

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Ordinance suspending the requirement in Bellevue City Code (BCC) Section 14.60.070 for the owners of property with a Transportation Management Program (TMP) performance goal to conduct biennial surveys for the 2020-2021 measurement cycle.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Ordinance suspends the BCC 14.60.070.K requirement to conduct commute mode surveys at certain office buildings for the 2020-2021 measurement cycle, owing to unique circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6540

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Bellevue City Code section [14.60.070](#) requires new buildings meeting certain thresholds for size and category of use to develop and implement automobile trip reduction programs (Transportation Management Programs or TMPs) directed to tenant employees or residents, in order to reduce transportation impacts related to building development. Council adopted updated requirements in November 2017 (Ordinance No. 6380). There are currently 67 sites in Bellevue with TMP conditions in effect (including 27 residential sites).

Some sites, generally, these are office buildings in Downtown of 50,000 square feet or more, have a designated performance goal, typically specified in terms of the maximum proportion of employees on site who commute by drive-alone mode. Per BCC 14.60.070.K, these sites are required to conduct commute surveys every two years to track their progress toward meeting their drive-alone commute goal.

Some buildings are able to satisfy the measurement requirement by using the results of surveys conducted in conjunction with the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program ([BCC 14.40](#)), which focuses on large employer worksites. Other buildings have smaller tenants and must undertake a separate survey. The City sponsors a survey process, which is scheduled to take place this fall at nine office buildings and at one hotel. City staff recommends that the requirement to do surveys at the affected office buildings be waived for this survey cycle for the following reasons:

- Very few employees are in the buildings. Inquiry to managers of a subset of the affected buildings yielded responses from four; comments on employee numbers were “less than 1 percent”, “we’ve only been about 2 percent occupied since April”, “five to seven percent”, “Our building is down to approximately 90-120 people on site daily.”

- A survey measurement taken this fall would show an overwhelming proportion of people teleworking. It would not, however, provide meaningful indication of whether a building is making longer-term, substantive progress toward its performance goal (as the pandemic is an overwhelming confounding factor). Two building managers offered comments:
 - “I am not sure how much participation we would be able to gain. The answers would be almost 100 percent “Telecommute” from employees, which would almost certainly meet our SOV goals.”
 - “...obtaining emails from every employee that “likely” would still come into the office (had Coronavirus not hit) would be quite difficult. In addition, the results obtained would be incorrectly skewed in a building owner’s favor as nobody is driving solo (or by any other means) in to work at this time. Bottom line: I think a survey at this time would be a lesson in futility. I am fine to take part if deemed necessary but know the information gleaned from a survey during these trying times would be basically worthless.”
- Conducting the surveys (which are in online format) requires significant effort on the part of building managers and their tenant contacts to disseminate the survey messaging to employees and, especially, to send follow up messaging to encourage employee response and thus secure an adequate overall rate of response (the target rate is 70 percent, though tenants and buildings often fall short of this level). Securing employee responses in the current environment will be more challenging, as posing commute mode questions and conducting the standard survey may seem tone-deaf to employees who have little alternative but to work from home.
- The time required for each individual employee to respond is modest (3-4 minutes) but adds up to a more significant impact in the aggregate (the target population for surveying totals approximately 3,600 employees).

If this recommendation is approved, the next measurement at the office building sites would take place in fall 2022. The survey at the hotel (Seattle Marriott Bellevue) would proceed this fall. (The survey is an element of an agreement that allowed the building to be developed with limited parking supply.)

The overall purpose of the surveys is to measure progress of buildings toward their particular commute mode split goal for the maximum proportion of employee commute trips by drive-alone mode (the goal is established at the time of initial building occupancy and varies by building). No buildings have yet met their mode split goal, but many are making progress, and some are approaching their goal.

In addition to the commute survey required at a subset of buildings, managers of TMP buildings are required to complete a TMP Implementation Report every second year, describing measures taken to comply with the TMP Implementation Agreement for their building. These were completed in fall 2019 at 28 buildings. The next reports will be due in fall 2021.

The City contracts with King County Metro to support engagement with TMP-conditioned buildings. This is a component of a larger contract with the County to implement CTR program requirements at large employer worksites. The TMP component of the current contract (approved by Council on October 7, 2018, Ordinance No. 6477) ends on December 31, 2020. (The overall contract extends to June 30, 2021, commensurate with the timeline for state grant funding that supports the Commute Trip Reduction program element.)

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Bellevue City Code 14.60.070.K states, “The owner of a property with a TMP performance goal shall conduct a biennial survey to determine employee mode split. The survey must be conducted by an independent agent approved by the City according to protocols described in the TMP Implementation Guidelines. The City will designate a targeted minimum response rate. Surveys with response rates below the targeted minimum response rate may be invalid.”

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with suspending the survey obligation for the 2020-2021 period.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance suspending the requirement in Bellevue City Code (BCC) Section 14.60.070 for the owners of property with a Transportation Management Program (TMP) performance goal to conduct biennial surveys for the 2020-2021 measurement cycle.
2. Do not adopt the Ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Map of Transportation Management Program buildings (multifamily residential sites not shown)
Proposed Ordinance No. 6540

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A