

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

TRANSPORTATION VISION

MOVING INTO, AROUND AND THROUGH BELLEVUE IS RELIABLE AND PREDICTABLE.

Bellevue is connected to the region, enabling local and regional access for businesses and neighborhoods. Safe and reliable mobility options, including walking, biking, transit and car, take people where they need to go. The City's transportation system integrates leading safety and efficiency technology.

MAJOR THEMES & DRIVERS

The Transportation Element addresses mobility for people who drive on a road, ride transit or a bicycle and for everyone who is a pedestrian. At any point in the day a Bellevue resident, employee or visitor could be using any of these modes, and throughout the day, a person could use all of them. Transportation policy considers the need for local and regional mobility in an integrated and multimodal transportation system.

Since the last major update of the Transportation Element in 2004, the community has grown and become more urban and diverse. There has been a fundamental shift in how people view the components of the transportation system and how they use them. Context is increasingly important, and transportation is not just about going places. People expect that the transportation system in Bellevue will help them get around, and will also contribute to the quality of their lives, provide benefits to their health and improve the livability of their neighborhoods. Council has recognized this expectation through the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Downtown Livability Initiative. This update of the Transportation Element integrates mobility and livability on a citywide scale.

Transportation policy and investments must broadly address the mobility needs of a diverse community. Plans for local and regional transit have changed dramatically since then as well, with Rapid Ride now in service, light rail construction beginning soon and King County Metro making a number of service changes. While congestion is a concern, people are requesting improvements to help them to get places on foot, on bicycle or on transit.

The Growth Management Act includes requirements specific to transportation elements, including the need to plan for transportation facilities to meet future needs. In response to the GMA, the Comprehensive Plan includes transportation policies and a transportation project list that influence transportation project design, priorities and investments.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- Bellevue has a level of service standard that measures only one thing: vehicles at intersections. The Transportation Commission recommends defining level-of-service standards for walking, bicycling, and riding transit, as well as refining level-of-service standards for vehicles. To implement this policy, measures for each mode are needed and long-term monitoring will track progress and help make data-based decisions on investments. Updated or new policies in the Mobility Management section address this topic (TR-4, 6, X6, X7, X8, and X9).
- Several updated and new policies in the Transit section incorporate major provisions of the Transit Master Plan, adopted in July (TR-50, X14, X15, 58, X18).
- The plan (TR-X10) supports developing a Transportation Master Plan that would integrate projects and policies from adopted plans such as corridor plans, subarea plans, the Transit Master Plan, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan. A Transportation Master Plan would help the community prioritize mobility investments in accord with intended level-of-service for all modes, and describe phasing and integration approaches.
- Transportation policies (TR-X25, X26, X27) support development of a transportation system that protects the environment and improves neighborhood character, while addressing the city's long-term transportation and land use objectives, including reducing greenhouse gases and managing stormwater drainage.
- Neighborhood Protection section (TR-115, X29) supports efforts to preserve the safety and livability of residential streets through the neighborhood traffic safety program and to design or retrofit residential streets to discourage cut-through traffic, while providing connectivity.
- New system intersections are added and boundaries are adjusted to Mobility Management Area 11 (Newcastle). This recommendation reflects recent land development, completed roadway infrastructure projects, alignment of corridor travel patterns, and annexations/urban incorporations. The recommendation includes a name change for the MMA from *Newcastle* to *SE Bellevue*.
- The Comprehensive Plan Update has consolidated all transportation facility plans in Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, together with the transportation projects from subarea plans, into a single comprehensive project list. Through this process, the Commission took a list of over 800 transportation projects and reduced it to about 100, by reconciling discrepancies and eliminating redundancies, and also removing projects from the list that have been constructed or superseded by more recent planning. This list is the foundation for a future Transportation Master Plan that will help establish modal priorities and implementation strategies.

ISSUES/MAJOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION TOPICS

The bulk of the Transportation Commission's work on the Transportation Element occurred over months of review and analysis, with considerable deliberations on specific policy language. There were a number of coordination opportunities between the Transportation and Planning Commissions during the update process including several joint commission meetings. Some specific recommendations exchanged back and forth between the commissions.

Reviewing the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, the Planning Commission sought to ensure that the transportation recommendations fit within the overall plan and support the proposed land uses in the city. By and large, the Planning Commission's review supports and recommends the updates as recommended by the Transportation Commission, and the Planning Commission's final recommendation is what is now before the City Council as the recommended draft.

Despite the back and forth coordination between the commissions, the adoption schedule did not allow sufficient time for the two commissions to coordinate on a few refinements late in the process. Due to the review schedule, the final recommendations by the Planning Commission could not be reviewed by the Transportation Commission until after the recommendation was presented to the Council. This is an exception that only applies to two policies and the goal. As required by the Council, staff is bringing these forward as a part of a complete record of the deliberations and recommendations from all of the boards and commissions. The starting point for review is the Planning Commission's complete draft, which seeks to integrate the plan as a whole. The Transportation Commission's additional recommendations are described here for your information.

Changes to the Transportation Goal and to policy TR-1 recommended by the Planning Commission on March 25 were intended to ensure that the policies are not "punitive" to any one mode of travel and embrace an aspiration of reducing congestion. Their recommended Transportation Goal is:

"To maintain and enhance a comprehensive citywide network of mobility options to serve all members of the community by encouraging a multitude of transportation modes while not discouraging the use of any particular mode."

And for policy TR-1:

"Integrate land use and transportation decisions to ensure that the transportation system supports the Comprehensive Plan while striving to reduce congestion and improve mobility."

At its April 9 meeting, the Transportation Commission reviewed these most recent changes recommended by the Planning Commission and recommends retaining their original language for policy TR-1 and making a slight change to the previous version of the Transportation Goal.

The commissions share the aspiration to address congestion through planning of the transportation system. However, the Transportation Commission noted that the policies in the Transportation Element already address transportation level-of-service (LOS) and concurrency, which are the tools the city uses to measure and regulate congestion. Adding language “to reduce congestion” recognizes the community’s desire and may be more straightforward than the terms “LOS” and “concurrency”, but may complicate the development review process by creating uncertainty about what standard applies. At worst, the Transportation Commission was concerned that this policy language could dampen private sector interest in pursuing development, due to uncertainty as to how the policy applies to new projects that create traffic.

The Planning Commission also recommended TR-4 consistent with their broad objective of reducing excess policy language and simplifying complex concepts:

“Ensure that the transportation system infrastructure in Bellevue provides mobility options for all modes, and accommodates the mobility needs of everyone, including underserved populations.”

The Transportation Commission recommends keeping their original recommended wording of TR-4, which identifies specific hard-to-serve populations that are important for the transportation system to accommodate.

The Goal and these two policies as recommended by the Transportation Commission are:

Transportation Goal: To maintain and enhance a comprehensive, multimodal transportation system ~~citywide network of mobility options~~ to serve all members of the community ~~by encouraging a multitude of transportation modes while not discouraging the use of any particular mode.~~

TR-1. Integrate land use and transportation decisions to ensure that the transportation system supports the Comprehensive Plan ~~while striving to reduce congestion and improve mobility.~~

TR-4. Ensure that the transportation system infrastructure in Bellevue provides mobility options for all modes, and accommodates the mobility needs of everyone, including underserved populations including persons with disabilities, the elderly, the young, and low-income households.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- Any questions about what is recommended for change?
- Any additional information needed on this topic?
- Direction on specific changes/refinements to the draft policies?