



Planning Commission

TRANSMITTAL

DATE: November 15, 2016

TO: Mayor Stokes and Members of the City Council

FROM: John deVadoss, Chair
Members of the Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Final Review Recommendation for 2016 Comprehensive Plan Amendments
(CPA): **Vision Zero Policies, File No. 16-140007 AC**

The Planning Commission recommends by a 6-0 vote (Commissioner Hilhorst excused) that the City Council adopt the recommended Vision Zero policies into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. New policies and amended existing policies would be integrated into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to support Vision Zero.

I. SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Vision Zero policies express the commitment in Bellevue to strive to reduce to zero, the number of serious injuries and fatalities on Bellevue streets by 2030. Policies support a comprehensive and programmatic approach to traffic safety that would coordinate existing efforts and accelerate the acquisition and use of data to identify safe design standards and prioritize project investments.

II. RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission finds that the Final Review Decision Criteria have been met for this proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment as set forth in the Land Use Code (LUC 20.30I.150).

The Commission concluded that the proposed amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city, and addresses significantly changed conditions. The proposed Vision Zero amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city. The city intends to continue its efforts to make streets safe for everyone. Support for these efforts exists in the form of Comprehensive Plan policies, ongoing safety programs, Council direction, and endorsement and use of best practice design manuals. Vision Zero goes one step farther in that it succinctly and explicitly embeds city policies and efforts into a unifying framework that will help focus efforts and identify priorities.

Consistent with City Council direction endorsing Vision Zero the Transportation Commission prepared policy proposals to support a comprehensive and programmatic approach to traffic safety that has the ultimate goal of reducing to zero the number of traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030. Through its study and review of the proposal the Planning Commission offered minor amendments to the recommended policies. The Transportation Commission chair and former chair concurred with those amendments. See Attachment PC-1.

III. BACKGROUND

On December 7, 2015, the City Council unanimously adopted Resolution 9035 endorsing Vision Zero and directing the Transportation Commission to review the existing Comprehensive Plan to determine if any updates, revisions, or additional policies are warranted in light of Vision Zero and other transportation network goals. Having received a recommendation from the Transportation Commission, the City Council on March 7, 2016, initiated a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to integrate Vision Zero policy into the Transportation Element.

The City Council directed the application for Final Review of the Vision Zero Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA), on July 18, 2016.

On November 9, 2016, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and study session to review the Transportation Commission recommendation. Transportation Commission Chair, Janice Zahn and former chair Scott Lampe provided a detailed overview of the recommendation and provided insight to the Commission's discussions and rationale in preparing the recommendation. The Planning Commission offered amendments to two of the recommended policies, which passed unanimously and to which Commissioners Zahn and Lampe concurred.

Vision Zero

Vision Zero is an approach to traffic safety that has the ultimate goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries. It is a framework for a multi-faceted approach to design, build, operate and maintain a transportation system that is safe for everyone.

Vision Zero began in Sweden in the 1990s, where it was adopted as national policy. At the core of Vision Zero is the premise that death and injury on city streets is preventable. For the most part, an injury or death is not the result of an "accident", but rather these result from "collisions" that have the most significant adverse impacts on the most vulnerable users of the roadway—people who are walking and bicycling. Collisions often stem from behaviors that are dangerous and inappropriate, and from street design that may encourage such inappropriate behavior. Within a Vision Zero framework, streets are designed to encourage and reinforce safe, positive behavior. Vehicle speed is a fundamental predictor of collision survival for people who are hit while walking and biking. Therefore, street design should emphasize safety, predictability and anticipate the potential for human error, coupled with targeted education and rigorous, data-driven enforcement. Vision Zero instills a holistic, new way of thinking about traffic fatalities and serious injuries—that they are not inevitable.

Vision Zero is a multi-faceted approach to transportation system safety in Bellevue that would:

- Design and manage streets to encourage safe and context-appropriate behavior of all roadway users;
- Provide infrastructure that accommodates all travel modes, and creates a protected environment for the most vulnerable users;
- Build a complete and connected non-motorized transportation network that supports people who are walking and bicycling;
- Educate the community to instill awareness and respect for one another in the environment of shared streets; and

- Enforce traffic safety laws with emphasis on roadways and intersections that have high collision rates, and especially where collisions involve vulnerable road users.

IV. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENT

Staff from the Transportation Department introduced the Vision Zero policy recommendations to the Planning Commission during study session on March 9, 2016. Notice of the November 9, 2016, Public Hearing before the Planning Commission was published in the Weekly Permit Bulletin on October 20, 2016, and included notice sent to parties of record.

No testimony was offered at the November 9, 2016, public hearing.

V. STATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (SEPA)

The Environmental Coordinator reviewed the proposal under the State Environmental Policy Act and determined that it will not result in any probable, significant adverse environmental impacts, and therefore issued a Determination of Non-Significance on October 20, 2016. Environmental Coordinator staff affirmed that the amendments offered by the Planning Commission to the Transportation Commission's recommendation do not substantively alter the anticipated environmental outcomes, therefore the prior-issued Determination of Non-Significance is appropriate for the final recommendation.

VI. REVIEW PROCESS AND APPLICATION OF DECISION CRITERIA

The Planning Commission finds that the Decision Criteria for a Comprehensive Plan amendment have been satisfied for this recommendation, as set forth in the Land Use Code in Section 20.30I.150. A proposal must be found to have met all of the decision criteria to be recommended for approval.

Based on the criteria, the Planning Commission recommends approval of the Vision Zero policies. This recommendation is based on information in the application materials, the staff report, and testimony and material provided at the public hearing.

This conclusion is based on the following:

A. There exists obvious technical error in the pertinent Comprehensive Plan provision, or

Not applicable to this proposal.

B1. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other goals and policies of the city, the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP), the Growth Management Act and other applicable law; and

The Vision Zero policy intent and purpose are directly responsive to and augment existing Comprehensive Plan policy. Additional policy would advance a comprehensive and programmatic Vision Zero approach to traffic safety.

Transportation Element Policies – Support for Safety

Policies in the Transportation Element support the Transportation Vision of a system that integrates leading safety and efficiency techniques to provide safe and reliable mobility options for people wherever they need to go throughout the city, for whatever purpose they are traveling, and whether they are walking, riding a bicycle, taking transit or driving a car. The goal of the Transportation Element and its supporting policies articulate the safety considerations for the transportation system design, operation and maintenance.

Transportation Element Goal “To maintain and enhance a comprehensive multimodal transportation system to serve all members of the community.”

Roadways Chapter - Policies that address management of the city’s street system to meet community mobility needs:

- ***TR-53.*** Maintain and enhance safety for all users of the roadway network.
- ***TR-55.*** Maintain a collision reduction program to identify high collision locations, evaluate potential safety improvements and implement recommended changes.
- ***TR-56.*** Provide street lighting where needed and appropriate based on neighborhood context to improve visibility and safety while minimizing light/glare spillover.
- ***TR-57.*** Minimize visual distractions, extraneous objects, and excessive clutter along arterials.
- ***TR-58.*** Minimize the number of driveways on arterials to improve the pedestrian environment and reduce the potential for pedestrian and vehicle collisions.

Transit Chapter - Policies that address the provision of transit service and access to transit in Bellevue:

- ***TR-76.*** Develop and maintain safe and convenient pedestrian access to transit stops and stations, through shared responsibility with transit providers, that:
 1. Provides short, direct routes within a ten-minute walk;
 2. Designs the pedestrian environment to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation;
 3. Maximizes safety for pedestrians at street crossings; and
 4. Gives priority to pedestrian access and safety.
- ***TR-77.*** Facilitate intermodal transfers and increased access to transit stations through partnerships with public and private providers of transit and shuttle services with an emphasis on safety for people transferring between the station platform and the various modes.
- ***TR-91.*** Implement standards and guidelines to create transit stations that are valued places in the community by providing:
 1. Comfortable and safe access to the surrounding community;
 2. Space that is comfortable for both large and small numbers of people; and
 3. Design that encourages social interaction.
- ***TR-94.*** Maintain and enhance safety when incorporating high capacity transit along Bellevue streets, through the use of street design features, materials, street signage and

lane markings that provide clear, unambiguous direction to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

- **TR-97.** *Ensure that agreements with transit providers include elements to provide long-term safety and security, operation and maintenance of stations.*

Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Chapter - Policies that address increasing the opportunities to provide people with safe, comfortable and connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Bellevue:

- **TR-105.** *Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and prioritize projects that:*
 1. *Address safety issues;*
 2. *Provide access to activity centers;*
 3. *Provide access to the transit and school bus systems;*
 4. *Complete and connect planned pedestrian or bicycle facilities;*
 5. *Develop primary north-south and east-west bicycle routes through the city;*
 6. *Improve multimodal level of service along travel corridors; and*
 7. *Serve residents who have special accessibility needs.*
- **TR-109.** *Ensure that a safe, permanent, and convenient alternative facility is present prior to the permanent vacation of an off-street pedestrian or bicycle facility.*
- **TR-110.** *Support education and information programs to promote a share the road/share the trail message.*
- **TR-116.** *Improve the opportunities for pedestrians to safely cross streets at intersections and designated mid-block locations.*

Neighborhood Protection Chapter - Policies that address how the city will protect neighborhoods from impacts associated with the transportation system, such as noise, congestion, and cut-through traffic in coordination with the policies of the Neighborhoods Element:

- **TR-145.** *Preserve the safety and livability of residential streets through an adequately funded neighborhood traffic safety program.*
- **TR-153.** *Employ traffic calming measures to slow vehicular travel speed along residential streets and to reduce the volume of cut-through traffic.*

Growth Management Act

The Vision Zero policy recommendation is consistent with GMA planning goals encouraging efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Countywide Planning Policies

The recommended Vision Zero policies are consistent with the overall intent of the King County Countywide Planning Policies (KCCPP) to provide for an “efficient transportation system that provides multiple options for moving people and goods.” The Countywide Planning Policies also recognize that “Mobility is necessary to sustain personal quality of

life and the regional economy. For individuals, mobility requires an effective transportation system that provides safe, reliable, and affordable travel options for people of all ages, incomes and abilities.” Specific KCCPP policies that address safety and mobility include the following:

- ***T-1.*** *Work cooperatively with the Puget Sound Regional Council, the state, and other relevant agencies to finance and develop a multi-modal transportation system that enhances regional mobility and reinforces the countywide vision for managing growth. Use VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 as the policy and funding framework for creating a system of Urban Centers and Manufacturing / Industrial Centers linked by high-capacity transit, bus transit and an interconnected system of freeways and high-occupancy vehicle lanes.*
- ***T-9.*** *Promote the mobility of people and goods through a multi-modal transportation system based on regional priorities consistent with VISION 2040 and local comprehensive plans.*
- ***T-12.*** *Address the needs of non-driving populations in the development and management of local and regional transportation systems.*
- ***T-14.*** *Prioritize essential maintenance, preservation, and safety improvements of the existing transportation system to protect mobility and avoid more costly replacement projects.*
- ***T-19.*** *Design roads and streets, including retrofit projects, to accommodate a range of motorized and non-motorized travel modes in order to reduce injuries and fatalities and to encourage non-motorized travel. The design should include well-defined, safe and appealing spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- ***T-20.*** *Develop a transportation system that minimizes negative impacts to human health, including exposure to environmental toxins generated by vehicle emissions.*
- ***T-21.*** *Provide opportunities for an active, healthy lifestyle by integrating the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in the local and regional transportation plans and systems.*

Proposed Vision Zero policies for Bellevue recognize that safe mobility options are essential and that the community is responsible for ensuring equitable access to mobility. Therefore, the proposed comprehensive and programmatic Vision Zero approach to mobility and traffic safety is consistent with Countywide Planning Policies.

B2. The proposed amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city as identified in its long-range planning and policy documents; and

The proposed Vision Zero amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city. The city intends to continue its efforts to make streets safe for everyone. Support for these efforts exists in the form of Comprehensive Plan policies, ongoing safety programs, Council direction, and endorsement and use of best practice design manuals. Vision Zero goes one step farther in that it succinctly and explicitly embeds city policies and efforts into a unifying framework that will help focus efforts and identify priorities. Existing policies, programs, direction and endorsements include:

- *Comprehensive Plan: Council adopted the Transportation Element in August 2015 as part of the ten-year Comprehensive Plan update. Transportation Element policy addresses the safety for all users of the transportation system.*
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative (PBII): PBII is a complement of action-oriented efforts that will advance the implementation of the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan to make Bellevue a great place to walk and bike.*
- *U.S. Department of Transportation Mayor’s Challenge: Along with 200 other cities across the nation, the city of Bellevue—in April 2015—joined the U.S. Department of Transportation Challenge for Safe People, Safer Streets, to encourage mayors and local elected officials to take significant action to improve the safety for people while they are walking or riding a bicycle. Each jurisdiction takes an approach targeted to the needs of the community, while staying true to the idea that human errors in judgment shouldn’t lead to death and serious injury.*
- *National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO): In March 2014, the city of Bellevue – through Transportation Director Dave Berg - endorsed the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide to recognize that streets must be designed in a manner that is safe, sustainable, multi-modal and context-appropriate for all users.*

B3. The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the pertinent Comprehensive Plan map or text was amended. See LUC 20.50.046 [below] for the definition of “significantly changed conditions”; and

Significantly changed conditions are defined as: Demonstrating evidence of change such as unanticipated consequences of an adopted policy, or changed conditions on the subject property or its surrounding area, or changes related to the pertinent Plan map or text; where such change has implications of a magnitude that need to be addressed for the Comprehensive Plan to function as an integrated whole. *This definition applies only to Part 20.30I Amendment and Review of the Comprehensive Plan (LUC 20.50.046).*

The proposal addresses significantly changed conditions where changes related to the pertinent Plan map or text have implications of a magnitude that need to be addressed for the Comprehensive Plan to function as an integrated whole.

Acting with Council direction, the Transportation Commission found substantial policy support in the Transportation Element for existing programs and projects intended to address safety issues for people using the transportation system in Bellevue, especially the people who are most vulnerable to serious injury or death from collisions with motorized vehicles. The Commission determined, however, that more could be done, and that a comprehensive, coordinated and programmatic approach to traffic safety under a Vision Zero framework would help Bellevue maintain, enhance and monitor progress in a citywide effort to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

Having reviewed the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan and a potential Vision Zero policy framework in study sessions on January 14 and February 11, 2016, the Transportation Commission recommended several policy amendments. These policy recommendations were offered to the Council on March 7, 2016 in response to direction

from Resolution 9035. Recommended new and amended policies would be integrated into the Transportation Element, supported by background narrative that describes the intent of Vision Zero.

In their transmittal messages to the Council, Transportation Commission Chair Scott Lampe and Vice-Chair Janice Zahn noted that while existing safety programs in Bellevue give the city a relatively low rate of collisions and injuries compared to other cities in the region, there is still some work to do to achieve the goal of Vision Zero. Mr. Lampe noted that over the past 10 years there have been about 40 collisions per year that resulted in injury to pedestrians, 30 collisions per year with injury to bicyclists, and about 400 collisions annually that resulted in injury to people driving cars. Fifteen of those collisions have resulted in a fatality. Without focusing specifically on the causes of these collisions, the Commission instead determined that additional steps could be taken to reduce serious injury and death toward zero.

For instance, documentation of injury collisions is not in a format that is readily searchable. One of the benefits of a programmatic approach in a Vision Zero Action Plan would be to develop a searchable database that could be used to inform project design and funding priorities.

The Transportation Commission heard from the community and worked with staff during two study sessions to explore all of the existing policies in the Comprehensive Plan that support programs and projects that advance traffic safety. Mr. Lampe acknowledged the excellent programs, such as the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program, and the Accident Reduction Program that help people to be safe while driving, walking and riding bicycles. Ms. Zahn noted that the city can and should do more to promote safety on city streets. A Vision Zero framework in Bellevue would be based on the 6 “Es” of traffic safety:

- ***Education:*** Inform residents about traffic laws and safe behavior for travelers of all ages and abilities
- ***Encouragement:*** Provide incentives for safe behavior
- ***Enforcement:*** Implement strategies to more effectively enforce traffic laws and regulations
- ***Engineering:*** Employ street design techniques to make streets safe for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable users
- ***Equity:*** Ensure that safety applies to everyone no matter who you are, what mode you are using, or where in the city you are traveling
- ***Evaluation:*** Monitor progress, adjust strategies, and celebrate success

Bellevue currently does all of these “Es” to some degree, but lacks an overarching framework for safety that Vision Zero policies would provide.

The Commission reviewed each of the policies in the Transportation Element and determined that it would be helpful to integrate new policy support related to Vision Zero. Ms. Zahn reiterated that an important policy recommendation is to establish a Vision Zero

Action Plan that would take a comprehensive and programmatic approach to traffic safety. Such a programmatic approach would require additional data – to better understand where and why collisions are occurring – and perhaps also to add emphasis on some or all of the six traffic safety “Es” in the effort to achieve zero deaths and serious injuries. There may be a staffing and budget implication to develop and implement a programmatic approach. However, such an approach would help make existing programs more effective and possibly identify new ways achieve the goal of Vision Zero.

B4. If a site-specific proposed amendment, the subject property is suitable for development in general conformance with adjacent land use and the surrounding development pattern, and with zoning standards under the potential zoning classifications; and
N/A.

B5. The proposed amendment demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare of the city.

The proposal demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare of the city. A comprehensive and programmatic approach to Vision Zero, as supported by the recommended policies, would improve the safety of all users of the transportation system and advance the Vision Zero goal of zero traffic-related death and serious injury by 2030.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Planning Commission recommends by a 6-0 vote (Commissioner Hilhorst excused) that the City Council adopt the recommended Vision Zero policies into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

PC-1. Vision Zero Policies – Planning Commission Recommendation

Planning Commission Recommendation (11/09/16)

Vision Zero Policies 2016 Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Transportation Element

Roadways Chapter

- **TR-55.** Maintain a collision reduction program to identify high collision locations, evaluate and prioritize potential safety improvements and implement recommended changes.
- **TR-61.1.** Strive to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030.
- **TR-61.2.** Develop a programmatic approach to Vision Zero that integrates components of Education; Encouragement, Enforcement; Engineering; Equity; and Evaluation.
- **TR-61.3.** Design and manage streets to foster safe and context-appropriate behavior of all roadway users.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Chapter

Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation - *Policies that address increasing the opportunities to provide people with safe, comfortable, protected and connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Bellevue.*

- **TR-116.1.** Strive to provide separation between motorized vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as feasible, reasonable and appropriate to the context, while maintaining adopted level-of-service standards for all modes.

Accompanying Narrative in the Transportation Element

Vision Zero

Bellevue City Council Resolution 9035 (December 7, 2015) endorsed Vision Zero – recognizing that death and serious injury on city streets is unacceptable and preventable. Policies related to Vision Zero are integrated throughout the Transportation Element to support implementing context-appropriate traffic safety measures for all travel modes and to emphasize protecting the most vulnerable users. In a comprehensive, coordinated and programmatic manner, Bellevue will maintain, enhance and monitor progress in a citywide effort to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

WHAT IS VISION ZERO?

Vision Zero is an approach to traffic safety that has the ultimate goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries. It is a framework for a multi-faceted approach to create a transportation system that is safe for all users, especially for those people who are the most vulnerable. Components of a Vision Zero programmatic approach to safety include several categories of actions: Education; Encouragement; Enforcement; Engineering; Equity; and Evaluation.