms of implementing policy. Policy TR-120, absent the clause about ridership, is still a good policy given that there is still development in process for high-capacity transit on the freeway system.

Commissioner Rebhuhn proposed revising the last part of the policy to read “...to encourage transit ridership.” There was agreement to make that change.

There were no comments made in regard to the policies in the Freight Mobility section.

Kevin McDonald said New Policy TR-127.1 in the Transportation Finance section came about through the need to split a single policy into two in order to avoid having multiple topics in a

single policy.

No comments were made regarding the policies in the section.

Turning to the Environmental Considerations section, Commissioner Helland called attention to the note added to policy TR-137 and asked what noise impacts would be called out. Dr. Kate Nesse said the proposal was to include the topic in neighborhood protection but allowed that the Environmental Considerations section would also be a good place for it. The consensus reached was that it should be housed in the Environmental Considerations section.

Kevin McDonald said a comment previously made with respect to policy TR-136 resulted in retaining the policy.

Commissioner Helland called attention to policy TR-140 and asked what details in the Watershed Management Plan should be kept in mind. Kevin McDonald said that plan is being developed by the Department of Utilities to look at the specific needs of each watershed area in the city, and to describe investments for enhancing the functions and values of the streams within those watersheds. One of the tools and techniques to enhance the functions and values of the streams is low-impact development, and the plan will provide pertinent guidance.

Turning to the Neighborhood Protection section, Commissioner Rebhuhn referenced policy TR-145 and asked if the curb management plan addresses spillover traffic. Kevin McDonald said the guidance received from the subject matter experts was to be a little more broad. The term they recommended was “non-residential parking,” which is clearer in terms of intent.

Vice Chair Beason commented that a lot is said about safety but not enforcement. It is good to have crosswalks and flashing lights, but people blow through them every day. Kevin McDonald said one of the tenets of the Vision Zero action strategy is related to enforcement. The Comprehensive Plan looks to the Vision Zero plan to describe enforcement. Vice Chair Beason there needs to be a strong reference made to Vision Zero in the plan.

Commissioner Helland asked how the city decides where traffic calming measures should be located. Kevin McDonald said there is a division in the transportation department that works with neighborhoods to study situations that get reported, and to plan with the neighborhoods how to address issues. There is also a subsequent feedback process to determine how well things worked and if adjustments are needed. Many of the opportunities are driven by complaints, but the development of neighborhood plans involves a process of engaging communities in discussions around what they would like to see going forward. The vetting is done in a community setting and action plans are developed accordingly.

Kevin McDonald stressed that curb management will not be a section within the transportation policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Rather, they will be fitted into the body of the Transportation Element where they best fit.

Chair Stash observed that the topic of pay for curb use was listed both in New 2 and New 8. Kevin McDonald explained that it is highlighted in New 8 as an effort to make sure the topic is integrated into the curb management plan. In New 2 the suggestion is that the curb management plan, once developed, be integrated.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 10, 2022

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

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Commissioner Remote Participation for January 12, 2023

After discussion, a motion to allow Commissioners Helland, Ting and Marciante to participate remotely on January 12, 2023, was made by Vice Chair Beason. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Helland asked what the current Covid protocol is for anyone testing positive. Chair Stash said the protocol is to follow the current CDC guidelines.

11. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR

Kevin McDonald briefly reviewed the Commission's calendar of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stash adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date