

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 8, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Hybrid Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Stash, Vice Chair Beason, Commissioners, Kurz, Marciante, Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Helland, Rebhuhn

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Andrew Singelakis, Molly Johnson, Department of Transportation; Thara Johnson, Kate Nesse, Department of Community Development; Anthony Gill, Jesse Canedo, Economic Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Zahn

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Stash who presided.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Helland and Rebhuhn.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Principal Planner Kevin McDonald noted having forwarded to the Commissioners several written communications received on the topic of the public hearing for the Multimodal Concurrency Implementation Guide and the curb management plan.

Chris Randalls, founder of Complete Streets Bellevue, an organization that advocates for those biking, walking, rolling and taking transit in the city, thanked the Commission for its work around key multimodal policies. The group convened two separate gatherings in August for people live in, work in and visit Bellevue. The first was a walking tour of the area immediately adjacent to the Wilburton light rail station and it was attended by more than two dozen people. The second was a biking tour of key roadways in the Wilburton commercial corridor and it was attended by about a dozen people. At each event the attendees were able to observe how unsafe many streets are in the neighborhood. With key multimodal investments set to bring even more people to the area, the view of the organization is that the city must ensure those who are biking, walking, rolling and getting around Bellevue by transit and trails have adequate infrastructure. The urban core Bicycle Rapid Implementation Program will be an important opportunity to improve multimodal facilities in the Wilburton commercial corridor.

Alex Tsimerman, a resident of Bellevue for 35 years, indicated being president of Stand Up America and having spoken in Council chambers more than 3000 times. Thirty-five years ago Bellevue was a nice village, but now traffic in the city is unbearable, and nothing is being done to make the situation better. The Commissioners belong to a group that can be called super smart idiots. Amazon wants to bring in 35,000 people soon, a situation that will from a transportation stance be absolutely idiotic. Traffic is currently stupid and that will make it even more stupid. Too many people are driving into the city, making things dangerous and sick. Sound Transit's big spending has been pushed by the City Council and the King County Council so now Bellevue looks like New York, Moscow or Tokyo. Where Bellevue was previously a beautiful city, now it is sickening. The Commission has done nothing to stop it. Half the revenues from the city's red light cameras go to a private company in Arizona. They are stupid because the city has spent government money on them. Going to court over the red light cameras brings no justice. Bellevue should stop the red cameras to keep the city safe.

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

Councilmember Zahn informed the Commission that in August the joint transportation board met and there were representatives from the Eastside, north and south King County areas. The excellent presentation was focused on transportation safety. The city was recognized for the work it is doing around Vision Zero. The Eastside Transportation Partnership is set to meet next on September 9 to hear from the Washington State Department of Transportation regarding their active transportation program, a big part of which will be that all projects with budgets exceeding \$500,000 will include an analysis with a Complete Streets mindset. The I-405/SR-167 advisory group meeting is scheduled to meet in early October and will receive an update from WSDOT.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. McDonald reported that on October 10 the City Council will receive the governor's Smart Communities award for the Mobility Implementation Plan, work the Commission had a large hand in crafting. On October 11 Commissioner Marciante along with a representative of Fehr & Peers will provide a presentation about the Mobility Implementation Plan at the Washington Chapter American Planning Association Conference in Vancouver, WA.

Mr. McDonald noted that on September 14 the Planning Commission would hold a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan amendment policy recommendations on the curb management plan. The Transportation Commission could choose to send a representative to that meeting. Also, next week the Department of Community Development will host a deep dive to gain community input on the topic of housing diversity and choice; the meeting will occur on September 15 in City Hall from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The Commissioners were informed that on September 13 Kevin will deliver a presentation on the Mobility Implementation Plan to the Institute of Transportation Engineers in Seattle.

Commissioner Ting indicated a desire to participate remotely in the meeting concerning housing diversity and choice. Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse that the meeting will not be conducted in a hybrid format. However, the exercises that will be undertaken will be available on Engaging Bellevue under Comprehensive Plan 2024. Visitors to the site will be able to offer

feedback.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Multimodal Concurrency Implementation Guide

Chair Stash explained that the Commission's only role relative to the guide is to facilitate the public hearing. The adoption of the guide will be done administratively by the Director rather than as a legislative action taken by the Commission or the City Council. All public input will be directed to the staff for consideration.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Vice Chair Beason. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Marciante and the motion carried unanimously.

Transportation Development Review Manager Molly Johnson noted that following the public hearing the testimony would be reviewed for any areas where revisions to the guide should be made. Following approval of the document by the Director, there will be a 30-day transition period between the old concurrency program and the new concurrency program.

The process to date has involved policy amendments in the Comprehensive Plan to set up the direction to pursue a multimodal approach to concurrency. The Mobility Implementation Plan went further by setting out the program basics and the framework was used to draft a new concurrency code to replace the current code. The implementation guide is intended to provide all the details the Director will administer the program.

The guide has several chapters, beginning with an introduction. The program description chapter includes the specifics of how a private developer will apply for a concurrency determination; the trip rate schedule; a discussion of the concurrency reservation and certificate of concurrency; and mitigation options. The system management chapter includes a dashboard to indicate the number of available mobility units of supply, how many of them have been reserved, and how many have been allocated to approved projects. The chapter indicates there will be an annual report published; notes that there will be periodic updates to the Comprehensive Plan projected growth targets and financial forecast; and will outline opportunities to update the implementation guide, some of which will be handled administratively and some of which will require a public hearing before the Commission. The last two chapters outline how the mobility units of supply, and the mobility units of demand are calculated using the most recently available data. The program was shared with a group of traffic engineer practitioners as a way of gaining their feedback and input. The program was very well received by them.

Molly Johnson said any revisions to the guide based on the public hearing testimony will be made over the coming week. The Director will approve the guide on September 15, and it will become effective on October 17.

Chris Randalls noted the support of the Complete Streets Bellevue organization for the concurrency implementation guide as recommended by staff. No major modifications are needed, though there should be included a framework to regularly update the modeshare for land uses in Appendix A. As the city grows, densifies, and continues to build up its multimodal network, and as more people choose to use the facilities, the single-occupant vehicle percentages are likely to decline. Having a framework for regularly updating the figures based on the best available data will be very important.

Michelle Wannamaker, 4045 149th Avenue SE, noted being somewhat uncomfortable with the trip rate schedule, specifically the vehicle trip rate ratios. By way of example, senior adult housing/multifamily has a vehicle trip rate of .26. Assisted living has a vehicle trip rate of .24. There is a big difference between those two uses. The former can include a retirement community with residents who use their vehicles to further their independence. That could include both members of a two-person household. In assisted living facilities, there could be situations where one member of a couple drives while the other does not. Those kinds of things need to be taken into consideration. Some of the information on the dashboard should be broken out quarterly, specifically the number of people using each mode versus the modeshare ratios. Pedestrian and bicycle numbers will be very different in December than they are in July.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Vice Chair Beason. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Update

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson reported being the staff liaison to the Planning Commission. As the Comprehensive Plan update process proceeds, the Transportation Commission will be kept informed, and feedback will be sought in regard to various aspects, in particular policies in the Transportation Element.

By way of background, Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the Comprehensive Plan update process involves four main streams of engagement: public engagement, which includes events, surveys, and discussions; engagement by the strategy team which is made up of people with specialized knowledge on topics related to the Comprehensive Plan; public comment at board and commission meetings; and recommendations from the boards and commissions. All of that input is carried forward into the draft plan. Ultimately the Transportation Commission will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission which in turn will make a recommendation for adoption to the City Council.

In March the Transportation Commission was updated with regard to the overall scope of the update relative to job and housing targets; the land use map; housing options and affordability; equitable outcomes; environmental sustainability and resilience; and ways to create vibrant places throughout the city. The discussion included the scope of engagement via direct outreach in the form of mailed questionnaires and announcements; on-demand engagement via EngagingBellevue.com; in-person and virtual events; and other equitable approaches to communication and engagement.

Dr. Nesse said the community deep dive on August 24 focused on access to jobs and opportunities. At the event the participants were asked to create a profile of themselves, their household or someone they knew. The profile included information about where the people go during the typical week, and what mobility challenges they face. Those profiles were then handed to other groups who worked to solve for the mobility challenges. Areas of consensus and disagreement were identified. There was consensus around the need to have complete sidewalks; the need for additional bike lanes and safety measures for pedestrians and bicyclists; and around more frequent bus transit service. Opinions diverged regarding implementation, specifically how to reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles; how to get to transit; and the best mix of land uses to support walking/biking/transit.

The goal of the Comprehensive Plan update is to plan for growth, expand housing options, create vibrant places, using equitable approaches, environmental sustainability and resilience, and set the stage for future planning in the city. The options for updating the Comprehensive Plan include adding new policies, repealing existing policies, modifying existing policies, and moving existing policies within the various elements. Direction has been given from regional bodies such as the Puget Sound Regional Council and King County in regard to policies that have had an inequitable impact on communities of color and creating policies to remediate those impacts; ensuring that there is housing to meet the needs of households at a variety of income levels in every neighborhood; and addressing the causes and impacts of climate change.

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, there have been some changed circumstances, not the least of which are new jobs and housing targets. There have also been new countywide centers identified which will require transportation investments. New transportation demand management programs have been established, and several functional plans have been updated. The PSRC has adopted a regional transportation plan, and some of the major transportation projects that were anticipated in 2015 have been completed. The countywide centers and the growth targets are leading to some changes around coordination with the Land Use Element, including moving some policies from the Transportation Element to the Land Use Element. The transportation demand management programs that have been established may need some new supporting policies, and employers may need to be encouraged to implement alternative transportation options, all of which may require new policies. The city's functional plans have been updated, and they must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, thus some policy changes are required. It will be necessary to make sure the Comprehensive Plan language is consistent with the adopted regional transportation plan, and some redundant policies may need to be repealed. The completion of major transportation projects will necessitate a repeal the policies that were intended to guide development of those projects, and to modify policies to appropriately reflect future planning and implementation of transportation and other projects.

Dr. Nesse said there are additional things that may influence the scope of the update. An Environmental Impact Statement analysis currently being conducted may highlight the need for policy changes. The outcome of the EIS will include choosing a preferred growth alternative. Depending on what that alternative is, some additional policy changes may be needed. A racial equity and displacement analysis will also be conducted. While the latter likely will not have much of an impact on the Transportation Element, the former may and as such may trigger the need to address policy language. Staff are looking at environment and land use policies as well as policies associated with crossover topics. Future community engagement efforts may also influence the scope of the update.

Dr. Nesse briefly reviewed with the Commission the update timeline, noting that the issue would next be on the Commission's agenda on November 10 and again on March 9. The Commission will ultimately review the final draft and be asked to make recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Ting asked if the community feedback regarding complete sidewalks was in reference to sidewalks along arterials or non-arterials. Dr. Nesse said answering the question would require going back and looking at the specific comments. All of the comments made at the deep dive events are transcribed, and the written comments on EngagingBellevue related to the exercises are also part of the raw. Commissioner Ting asked to be shown the raw data.

Chair Stash referred to the topics around which there has not been full agreement and noted the statement that in most instances the disagreements related to how to implement something, then asked if some had called for more emphasis on single-occupant vehicles while others called for just the opposite. Dr. Nesse said at the event where the participants were asked to focus on their specific transportation challenges, a number of people indicated they have no challenges in that they drive everywhere and have no problems doing so. The widely distributed survey to Bellevue residents yielded a much broader array of comments. Parking came up often as did traffic. A statistically valid survey will be conducted later in the fall to be assured that it will not only be the loudest voices offering observations.

Commissioner Kurz asked for more detail about the equity policies. Dr. Nesse said the focus of the policies is on things like redlining and highways impacting neighborhoods. There will also be a review of all current policies to see if any of them could be adversely impacting any community.

B. Special Topic: Economic Development

Chief Economic Development Officer Jesse Canedo commented that the nature of economic development has changed over the last couple of years and has taken a much broader shift. Following the Council's vision of Bellevue being a welcoming community where diversity is a strength, the economic development program includes entrepreneurship support, business relations support for small, medium and large businesses, workforce development, arts and culture, public/private partnerships, and place management among other things. The intent is to build a foundation for broad-based community prosperity and creating learning, a holistic approach.

Jesse Canedo noted that Bellevue as a whole is growing, but growth in the Downtown in particular is literally reaching new heights. The Downtown is now the third tallest in the Pacific Northwest. The new 555 building tops out at 600 feet, which is the maximum allowed height in the Downtown, which is taller than anything existing or planned in downtown Portland. That points to the continuing confidence businesses and others have in Bellevue for the long term. For a city of only 150,000 residents, that is an impressive feat.

For the moment, hybrid work is here to stay. The CEO of Amazon has announced that the company's professional and corporate employees will not be required to return to the office. Only about 40 percent of all office employees are currently coming to the office every week, down from some 75 percent pre-pandemic. For the midterm, it is projected that 40 to 50 percent is where utilization will stabilize. That is something the city has been hoping for. People have more flexibility in their work environment, and they can shop closer to home. Tenant business employers are reporting that their employees want to come into the office for events and experiences but want to do their solo contributor work from home. Visitors, workers and learners as well as residents are looking for opportunities to use public spaces in different ways. They want a downtown that is more active, more inviting, and which has more going on at the street level. With the changing commute patterns, things are less predictable. Those working from home may experience an issue like a computer malfunction and choose to commute to the office during the middle of the day rather than at peak commute times.

The market is changing. Several substantial leases in the Downtown are set to come up for renewal in the next couple of years. Some long-time employers have elected to reduce the amount of office space they have in the Downtown. All of that is occurring at the same time there is still a substantial amount of new construction going on with Amazon leases. Over the

last decade Bellevue has benefited from a very robust office market but the city is now facing a very different situation. There are a lot of new property owners and stakeholders in and around the city, including in the Downtown, in Crossroads, Factoria and BelRed, which evokes changing perspectives on growth, redevelopment and economic development.

Jesse Canedo noted that Bellevue had the foresight to update its economic development plan in 2020, putting in place a lot of good policies that set the city on a foundation of flexibility and resiliency.

Economic Development Specialist Anthony Gill said the city's approach to economic development layers on top of the built environment with policies, partnerships and programming. Bellevue has the built environment by way of infrastructure and private development projects, and the focus is on layer on top of them new policies, partnerships and programs that enable economic development in the form of things like colorful crosswalks, public art, live music in the Downtown and neighborhoods like BelRed and Crossroads, outdoor dining areas, banners and flowerpots along corridors. Economic development is working closely with the transportation department to support restaurants that are interested in expanding their outdoor spaces, activating the Grand Connection, and supporting events, activations and art in public spaces. The Bellevue Downtown Association has brought out ambassadors to share information about favorite local businesses and different events.

In the coming months a study will be launched regarding Bellevue's retail environment. It will be an in-depth study focused on current and future retail needs through a retail market analysis, all with the goal of making sure all desired retail amenities are in place in the city, things like maintaining auto retailers even as the communities continue to change. There will be a significant focus through the effort on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as on independent retailers. On the built environment side, a partnership with Sound Transit is being worked on in regard to the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) to the northwest of the Spring District. The public/private partnership will focus on redevelopment of the space with a significant amount of affordable housing. Sound Transit led an RFP process and developer selection, which the city participated in, which resulted in choosing Bridge Housing as the master developer and the affordable housing developer. One of the goals will be to drive connections with the light rail station and to help build out the Spring District and the OMFE neighborhood as a complete community.

Anthony Gill said another transit-oriented development is planned for the 130th Avenue light rail station site. The city received a property from Sound Transit for a park and ride facility and the city set out with the goal of redeveloping the property to include parking along with a significant number of housing units, about 40 percent of them affordable for households making below 80 percent of area median income. The city is working with a developer to determine what the development will look like and how it will come together. There will be a push to bring in great first-floor retail tenants and catalyzing the arts district.

The neighborhood around the 130th Avenue station is the anchor for the BelRed Arts District where there are currently some one hundred creative businesses and non-profits. Attention is being given to what can be done to support those organizations and to encourage more to locate in BelRed over time. Over the past several months creative utility box wraps have been rolled out to brighten the space and give local artists a canvas. A program to bring in murals is being developed, and a stakeholder group is being set up to essentially organize the arts district efforts and bring the neighborhood together around the arts.

Anthony Gill said the ways in which Bellevue uses its infrastructure are starting to change. Bellevue's economy is increasingly dependent on creating experiences, and that requires new thinking about the use of public space. The work of the Commission in enabling new street uses and activations is critical to economic development.

Commissioner Marciante asked if economic development is working with the team that is developing the curb management plan. Anthony Gill said economic development staff are working as part of the curb management core team. Adoption of the curb management plan will certainly play a role in economic development.

Commissioner Ting asked how dense the OMF and 130th Avenue transit-oriented development projects will be, adding that increasing density does not increase transportation needs. Jesse Canedo said the developers are looking to build to the maximum density that is financially feasible. The market rents in BelRed are still not high enough to justify more of the ten-floor construction projects, though there definitely is a demand for the units. Commissioner Ting stressed the need for higher densities near transit stops.

Commissioner Ting asked if the target audience for placemaking is employees or visitors and residents. Jesse Canedo said the four audiences are residents, workers, visitors and learners or students. It has been noted that there is a convergence in interests among those groups. Workers prefer to spend time in neighborhoods more like those where they live. The retail study work will help inform the question of whether different neighborhoods within the city might have different issues. The primary motivation is to attract all four audiences.

Commissioner Ting commented that remote work is interesting and clearly businesses will be seen changing their models based on remote work. The question asked was if businesses might choose to move out of Bellevue as a result of the new remote work model. Jesse Canedo said the city is not overly concerned that businesses will wholesale move out of the city. Some likely will reduce their footprint. There have been concerns voiced given the volume of space in the pipeline to be constructed, but that has eased significantly given the news from major employers. Office employers and office property owners remain confident in Bellevue.

Vice Chair Beason commented as a Downtown resident that people love the outdoor seating options. One thing that keeps coming up is that employers like restaurants cannot find the employees they need, and the question was asked what is being done to support local businesses in that regard. Vice Chair Beason also stressed the need to have a business incubator program given the culture of the city. Jesse Canedo said the issue around recruiting and retaining employees is solidly on the city's radar, particularly for hospitality businesses. One challenge is that such workers find it difficult to afford to live in Bellevue given the high cost of housing. Many are electing to work closer to where they live and avoiding the commute into the city. The affordable housing work under way by the Council is very important to economic development and the vitality of the hospitality sector. Transportation solutions are also very much needed, particularly mass transit. There are high school students who might be interested in getting summer jobs and economic development is working with the Bellevue School District.

Vice Chair Beason agreed that transportation is a critical issue. The workers are there, but a way to get them to Bellevue is vitally important. Affordable housing is also a critical issue. Anthony Gill said in the coming months the city will be taking over the administration of Startup 425, a small business program that is focused on more than just tech. Even so, more effort needs to be built in on the incubation side. Jesse Canedo added that some of the legal

restrictions in Washington state regarding the ways government can and cannot partner with business have proved to be problematic in terms of getting the financial support needed for incubation programs. Additionally, the relative wealth of Bellevue has made it difficult to obtain grants to fund such programs.

Commissioner Kurz asked if the city has seen the conversion of commercial spaces to housing. Jesse Canedo said that has not been evident yet. There has been a slowdown in bringing commercial development online, particularly office space. There were a couple of projects that were originally intended to be residential flipped to office because of the higher profitability of office, but that trend has also slowed. It is still possible that projects in the pipeline will start thinking in terms of residential units instead.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Kurz, Jesse Canedo explained that the Grand Connection has been a decade in the making. It is the concept of a pedestrian-oriented walkway stretching from Meydenbauer Bay Park all the way to the Wilburton area. It is intended to be a continuous 18-hour activated walkway. Parts of the Grand Connection were previously referred to as the Pedestrian Corridor, which has since been rebranded. One portion currently under construction is being contributed by Vulcan Development as part of the 555 tower.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 14, 2022

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

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Commissioner Remote Participation for the October 13 Meeting

Commissioner Ting requested to participate remotely and Chair Stash proposed also approving remote participation for Commissioners Helland and Rebhuhn.

A motion to approve remote participation for all three Commissioners for the October 13 meeting was made by Vice Chair Beason. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Marciante and the motion carried unanimously.

11. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR

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

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stash adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date