CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 10, 2019 Bellevue City Hall
6:30 p.m. City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Wu, Commissioners Bishop, Chirls, Lampe, Marciante, Teh, Woosley

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Franz Loewenherz, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Breiland, Fehr & Peers

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls and the motion carried unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

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

Councilmember Lee wished all Commissioners a happy new year. He said 2019 would be a great year.

Commissioner Woosley reported that the city of Bellevue, the Eastside Transportation Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce Legislative Coalition and the Eastside Transportation Association have all made completion of the I-405 master plan a top legislative priority. The groups intend to work together toward getting the state legislature to fund it, or at least some of the components.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Principal Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald allowed that there had been some hiccoughs in the rollout of the iPad technology and city e-mails. He said any Commissioners having difficulties has the permission of the IT support staff to seek their assistance directly. He the public records requirements mean it is necessary to migrate to the @bellevuewa.gov email system, but until everyone has access, information will continue to be sent to private email addresses.

Mr. McDonald provided the Commissioners with copies of a flyer regarding the Great Neighborhoods project website. He said the project involves the Community Development department working with the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue neighborhoods to refresh their subarea plans. However, instead of going through the full process of updating all policies and projects, the focus is on identifying action items that can be done to further the intent of the subarea plans. The action items may be infrastructure, maintenance or programmatic items.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Vision Zero Action Plan

Principal Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz said a person is killed or seriously injured on Bellevue's streets every 17 days. During 2017, there were 1495 police-reported collisions, resulting in 467 injuries. That statistic lies at the heart of the Vision Zero action plan. Vision Zero recognizes that traffic fatalities and injuries are the result of crashes, as opposed to "accidents" and that they are preventable. The plan sets a target timeline of 2030 to aggressively eliminate both serious injuries and fatalities. One critical element of the plan is a deep dive into data and setting in motion strategic and measurable goals aimed at making progress toward the ultimate vision. The plan includes a multidisciplinary approach. All of the city's departments and department heads are fully informed and are committed to working toward achieving the goal.

Mr. Loewenherz said Vision Zero differs from a lot of other road safety efforts that were brought into play during Bellevue's history. It builds on that solid foundation of work, but it approaches it in a programmatic manner. In 2015 the City Council signed on to the worldwide Vision Zero movement and set the 2030 target. With that action the Council requested that the Transportation Commission in conjunction with the Planning Commission work their guidance into the Comprehensive Plan, which occurred in 2016 with Ordinance 6334. The three policies outlined in the ordinance direct the city to strive to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030, developm a programmatic approach to Vision Zero, and design and manage streets to foster safe and context-appropriate behavior of all roadway users.

The Action Plan cover reflects the contents of the document. The text uses the five more commonly used languages in the city to spell out "Safe Streets." The tagline of the document is "One City Towards Safe Streets." Mr. Loewenherz noted that earlier in the day he met with the India Association of Western Washington at the North Bellevue Community Center during which attendees wrote out the message in Sanskrit. The intent is to make sure the focus will be on more than just the numbers, which only tell a part of the story. The people being injured are fathers, mothers, grandparents and children.

The scope of work for the Action Plan involves diving into data, reviewing existing policies and practices, and then evaluating industry best practices to determine the incremental elements that might be integrated into the way Bellevue does business. It takes stock of where things stand relative to the city's existing road safety efforts and then tweaks and refines them. The plan is truly an action plan and has a near-term focus. The intent is to identify strategies and actions that can come online immediately and through 2022 through a phased implementation approach. One important element involves the identification of partnerships given that the responsibilities of getting to zero traffic deaths and serious injuries is shared by the city, the community, and by the broader statewide Target Zero and the national Road to Zero efforts. The importance of having

metrics with which to assess performance over time is stressed in the plan, as is the importance of fostering a One City commitment.

Several consultants applied to be a part of the process and ultimately the firm Fehr and Peers was selected. Their scope of work will be to move through the established timeline and wrap up their efforts by the end of March. Following on the heels of that, there will be additional staff work to review the detailed technical memos the consultant will produce, refine them and integrate them into the plan document.

Mr. Loewenherz said the community engagement effort under way has included the use of message boards that communicate pledges on the part of residents and visitors regarding what they can do to make sure everyone gets home safe each night. Additionally, an online questionnaire was released on January 7. A media release was issued earlier in the day to call attention to the survey. The engagement work with the community is complemented by an internal focus on where the city as an organization is in the context of Vision Zero. While there are many best practices utilized by the city, there are areas in which improvements can be made. Part of the internal reflection will take the form of a questionnaire which is still being refined for administration within each of the city departments. All reports will be posted to the project webpage as they are produced.

Mr. Loewenherz said the Vision Zero summit is slated for February 13. The intended audience is Bellevue staff and the Transportation Commission. The program is structured on the safe system framework for which the concurrence of the Commission is needed. There will be four panel sessions on the elements of safe vehicle speeds, people and streets. The early part of the summit will include a number of international, national, state and local speakers. The opportunity affords the city the ability to highlight industry best practices, after which through introspection a determination will be made as to which of the ideas resonates for Bellevue.

What is done at the local level should align with what is happening at the statewide level. The state has a strategic highway safety plan that is also branded as the statewide Target Zero plan. That plan is currently being updated and Bellevue transportation staff are working closely with members of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Transportation Improvement Board.

Consultant Chris Breiland with Fehr and Peers explained that the safe systems framework is an organizing approach to house the strategies the city will use to drive toward the Vision Zero target. It is all about identifying key actions the city can take. The framework starts with the fundamental belief that humans make mistakes. Pedestrians and drivers do not always make perfect decisions at all times, and because of that a system needs to be set up to account for the fact that sometimes things happen and to try to reduce the impact or severity of collisions so that they do not result in a fatality or serious injury. The framework is structured around the four key areas of safe vehicles, safe people, safe speeds and safe streets.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Chirls, Mr. Loewenherz explained that the origin of the program came from the worldwide Vision Zero movement. A lot of the work comes out of Sweden and Denmark, which is where Vision Zero originated. The concept most recently was reflected in a lot of the materials published by the World Health Organization, and other communities are starting to integrate their own action plans. Vision Zero is clearly an evolution in best practices; not even the terms used are common yet. The Institute of Transportation Engineers has identified the Vision Zero concepts as an organizing principle.

Commissioner Marciante noted from her reading of the background materials provided in the

packet that each local community must apply the concepts to their specific contexts. She asked if the safe systems framework is an adoption of someone else's best practice, or if it evolved from a Bellevue-centric approach. Mr. Loewenherz said the images created for the safe systems framework materials were produced for Bellevue's project and is reflective of what the program is intended to accomplish. Though it is inspired by literature that is being created internationally, it resonates with the staff core team that is overseeing the process. The framework is generally consistent with the broader industry, but the core team believes it applies to Bellevue.

Mr. Breiland said the four components of safe people, safe vehicles, safe speeds and safe streets are the elements that commonly come up in other Vision Zero plans. They each have to do with the things that are driving serious injury and fatality collisions. With regard to safe people, he said the overall objective is to educate people to take a shared role in Vision Zero by using the transportation system as intended, by using the systems within their own vehicles, and by personalizing transportation safety. Some of the actions that come out of the safe people category have to do with enforcement relative to those who are impaired or distracted. Such persons are not using the systems as intended.

Mr. Loewenherz commented that in looking at the Bellevue data it is clear that the youth are disproportionately represented in the killed/serious injury data. They in fact represent more than 25 percent of the total number of persons who are either killed or seriously injured on Bellevue's streets despite representing only 11 percent of the population. Because of that, one of the things staff have been working on in terms of partnership opportunities is conversations with the Bellevue School District. The numbers serve as a sobering reality for the district which is taking a measured approach that has included a ticketing program for those who violate stop paddles on school buses; the $400 tickets result from enforcement actions related to video taken by the school buses. The city offered up the idea of partnering with the district and with Washington DECA, a worldwide program that encourages youth to become the business leaders of tomorrow. At the upcoming Vision Zero summit, the superintendent of the Bellevue School District and the president of Washington DECA will along with Mayor Chelminiak announce a strategic partnership for the 2019-2020 school to address the topic of safe people.

Commissioner Bishop asked what ages fall into the youth category. Mr. Loewenherz said in the state of Washington, the category is defined as 25 or younger.

Commissioner Marciante asked if the killed/serious injury data involves both drivers and pedestrians. Mr. Loewenherz said the data shows that people who are walking and biking are a very small percentage of all the collisions in Bellevue, but they represent an outsized percentage of those who are killed or seriously injured in the city. The data regarding the so-called vulnerable populations, namely those who are walking and biking, inform the strategies that will be shared with the Commission toward the end of March.

Commissioner Woosley noted his support for the program. With regard to the data, he suggested separating it out. There are different types of facilities for different types of movements such as walking, biking and using motorized vehicles. Different approaches must be used to improve the capacity and safety of each type of facility. With regard to the trends, he commented that while the city is said to have a culture of safety, given the information supplied to the Commission the trend appears to be more dangerous for some reason. For decades the city has employed best practices, especially in facility designs, that resulted in a decrease in the number of serious accidents and deaths, but there has been an upward spike over the last few years. He asked if the analysis of the Bellevue trends separate out the various facilities. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that it will. The data will be looked at in different ways, including how Bellevue compares to state and national

statistics.

With regard to the safe streets category, Mr. Brieland said the character and nature of streets are highly correlated to the types of collisions seen in Bellevue. Seven percent of all the streets in Bellevue see about 75 percent of all the killed/serious injury incidents. Clearly the street matters in terms of location, design and operation. The safe streets framework recognizes that and seeks to improve the street for all modes in order to minimize the consequences of crashes when they do occur. For an urban city like Bellevue, that will most often mean looking at retrofitting existing streets using a data-driven approach. At the summit, an Federal Highway Administration engineer will speak on the topic of road dieting, a retrofit strategy that can work for some streets. Additionally, a University of Washington epidemiologist will talk about complete streets from a healthcare providers standpoint.

Mr. Loewenherz said Fehr and Peers has a background in developing solutions to high-injury networks by making deep dives into data to determine the preponderance of collision activity. That is one of the reasons the firm was selected to serve as consultant for the project.

Mr. Breiland said the safe speeds element of the framework is a fairly well-researched topic. It is basic physics that the faster something is going the more energy it has and the more damage it can cause. Accordingly, the risk of injury or death increases at an exponential rate as speeds increase. The element is focused on how to set reasonable speeds for different roads in acknowledgement of their different uses and the need to serve a variety of users. The data nationally, regionally and locally all aligns around the fact that the preponderance of killed/serious injury collisions occur on roadways that have speed limits of 35 mph and above. The topics to be addressed by panelists at the upcoming summit include reevaluation of the federal guidelines for setting speed limits in cities, and the outcomes of some of the speed limit changes enacted by Washington State Department of Transportation.

Mr. Breiland said the fourth element, safe vehicles, relates to both vehicle design and technology. He noted that vehicle design over the years has gone a long way toward protecting the occupants of vehicles, but the evolving shape of cars also has much to do with minimizing injuries where there are collisions with pedestrians or bicycles. Given that the city operates a sizeable vehicle fleet, as do a number of partners within the city, safe vehicles is an area in which the city has a strong role to play in terms of purchasing and operating vehicles. One speaker at the summit will be a director from Pactrans at the University of Washington and their focus will be on the use of video analytics in informing the relationships between vehicles and blind spots. Another speaker will address the role of autonomous vehicles in Bellevue's future.

Commissioner Bishop said the safe vehicles element is the one of the four the city has the least ability to influence. The city will not get into vehicle design. The question is how the element relates to what the city does and has the ability to control. Mr. Loewenherz said the city plays a significant role in terms of influencing what the transit agency partners prioritize. In fact, King County Metro's general manager of safety will attend the conference with the intent of encouraging his agency to adopt the technology. It is all part of a sense of shared responsibility and culture. The city operates a large fleet of vehicles. Research recently published identifies the fact that larger fleet vehicles can have serious negative consequences from a safe streets perspective. In particular, because of the outsized design of fire trucks, cities are often forced to design intersections to accommodate them. If that specific vehicle fleet could be miniaturized, it would not be necessary to have intersections as wide as they are now, making it easier for pedestrians to cross. They city can also play a large role in terms of piloting autonomous vehicle demonstrations, which also plays into the safe vehicles element.

Commissioner Woosley asked how the importance of response times by emergency service providers can be factored in. Their ability to get through the streets is a big component, and seconds matter when it comes to saving lives.

Commissioner Chirls asked if the framework as proposed would include that question, and if so in what category. Mr. Loewenherz said the core team includes representation by the fire department. The fire chief is in fact on the steering team. All such detailed questions about actions that might be undertaken will be vetted at the staff level at the right time. Currently, the focus is at a much higher level. Mr. Breiland agreed and added that response time is an element of the safe streets category.

Commissioner Teh asked if the objective for safe speeds conflicts with any other city objectives, such as for congestion. Mr. Breiland said there is certainly a balancing act in regard to other goals. Setting traffic speeds for traffic control purposes should not be done without also looking at the safety implications. Commissioner Teh asked which policies will be given higher priority, those regarding congestion or those regarding Vision Zero. Mr. Loewenherz said one of the lines of inquiry in the questionnaire seeks feedback on tradeoff considerations. He said he did not have a direct answer to the question but will report on what the community has to say on the topic. The top priority in the Transportation Department, as reflected in the Transportation Element, is the safe and efficient movement of people, and undoubtedly the Director would italicize safe over efficient, and at the human level most people are willing to wait a few seconds more so that everyone can arrive home safely. Mr. Breiland added that safety and congestion are very different pieces, noting that just because there is congestion does not necessarily mean it is safe, and just because traffic speeds are slower does not necessarily mean there is congestion.

Commissioner Woosley asked if the analysis will compare the impact of options and recommendations on systems operations in terms of level of service. Mr. Loewenherz said in the timeframe in which the document is being developed, it will not be possible to answer every question. What it will do is lay out specific activities that staff can move forward with through 2022. The document will not point out things like which lanes will be repurposed, but it will include a map showing the many corridors that have been road dieted or buffeted over the past two decades, and candidate corridors that over the next several years the staff will examine in the coming years. The document will not be the last time the Commission will be asked to weigh in; the Commission will in fact have multiple opportunities to kick the can on each and every one of the actions. The proposed approach is simply aimed at giving staff a work program to see through in the next couple of years.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the Vision Zero action plan timeline indicated an end date of November 2018 for assessing collision data. He asked if there is a data report one could look at outlining the collision data assessment. Mr. Loewenherz said the staff have been reviewing a draft technical memo that was produced by Fehr and Peers. The reality is the staff are still churning on the data. The timeline in the presentation was taken from the Fehr and Peers proposal and in truth the timelines are being added to and supplemented. Once the data is well vetted it will be shared and captured in the plan document. It is not the role of the Commission to determine how the data should be parsed.

Commissioner Lampe said it would be helpful to have a map showing the locations of the killed/serious injury incidents that occur in Bellevue every 17 days or so, along with some information about each incident. Commissioner Marciante pointed out that there is a map on the Vision Zero webpage that shows all of the crashes and the dates, though information about why

the collisions occurred is not included. She said the map was very helpful but likely does not support jumping to any conclusions ahead of completing a full analysis.

Commissioner Chirls stressed the difficulty in staying focused on an objective that does not yet have a lot of supporting data. It is a difficult task for the Commission to know what level of detail to seek. However, the proposed approach makes a lot of sense. Those Commissioners wanting a deeper dive into the data should seek to do so with the appropriate staff outside of a Commission meeting.

Chair Wu agreed and asked staff to share their data analysis when appropriate outside of a Commission meeting. The Commission is not in the business of supervising the work of the staff.

Commissioner Woosley offered his support for the framework and said it is a comprehensive approach without any predetermined outcome. He said one way to present the data would be to combine the map with which of the four elements would address the specific accidents that occurred there.

Commissioner Marciante agreed that it would be useful to have a map to aid in understanding geographical issues related to safe streets. A map would not, however, be as useful in understanding demographic issues. She encouraged staff to share with the Commission the pertinent data in the best possible way.

Commissioner Chirls reiterated that any deep data dives and specific data discussions wanted by Commissioners should occur outside of a Commission meeting.

Commissioner Bishop asked if the concept of metrics for how to conduct the evaluation of the data is part of the framework or is something that will come out of the framework. Mr. Breiland said the metric being aimed at is zero killed/serious injury collisions. That is driving the actions the city should take to get there. The data has been sliced and diced in a lot of different ways by the consultant team and the staff to try to understand what is behind the killed/serious injury data, including looking at methods being used by other cities, states and countries. The four elements of safe vehicles, safe people, safe speeds and safe streets best encapsulate the types of actions in a holistic sense that will drive toward the zero number. The question is whether or not the framework is holistic enough to house all the types of strategies the city will eventually use to achieve the goal of zero killed/serious injury collisions. The metric itself is separate from the specific elements. While the elements are nice ways to help organize actions, the causes of collisions are rarely simple and in fact they are a combination of most of the elements most of the time.

Commissioner Marciante agreed with the framework categories as proposed. She suggested the one thing missing from the visuals was some reference to the principles that are intrinsic to the framework and the way in which strategies will be identified. Mr. Loewenherz said something along those lines could be added. He stressed that while the staff did not want the visual to be too busy, something could be added by the graphics team about leadership, partnerships and other key elements. In any regard, the core fundamentals will be cited in the preamble to the document.

Commissioner Woosley said it would be a great idea to use the suggestion of Commissioner Marciante to articulate the cultural changes that may result.

With regard to the safe speeds element, Commissioner Bishop said the idea is to make speeds appropriate for specific streets given their contexts. He said he had the experience of working as

the traffic safety engineer for the city of Lynnwood in the 70s at a time when they built a number of four-lane arterials all around the city using state funding. All of those streets were given a posted speed limit of 25 mph by way of keeping them safe. He said he collected speed data from around the city and found that on a large portion of the arterials the 85th percentile was close to 35 mph, the average was 32 mph, and 100 percent of the vehicles were traveling above the speed limit. He said he went to the Council and argued in favor of changing the speed limit to 30 mph, which was approved, and a year later collected data again that showed the 85th percentile had dropped, the average speed had dropped, and the percentage of vehicles that were operating within the law was much higher. The act of raising the speed limit on those arterials resulted in actually lowering the vehicle speeds. He cautioned against doing things that are not appropriate for a given street because there could easily be unintended consequences.

Commissioner Marciante suggested the action plan is not intended to determine appropriate street speeds. The appropriate actions under the Vision Zero program is to reduce the number of killed/serious injury collisions. There is more than one way to think about the outcomes.

A motion to confirm that the safe system framework is appropriate for the program was made by Commissioner Bishop. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls.

Commissioner Marciante stressed the need for the motion to include making sure the safe systems framework includes the elements of data, leadership, partnerships, changing the culture toward safety, and reducing the zero the number of killed/serious injury incidents by 2030. Commissioner Bishop as the maker of the motion, and Commissioner Chirls as the seconder of the motion, said they would accept that amendment.

Commissioner Woosley questioned whether the amendment as stated was really necessary. Mr. McDonald said it was not strictly required but given the motion and the amendment to the motion on the floor, the issue should be settled by vote.

The motion to amend the motion carried unanimously.

The motion as amended carried unanimously.

With regard to the summit, Mr. Loewenherz informed the Commissioners that 70 of the 125 spots had been reserved. He encouraged the Commissioners who had not yet registered to attend to do so. He added that if more than three Commissioners attend, notice will be provided to the public.

Mr. Loewenherz said he was working with Bellevue Television staff about recording the event for prosperity. He said there will also be some written documentation for the event.

Mr. Loewenherz said staff would be before the Commission on March 28 to seek concurrence on the strategies of the safe system approach.

8. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL

A. December 13, 2018

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Teh and the motion carried unanimously.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

12. COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commission upcoming agenda items and meeting dates. He stressed that the Commission would have a second meeting in January on the 24th and that that meeting would be at the South Bellevue Community Center where the only item on the agenda will be the Eastgate Transportation Study and the focus will be on the results of the 2035 modeling, the intersections that do or do not meet the LOS for vehicles, and the corridor travel speeds. The modeling information will be paired with the intersection or corridor improvement projects that are already on the books by way of looking for gaps.

Commissioner Woosley noted that WSDOT is doing a project in the Eastgate area that will complement things the city is doing. He suggested it might be a good idea for the Commission to receive a brief update on the expansion of I-90. Mr. McDonald said he would seek available staff to provide a brief overview.

Mr. McDonald announced that the only Commission meeting in February will be on the 28th. He said at that meeting he would share with the Commission information from the Council's January 28 engagement on the topic of multimodal level of service, along with the Transportation Facilities Plan environmental analysis, and an introduction to the Transportation Improvement Program for 2020-2025.

13. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bishop. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Wu adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

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Secretary to the Transportation Commission Date

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Chairperson of the Transportation Commission Date