



# City of Bellevue

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**To:** Planning Commission

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**Date:** October 17, 2017

**RE: Downtown Subarea Plan – Policy and Narrative “Refresh” in 2017**

At the Planning Commission meeting on October 4, 2017, Commissioners asked about the specific changes to Downtown policy and narrative that “refreshed” the Transportation Commission’s prior subarea plan recommendation. What follows is a compilation of the various 2017 changes to the Downtown Subarea Plan narrative and policy recommendations from the original Transportation Commission recommendation approved in 2014.

Policy and narrative language changes incorporated into the final recommendation are generally **highlighted in yellow** in the sections below. At the end of this memo is the requested map of the Downtown Transit Priority Corridors.

## Transportation Commission Agenda Memo January 26, 2017

Policy “refresh” needed as a result of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update:

- Move policies LU 29 and LU 30 from the Land Use to the Downtown Subarea Plan.
- Refer to the Comprehensive Transportation Project List, remove the transportation projects and map from the Downtown Subarea Plan

Yellow highlights in narrative and policy indicate staff-recommended 2017 “refresh” changes first presented to the Transportation Commission.

Policy S-DT-41. Prioritize vehicular flow in the design and management of auto-**focused priority** streets.

Policy S-DT-41.1. Prioritize pedestrian activity, access and comfort in the design and management of pedestrian-**focused priority** streets.

**Downtown Mobility Goal:** **To identify and implement the road and transit multimodal transportation system improvements needed to support implement the city’s vision for Downtown Bellevue as a dense, mixed-use urban center.**

Policy S-DT-138.3 Implement transit speed and reliability improvements along Downtown **priority transit priority** corridors when there is a demonstrated benefit to transit passengers and overall mobility.

## **Pedestrian Corridor**

The NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor is a high priority route for both walking and bicycling. Incremental improvements through private developments and public investments will upgrade the Corridor to eventually eliminate narrow passages, steep sections, tight turns, and poor lighting and sightlines. The Pedestrian Corridor will be an increasingly important amenity to new development and will provide exceptional pedestrian access to the light rail station and to a connection across I-405.

Policy S-DT-147 Support the Downtown Transportation Management Program (Note: policy moved to Transportation Element)

## **Downtown Curbside Uses: On-Street Parking; Taxi Stands; Electric Vehicle Charging Stations**

### **On-Street Parking**

On-street parking supports businesses and residents with convenient short-term parking opportunities for customers and visitors. This is particularly true in Ashwood, Northwest Bellevue, and Old Bellevue neighborhoods where handy off-street parking is limited. A parking evaluation conducted in 2013 determined that some permanent or off-peak parking spaces could be added to the inventory. Figure XX is a map of the 2013 on-street parking inventory and potential future parking supply.

## **Downtown Pedestrian Facilities**

### **Intersections/Crosswalks**

Three types of Downtown crosswalks intersections are intended to fit the needs of pedestrians: Standard Crosswalks Intersections; Enhanced Crosswalks Intersections; and Exceptional Crosswalks Intersections. Refer to crosswalk map, Figure XX. Standard crosswalks intersections have consist of two parallel white bars that are spaced 8-feet apart and a pedestrian actuated signal that provides both audible and countdown indicators. The standard design may not be suitable at all intersections due to the high volume of pedestrians, the urban design character, or the traffic conditions. At such locations the features of either Enhanced or Exceptional crosswalks intersections are integrated. Enhanced crosswalks intersections are used where there are high numbers of pedestrians or vehicles, or both, and where streetscape improvements can be carried through the intersection. Enhanced crosswalks intersections are wider than Standard with special paving or striping, include neighborhood wayfinding and weather protection at corners, and curb bump outs or tighter radius to shorten crossing distance, calm traffic and provide pedestrian queuing areas. Crosswalks Intersections that merit “exceptional” treatment are along the Pedestrian Corridor and in Old Bellevue. Exceptional crosswalks intersections may include a pedestrian scramble signal phase, raised crossings, and significant/landmark wayfinding such as the popular kiosks that are located throughout Downtown. Exceptional crosswalk intersections design features incorporated in the crossing of 110th Avenue NE at NE 6th Street will create a near-seamless connection between the Transit Center and the light rail station.

## Mid-Block Crossings

Mid-block crossings may include signalization, median islands, and pedestrian bridges. While each mid-block location is a potential candidate for a crossing, a number of higher priority mid-block crossing locations are identified for near-term implementation subject to design and traffic analysis. Refer to mid-block crossing map, Figure XX. Most mid-block crossings are intended to be “at-grade”. In consideration of traffic volume, street width, and potential impacts to vehicle travel time of an at-grade crossing, any new mid-block crossing on NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE, and on Bellevue Way between NE 4th Street and NE 8th-10<sup>th</sup> Street may be designed as a grade-separated facility.

## Sidewalks/Curbside Landscaping

Sidewalks provide the fundamental infrastructure for pedestrian mobility and incorporate streetscape features that enhance livability. The Downtown Land Use Code prescribes the width of sidewalks and the landscaping treatment adjacent to the street. Refer to sidewalk and landscaping map, Figure XX. Along some streets a continuous landscape planter with street trees along the curbside edge of the sidewalk is installed where pedestrians need a buffer from traffic. This type of treatment is popular with pedestrians and it is a healthier growing environment for street trees.

## Downtown Bicycle Mobility

Bicycling as an attractive mobility option for all ages and abilities depends on a comprehensive network of on-street and off-street bicycle facilities, wayfinding, sidewalk bike racks, bike corrals and long-term, secured commuter parking. Bicycle facilities provide an important mobility option within Downtown and to neighborhoods and regional facilities such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway/I-90 Trail, the SR 520 Trail and the future Eastside Rail Corridor Trail, as shown in Figure XX.

Policy S-DT-164.1 Provide bicycle facility connections and wayfinding to neighborhoods and regional facilities such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway/I-90 Trail, the SR 520 Trail and the future Eastside Rail Corridor Trail.

## Transportation Commission Agenda Memo February 15, 2017

### Commissioner Comments

At the January 26, 2017 meeting, staff invited Commissioners to send specific comments and suggestions relative to the recommended policies.

- On January 27, Commissioner Lampe sent an e-mail to me to suggest adding the word “safety” to recommended Policy S-DT-41.1 to read as follows: “Prioritize pedestrian activity, access, comfort and safety in the design and management of pedestrian-priority streets.”

- Commissioner Wu written Comments and *staff response*

Page 32, Downtown Bicycle Mobility. The first sentence almost reads like the vision for a bicycle network for all ages and abilities, but it is not quite there. Revise the language to make it a clear vision and revise DT-163 on Page 33 to make it clear that pleasant and safe environment is for all ages and abilities. *The policy could be revised as you suggest.*

Policy S-DT-163. Designate and enhance bicycle routes through Downtown to create a ~~more~~ pleasant and safe environment for bicycling **for people of all ages and abilities.**

Page 25, DT-142. Left turn restriction is a traffic operations tool. There is nothing wrong to use it where it makes sense. It is not at the level of policies. It does not belong to the Comprehensive Plan. It belongs to the Traffic Operations Manual if there is one.

*I agree. This is a holdover policy that should be repealed as this is a Traffic Operations decision that is not guided by the Comprehensive Plan.*

**Policy S-DT-142. Restrict left turns at mid-block locations and at major intersections where needed to improve traffic operations, safety, and/or capacity.**
- Commissioner Woosley written Comments and *staff response*

POLICY S-DT-80: Add additional locations that are either already under construction (e.g. N.E. 6th St at Lincoln Square) as well as potential future locations (e.g. the Downtown Eastlink station to Meydenbauer Center/Bravern and the Grand Connection across 112th and 114th Avenues N.E.). We might also consider language that would give the Council additional discretion for grade separated pedestrian overpasses where appropriate but not currently identified.

*We should definitely add the crossing over NE 6th Street between the light rail station and Meydenbauer Center. The crossing shows as a recommendation on the map (that is adopted as part of the Comprehensive Transportation Project List in the Comprehensive Plan) but it was inadvertently left out of the policy. As to the potential Grand Connection crossing, the Transportation Commission in January 2014 did not have much knowledge of the Grand Connection – nobody did. As the project is evolving it is becoming clear that a grade separated crossing over 112th Avenue NE will be part of the design. The TC could add this crossing to the policy at this time...although the Grand Connection would be likely to make this request in the future. Construction is not imminent.*

*The new (under construction) pedestrian bridge between the Lincoln Center towers was also not anticipated by the Commission in January 2014...yet it is under construction, demonstrating that the Council has the discretion to make decisions on pedestrian bridges if they determine that a bridge provides a public benefit and that design criteria are fully met.*

*If I was to make a recommendation on this policy, I would take out the TC-recommended words “are” and “only” and reinstate the words “may be”. This is consistent with the Land Use Code.*

### Staff Suggestion

With regard to policy S-DT 128, the recommended language was intended to discourage drivers from using arterial streets in neighborhood settings for regional trips, but the recommended wording does not read that way. Staff suggests retaining the existing first sentence of that policy, adding “for regional trips”, and repealing the second and third sentences...to read as follows:

**S-DT-128.** Minimize growth of traffic on arterial streets in residential areas north, west and south of Downtown by encouraging the use of freeway facilities for regional trips. ~~Arterial streets should not function as alternatives to freeways. Traffic flow should be managed in accordance with the relevant Subarea Plan policies and should be distributed among arterial streets.~~

### **Transportation Commission Agenda Memo March 1, 2017**

Specifically for the **Downtown Streets** section, the Commission recommended inserting policy that would express that urban streets serve as more than corridors for cars and that they are important components of urban livability. The design and management of these public spaces should reflect mobility and livability functions that may vary by location, time of day and mode of travel. Instead of crafting language at the meeting, the Commission directed staff to return with a recommendation to be considered along with the body of Downtown Subarea Plan policy work.

What follows is staff-recommended “narrative” language and policies for Downtown Streets (*acknowledgements to Commissioner Wu for ideas for the first paragraph and to Commissioner Larrivee for ideas in the second paragraph*):

Throughout the city, and especially in the Downtown setting, the streets are valuable public places. Streets provide mobility, enabling people to travel throughout the city; for whatever purpose, at whatever time of day, and in whatever mode they choose. Downtown streets therefore are dynamic, and often busy places.

Streets are also public spaces where community members gather - to play, to talk, to explore, and more. They are shared spaces that express the character of the community in their design. Streets must be functional and welcoming, safe and beautiful, and enhance community livability.

Policy S-DT-39. Utilize a hierarchy of streets to guide right of way use in a manner that will Design and manage Downtown streets to provide mobility and to promote a safe, attractive environment for both motorize and non-motorized users.

Policy S-DT- 39.1. Blend engineering standards, traffic operations techniques and urban design components to enhance mobility and foster livability on Downtown streets.

## Transit Priority Corridor Map

In addition to questions about the Transportation Commission's 2017 policy recommendation, the Planning Commission asked to see a map of the Transit Priority Corridors that is in the [Downtown Transportation Plan Final Report](#) from April 2013. The map, from page 33 of the report, is copied below.

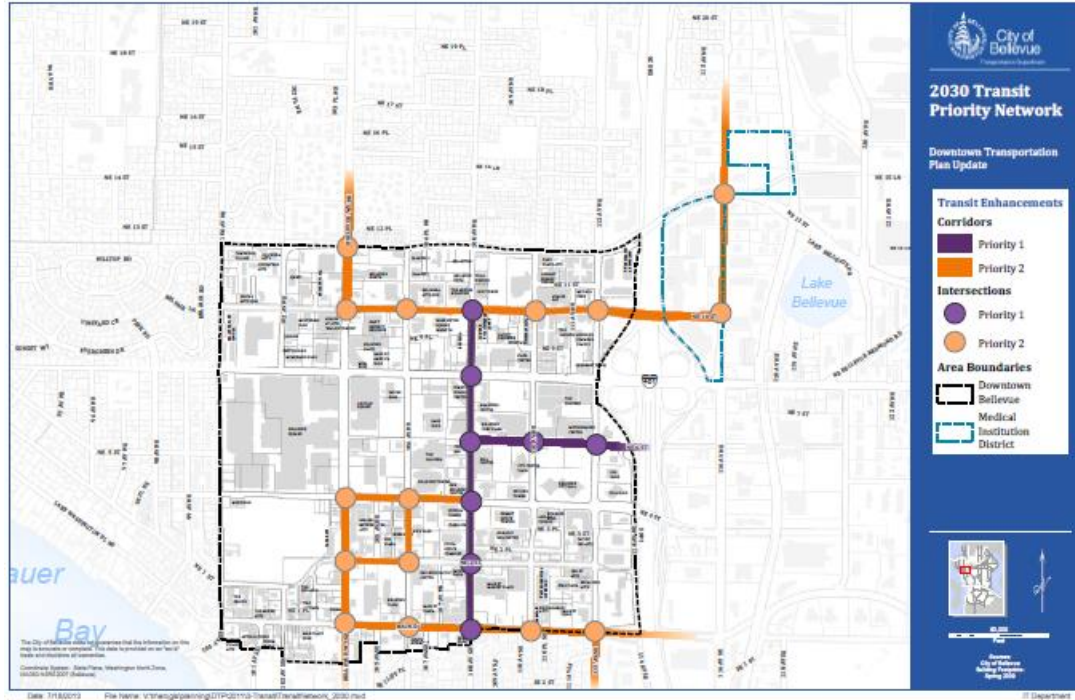


Figure 17. 2030 Planned Downtown Transit Priority Corridors