



Bellevue Planning Commission

March 9, 2022

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Amend Comprehensive Plan policies in the Transportation Element and Downtown Subarea Plan related to curb management.

STAFF CONTACT(S)

Chris Iverson, Senior Transportation Engineer, 425-452-6461

Transportation Department

Thara Johnson, Comprehensive Planning Manager, 425-452-4087

Community Development Department

POLICY ISSUES

Transportation-related policies are proposed to be modified in support of the ongoing Curb Management Plan. This effort is identified as a 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) workplan. Policy amendments will be recommended by the Transportation Commission.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



The March 9, 2022 study session item will review the scope of work and the intended policy outcomes as directed by the City Council for the Curb Management Plan. Specific policy recommendations from the Transportation Commission regarding curb management are forthcoming.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Curb Management Plan – Policy Approach

On November 15, 2021, the City Council approved a consultant contract and scope of work for the Curb Management Plan (CMP). This CMP effort seeks to establish more deliberate policies, practice, and guidance on how curb areas should be design, maintained, and operated over time.

On February 14, 2022, the City Council provided direction to initiate a 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendment workplan in support of curb management. Transportation Commission will develop initial policies and transmit recommendations to Planning Commission for consideration as part of the 2022 annual CPA process.

Curb Management – Background

Curb spaces typically lie within public right-of-way on transportation facilities. Curb spaces have traditionally been used for travel lanes, bus stops, and on-street parking zones for automobiles. However, the exponential growth of new mobility solutions and curbside placemaking strategies – as well as the accelerating growth within Bellevue’s urban neighborhoods – have placed burdens on traditional curbside methods and highlighted new importance on establishing better curb management practices.

Competing demands among mobility uses – such as app-based rideshare and taxi services, urban freight

uses, employer shuttles, and micromobility functions like free-floating bikeshare – are resulting in novel challenges at the curbside. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, cities around the country have experimented utilizing curbside space for placemaking functions, such as creating outdoor dining areas, installing public seating zones, establishing dedicated food truck spaces, and expanding tree canopy and greenery zones. Other innovative curbside functions include the advent of common carrier delivery lockers, mobility hubs, and EV charging stations. Ultimately, the curb can act as a tool for mobility, commerce, and placemaking.

Currently, Bellevue has policy language that speaks to managing curb areas, but does so in an ad-hoc manner. This approach does not reflect the growing need to approach curb management from a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective. As such, new and modified city policy direction will allow staff to approach these rising curb management challenges in a more deliberate manner. Additionally, new policy and operational frameworks will be needed to ensure that curb spaces are aligned with other city goals, such as the recently adopted Environmental Stewardship Plan.

Curb Space as Dynamic Space

In Bellevue, the curb has served as a relatively static zone throughout the course of the city's growth. Travel lanes and parking zones are established with consistent operational rules that do not account for variable traffic patterns. For example, curbside on-street parking areas in downtown Bellevue are typically offered as 2-hour parking between 7AM and 6PM, but parking is allowed at all times of the day generally. Meanwhile, most curbside travel lanes are maintained at all times of the day and week. These operation rules do not account for traffic demand variation, thus causing relative inefficiency in the transportation system.

A more dynamic approach to curb management would be responsive to observed transportation and land use demands during various time periods within days and weeks. Additionally, a dynamic approach would provide the foundation for allowing staff and the community to formally expand the definition of what curb areas can facilitate. Examples of dynamic curb uses include:

- Establishing time-of-day loading zones in parking areas to pair with peak delivery demands
- Implementing seasonal or year-round dining areas in neighborhood areas
- Allowing on-street parking within curbside travel lanes on specific roadways during time periods when traffic volumes are light
- Adding designated curbside mobility hubs near high-capacity transit stations to facilitate micromobility uses and passenger pick-up / drop-off functionalities

Establishing a comprehensive and dynamic mindset for curb management may require additional resources to properly operate. Currently, city policy does not provide enough support to facilitate augmented curb management functionality.

Existing Policy Supporting Curb Management

The advent of a Curb Management Plan is supported by existing Comprehensive Plan policies, city documents, and operational approaches. Some examples of existing Comprehensive Plan language include:

Downtown Subarea Plan

- **S-DT-135.** Provide space within or near Downtown for bus layovers and other bus transit facilities needed to support projected levels of transit service.

- **S-DT-157.1** Add new permanent on-street parking spaces in high-opportunity locations that meet engineering standards for traffic safety.
- **S-DT-157.2** Explore adding temporary on-street parking spaces for use during off-peak hours.
- **S-DT-157.3** Consider developing a proposal to implement a pay for on-street parking program.

Transportation Element

- **TR-128.** Provide for curbside space to accommodate small-scale parcel delivery and loading through development review
- **TR-143.** Provide curbside spaces for electric vehicle charging stations where on-street parking is allowed.
- **TR-149.** Minimize spillover parking into residential neighborhoods through residential parking zones and other measures.

Through the CMP process, policy language will be added, removed, and modified to support an upgraded comprehensive curb management strategy. Policies will be intended to guide decision-making primarily in the urban core neighborhoods of Bellevue, which include Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton, and East Main. The proposed changes to policy will conform to processes and criteria listed in Section 20.30I in the City of Bellevue Land Use Code. Proposed policy amendments will address significantly changed conditions since Comprehensive Plan language was amended.

Curb Management Plan – Amendments

At the January 13th Transportation Commission meeting, staff introduced the scope of the Curb Management Plan that was approved by Council on November 15th, 2021. At the February 14th meeting, City Council provided direction to initiate a 2022 CPA workplan in support of curb management. The Transportation Commission will guide the development of policy language in support of the CMP. While specific policy amendments are not yet articulated, it is intended that new and modified language would provide a broader foundation for curb management strategies and programs.

Transportation Commission is tasked to work with staff and the community to prepare policy recommendations in support of the CMP. These recommended policies will be transmitted to the Planning Commission in mid-2022 and are anticipated to be included with other annual city-initiated and privately-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment work programs.

NEXT STEPS

The Transportation Commission will prepare policy recommendations in support of curb management as part of the CMP. Discussion of Transportation Element and Downtown Subarea policy recommendations are expected to commence at study sessions in Q2-2022 and conclude with a policy recommendation in Q3 of 2022.

Planning Commission study sessions and public hearings will be scheduled to consider recommended Comprehensive Plan Amendments. The Planning Commission will prepare a final recommendation (expected Q3, 2022).

City Council action by ordinance on the Planning Commission CPA recommendations is expected in Q4, 2022.

ATTACHMENTS

1. None