

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 10, 2020
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Marciante, Commissioners Beason, Klutznick, Teh, Ting, Wu

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Stash

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Eric Miller, Kristi Oosterveen, Michael Ingram, Paula Stevens, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Robertson

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Chair Marciante noted the meeting was held remotely in order to comply with the Governor's order regarding the Open Public Meetings Act that prohibits in-person meetings.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Teh, who joined at 6:32 p.m., and Commissioner Stash, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

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

Councilmember Robertson reported that during the final review of the city's biannual budget a total of nine ~~different~~ amendments were made and approved. Among the items approved was setting aside money to fund a communities of color coordinating team to work on equity issues highlighted by the George Floyd situation. The team will be comprised of community members. Also approved was funding to put together a community group to engage with experts on environmental issues and implementation of the city's Environmental Stewardship Initiative. The Council also approved the early win rapid action for the Environmental Stewardship Initiative in the amount of \$150,000 per year for two years. The Council elected to give \$20,000 to the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Chamber of Commerce given how active they have been in helping local businesses during the time of Covid-19.

With regard to the Bellevue College connection transportation project, Councilmember

Robertson noted that the partners Bellevue College and King County Metro had pulled their funding for the next phase. Accordingly, the city pulled its funding and earmarked it for a different transportation project. Now that the partners are back at the table wanting to see the project moved forward, the Council put \$100,000 toward it.

The Council also put \$200,000 towards the cross cultural feasibility study. Councilmember Robertson noted that the city has a level of service for its community centers that has for a while not been met. There has also been a desire to have a cross cultural center. The two issues dovetail nicely. The funding will not build such a center but will move things in that direction.

The Council also moved some funding around in the CIP to address early implementation of Vision Zero, and to address ped/bike projects in the growth corridor.

The Council also restored a previous budget cut for an administration position for fire training. Given that the city is building a new fire station and is also facing a number of retirements, the Council saw the importance of the position and restored it.

Councilmember Robertson said the Council is slated to adopt the final budget on December 14.

Councilmember Robertson informed the Commission that the last Regional Transit Committee meeting of the year was held on November 30. She reported that the K Line, the bus rapid transit (BRT) line between Bellevue and Kirkland, is one of two lines that will be prioritized in the next phase of BRT projects. The work of the committee focused on the mobility framework and the service guidelines will continue in 2021.

Councilmember Robertson said the Transportation Policy Board met earlier in the day. She reported that more money will be coming from the federal government for appropriation in 2021 totaling about \$15 million. Those funds normally would be distributed among the four county region, but the city of Seattle presented a request to the board for the entire \$15 million for the West Seattle Bridge. That discussion will be taken up in January.

Commissioner Wu asked for an update regarding the Eastrail ~~trail overpass of NE 8th Street~~ [connection to Spring Blvd.](#) Senior Transportation Planner Michael Ingram said the earliest potential for tapping the funding for the project is about a year out, and that will require taking some steps with the Puget Sound Regional Council to allow for early dispensation of the funds. Officially, the funds are not available until the fall of 2022.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Principal Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald reported that technological issues kept Department of Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis from participating in the meeting.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Micromobility/e-Scooters

This item was postponed to a later meeting.

B. Transportation Facilities Plan 2022-2023 Update

Mr. Ingram briefly reviewed the steps taken to date to update the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP). He stressed the importance of the comments and input received from the public as part of the update process. Traditionally, the process has involved ~~more than one~~ in-person open house events at different locations around the city. The results from those in-person events have largely been mixed; there never has been a large turnout. The primary avenue for response has been via an online survey and interactive project map. In-person events are not a viable option under the current reality. Fortunately, a new platform called Engaging Bellevue has become available, allowing the city to conduct online open house events that are graphically rich and attractive. The option ultimately will be more effective at reaching more people and will be utilized going forward.

Mr. Ingram said a number of city projects that are currently under way can be found at EngagingBellevue.com. He said a presence will be established on the site for the TFP. People clicking on the link will see the story of the TFP and will be encouraged to look at the various projects and offer their input.

There are two primary components of the outreach effort, the survey and the interactive project map. The survey is purposefully kept short and focused on understanding who is providing the project comments. Respondents are asked if they live in Bellevue and if so where, if they work in Bellevue and where they work in terms of area, and how what modes they use to move around Bellevue and how often. The survey also provides the public the opportunity to provide general comments and questions as well.

The meat of the public input comes from the interactive project map. The projects are presented on the map in a graphical format, and they are color-coded to indicate the project type: roadway/ped/bike/transit/other. The map distinguishes which projects are fully funded in the ~~TFP~~ CIP. Most of the projects on the map are not fully funded and are shown in a lighter hue. Clicking on a project brings up a box describing the project. In the box a link is included which brings up another window where they can indicate if they are in favor of the project, opposed to the project, or neutral concerning the project. They can also offer open-ended comments. The format has been used for the last three TFP update cycles and it has been found to be very valuable. It yields comments across a range of projects. Staff compiles the information in a report and uses it to generate charts and graphs indicating characteristics of the respondents, including how people move around the city. All of the project comments are compiled in terms of the numbers of respondents in favor of a given project, how many were opposed, and how many were neutral. The data is then utilized by staff during the prioritization exercise which is then shared with the Commission for additional adjustments.

Commissioner Wu asked if consideration has been given to asking the survey respondents to indicate if they would use one mode of travel over another if the roadway environment were to be made more favorable. Mr. Ingram said a number of additional questions along those lines were asked as part of the 2016 TFP update process. In the end, however, the additional information did not prove to be particularly valuable in terms of what to do with it given that all respondents are self selected.

Commissioner Ting noted that during the pandemic people are working from home and he asked how the respondents should interpret questions about their transportation patterns given the unique situation. Mr. Ingram said staff will examine the language to make sure it is relevant to the current reality, possibly to elicit responses about travel patterns pre-Covid and post-Covid.

Commissioner Teh asked how the response rate for the current process compares to previous years. Mr. Ingram said there were around 450 respondents who provided input through the interactive project map during the last TFP update. The expectation is that there will be an equal number of responses for the current process, which has not yet been launched. He reiterated that attendance at the in-person open houses had never been very high.

Commissioner Teh suggested promoting the survey through various social media platforms, including NextDoor.

Commissioner Wu said some people and some companies may not ever go back to commuting to work. She asked if staff have considered whether it would be worthwhile to ask the respondents about their projected future travel patterns. Mr. Ingram said the input to questions of that sort likely would be questionable in terms of value, particularly in light of the fact that the respondents are self selected.

Turning to the city budget survey, Mr. Ingram said it is a great resource in terms of how it is conducted. The survey samples some 1100 Bellevue residents from all areas of the city and from various demographics. The data is used to inform the city's biannual budget process. The data ~~from for~~ the 2020 budget survey was collected in the months of January and February, which was pre-Covid. The travel patterns and the perceptions of people may have evolved as a result of the pandemic. The survey includes ~~some~~ questions relating to 39 city services, including transportation services. The respondents are asked to indicate how important the services are to them and their levels of satisfaction with the services.

Twelve of the 39 services relate to transportation. The responses clarified the importance of adequately funding maintenance and operations. Also generating above average importance responses were neighborhood improvements and system of walkways. With regard to neighborhood improvements, the question asked specifically highlighted sidewalks and crosswalks. Other questions relating to sidewalks, however, were rated as having below average importance, including sidewalks along major roads. The phrasing of the question relating to system of walkways had to do with the ability to walk comfortably from an origin to a destination. Bicycle facilities consistently rated as below average importance.

In regard to the responses relative the level of satisfaction with the 39 city services, Mr. Ingram noted that maintenance and operations, including clean streets, streetlights and traffic signals, all ranked as having above average satisfaction. That includes maintaining streets and sidewalks. The system of bikeways also ranked fairly high, which could have to do with the visibility of some bicycle facilities improvements made in recent years. Downtown traffic ranked low in terms of satisfaction but that could also have something to do with the specific language of the question, which asked about the city's progress in reducing traffic problems in the Downtown, setting the unrealistic expectation that traffic in the Downtown will get better.

Mr. Ingram shared with the Commissioners a quadrant analysis of the budget survey responses, with the most important services shown on the right side and the less important services on the left side, and the services with the most satisfaction on the top and the those with the least satisfaction on the bottom. He explained that the services mapped on the upper right portion of the quadrant could be seen as the most important. The maintenance and operations services relating to clean streets, street lights and signals, and maintaining sidewalks were all in the upper right side of the quadrant. Accessible walkways and neighborhood improvements, both cited as being important, fell just slightly below the middle line on the satisfaction scale.

Among those services viewed as below average importance, only one was listed above the line in terms of satisfaction, and that was system of bikeways. Downtown traffic and building and widening city streets both fell on the left side and below the middle line on the quadrant. Improvements for bike riders and sidewalks along major roads both were on the left side of the quadrant, and while higher on the satisfaction scale, below the midline, which Mr. Ingram said is recognition of a clear need, but also below average importance.

The Commissioners were told that the budget survey includes several areas of special focus. Transportation has always been one given that it is a key area of concern for residents. The question posed on the survey was “In order to deal with increased traffic congestion, the city should....” The question was followed by four strategies and the respondents were asked to either agree or disagree with each. The strategy that received the most support was working with regional transit agencies to improve transit service. Fully 80 percent of the respondents agreed either strongly or somewhat with that strategy; only ten percent disagreed. The strategy of encouraging people to choose alternative transportation modes was agreed to by 78 percent of the respondents. Sixty-six percent agreed with the strategy of working with the state to widen highways. Fifty-nine percent agreed with the strategy of widening major city roads, though the bulk of the support was for “somewhat” agree. Notably, 28 percent disagreed with the notion of widening city streets.

Mr. Ingram said staff will work to pull together the survey results, the interactive map comments and the budget survey results into a final report that will be presented to the Commission at its March 2021 meeting.

Commissioner Wu suggested the transportation department should work to make sure the questions about transportation issues in the budget survey are clear. She added that since accessible neighborhood sidewalks showed up as being important to the public, it is something that should be highlighted going forward.

Commissioner Ting noted that the issue of alternative forms of transportation pops up as being important in every survey. He asked if there is anything new the city is doing to encourage the utilization of alternative modes, or if there is anything new that could be done. Mr. Ingram pointed out that there has been increased growth even in the areas the city has consistently been doing for many years. There is an uptick in the number of people taking transit and riding bikes. The metric tracked most regularly is commute trips from the largest work sites that are affected by the Commute Trip Reduction regulations. There ~~has been an~~ is overall reduction in the number proportion of drive--alone trips every year over time. When there is something new to promote, the city jumps on the opportunity, such as when transit service gets updated along a corridor. On the workplace side, the city has a standing offer to work with smaller employers who are interested in improving their employee transportation benefits. The city contracts with the Bellevue Downtown Association and one of their representatives will sit down with an employer to review their numbers.

Mr. Ingram said the TFP process timeline is on track. The staff are currently working to score the roadway/intersection projects. The online open houses will be launched in January 2021. Staff will soon begin developing and updating project cost estimates. In January the Commission will be given a presentation from transportation finance staff on the city budget.

B. Mobility Implementation Plan Scope of Work

Chair Marciante proposed letting staff make their presentation on the topic and hold all

comments and discussion to future meetings or offline conversations with staff.

Commissioner Wu asked why the Commissioners should refrain from asking questions about the presentation. Chair Marciante said her intent was to keep things flowing. She said the Commission does not typically delve into discussions regarding the details of the scope of work. The Commission previously indicated to staff an interest in seeing the scope of work, but not necessarily to discuss it. Commissioner Wu said her interest was not in commenting on the consultant's scope of work since that is not in the purview of the Commission. She said she simply wanted to make sure the scope of work is consistent with the Transportation Master Plan as envisioned by the Commission and approved by the Council. As part of the presentation, the Commission should be permitted to ask questions.

Mr. McDonald said he appreciated the interest of the Commissioners in the topic. He said his intent was to provide an overview of the scope of the work the Commission will be undertaking in 2021 with the support of staff and the consultant. He clarified that the presentation would not include the consultant's scope of work, rather it would provide a preview and lay a foundation for ~~what~~ the work on the Mobility Implementation Plan the Commission will ~~undertake~~ be addressing in the coming year. He ~~said if appropriate, offered that~~ he would welcome questions at the end of the presentation, with the chair's concurrence.

Mr. McDonald took a moment on behalf of the city to acknowledge the land the city is on as the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people, the traditional home of all tribe and bands within the Duwamish and Snoqualmie Indian Tribe. He took the opportunity to honor and express the city's deepest respect to the original caretakers of this land, a people who are still here, continuing to honor their heritage.

Mr. McDonald ~~she said he would be serving~~ serve as the project manager for the Mobility Implementation Plan. The core staff team will include Shuming ~~Y~~ Tan, Eric Miller, Chris Iverson, Molly Johnson, Mike Ingram, Monica ~~B~~uck and Emil King, with oversight by Andrew Singelakis and Paula Stevens. The consultant team, which was selected through an Request for Proposals process, will be led by Fehr and Peers. The consultant firms Nelson Nygaard and Toole Design will serve as subconsultants.

Work on the Mobility Implementation Plan will begin in January 2021. In the first phase of the work the focus will be on multimodal transportation concurrency which will ~~build on and evolve~~ replace the current vehicle-based concurrency model, which is known to be ~~dysfunctional and~~ unsustainable. The work will include Transportation Commission recommendations for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan ~~amendments~~ and the Traffic Standards Code ~~amendments~~. The community ~~will be engaged~~ engagement program through a variety of means, including through tools that are will be robust, but has yet to be identified. Their Community input will likely result in recommendations for transportation system completeness and project descriptions, equity and sustainability considerations. In the second phase, topics that emerge in the first phase will be taken up and addressed. They could include transportation impact fees, enhanced transportation demand management, transportation development code to facilitate implementation of the Mobility Implementation Plan, and project descriptions in modal plans.

Much of the Mobility Implementation Plan work has its foundation in work done by the Commission over the last seven or eight years on multimodal level of service. Also foundational to the work that will be done on the Mobility Implementation Plan is the layered network, which recognizes that there is limited right-of-way, and that there are different

priorities depending on the type of land use extant or envisioned. A toolkit will be needed for resolving the conflicts. Multimodal concurrency is the most important ~~thing to come out of deliverable from~~ the Mobility Implementation Plan. During the summer ~~months of 2020~~ staff engaged in a series of workshops ~~aimed at to~~ developing a recommendation for the Commission to consider; it will be introduced in January. The recommendation will be largely based on a supply and demand equation where the supply of transportation capacity rests with the type of infrastructure built, and where the demand for that capacity will come from growth. Staff and the consultant team will work with the Commission ~~in to focusing define a concurrency program that ensures on having the~~ supply exceeds the demand.

To develop the inventory of transportation supply, the typical approach has been to engage in long-range transportation planning, either on a subarea basis or along corridors. Those plans create the inventory of ~~projects that provide the supply by creating project lists~~. The TFP looks at those ~~lists projects~~ and identifies priorities for the TFP cycle, and the projects that are identified for funding in the TFP ~~may be fully funded become part of in~~ the CIP for actual construction. The guidance for doing long-range planning comes from the Commission and is documented in the Multimodal Level of Service Metrics and Standards report.

The public always wants to know how things are progressing, what is being measured, and how ~~what is being measured performance~~ compares to the expectations. ~~In that arena, p~~Performance metrics, ~~documentation and display~~ will be ~~critical as an outcome products of~~ the Mobility Implementation Plan. ~~Outcomes of the Mobility Implementation Plan work will likely include the types of things that should be measured; the performance standards or guidelines; and how data should be displayed and shared.~~

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Traffic Standards Code will be needed in order to implement ~~multimodal concurrency the Mobility Implementation Plan~~. The Council on January 4 will be asked to initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment for multimodal concurrency. That will start the ball rolling through the Transportation Commission towards the Planning Commission, which has stewardship ~~over of~~ the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission will ultimately forward ~~a recommendation to the City Council a recommendation for adoption~~. The Comprehensive Plan sets the policy. The Traffic Standards Code sets the regulations by which transportation concurrency is measured and enforced.

Public involvement is always an element of the Commission's work. In the age of Covid-19 and in the interest of seeking diverse ~~and equitable~~ opinions, there will be a very robust public involvement process ~~initiated~~ that will involve a mix of workshops, surveys, discussions and study session with the Commission and other techniques that might arise.

Phase II will evolve out of Phase I and will include things like transportation impact fees, updating the transportation demand management programs, updating the environmental documentation for projects under the State Environmental Policy Act, and refreshing project descriptions in the modal plans.

Mr. McDonald said the Phase I timeline will kick off with the Commission in January and will run throughout all of 2021. The key milestones will be the ~~draft~~ Commission recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan and the Traffic Standards Code, ~~the preliminary Commission recommendations~~, the work by the Planning Commission, and ultimately adoption by the Council. The consultant contract is set to be routed ~~through the system~~ for internal approval ahead of Council approval in January. The Council will also be asked to initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment for multimodal concurrency in early January.

Chair Marciante opened the floor to comments and questions from the Commissioners.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wu about impact fees, Mr. McDonald said he expects that discussion to be part of Phase II, likely in 2022. The earliest timeframe for positively contributing to the budget discussion would be in the 2023-2024 cycle.

Commissioner Ting commented that the ~~work of~~ concept of the layered network and understanding how the various modes work together will be critical. He said he would like to see added as a part of the Commission's overall planning a proactive vision of what transportation should look like in 20 years. In some ways the Mobility Implementation Plan is reactive in that it sets standards and measurements and helps to guide the current set of plans, but it will not say 20 years out what the transportation system should look like, and what needs to be done right away to get the ball rolling toward achieving that vision. Mr. McDonald said ~~that he would love to have~~ a vision for all modes of the transportation system may come out of the Mobility Implementation Plan work. ~~While that may not be achieved,~~ † The Mobility Implementation Plan will develop the tools needed to get ~~thereto a vision~~, primarily through ~~what is called~~ describing the transportation system completeness. The intent of the Mobility Implementation Plan is to describe what the complete transportation system should look like, and to develop the types of projects for each mode to achieve the vision. The Mobility Implementation Plan will not develop an entire suite or projects but it will talk about the types of projects, their prioritization and how they sync up with the land use objectives, work that was initiated by the Commission through the multimodal LOS work.

Commissioner Beason asked what different input the Commission will be asked to provide over what has been offered in the past. She also asked for a brief outline regarding the consultants. Mr. McDonald said the consultant team is local and all of them have worked with the ~~Commission City~~ in the past. The lead consultant, Fehr and Peers, has worked with the Commission since 2013 to build the multimodal LOS foundation. The step from the Commission's previous work to the Mobility Implementation Plan is an important one. While all of the different pieces and parts were identified previously, the Mobility Implementation Plan brings everything together under a single umbrella in the form of policy support and an implementable document.

Commissioner Teh asked how the Mobility Implementation Plan fits with the Transportation Master Plan. Mr. McDonald said the Mobility Implementation Plan is the Transportation Master Plan.

Commissioner Wu said she wanted to know more about the notion of system completion and if the scope includes neighborhood sidewalk completion. Mr. McDonald responded by saying ~~what constitutes~~ system completeness will largely be defined by the Commission. He stated, however, the recommendation of staff will be to define system completeness ~~on for~~ the arterials system, not for neighborhood streets. There are a lot of issues involved in the neighborhoods that the Mobility Implementation Plan process will not have time to fully address.

Assistant Transportation Director Paula Stevens stressed the need to be cognizant of the ~~need to be consistent with~~ the Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan amendment process. The staff will keep the Transportation Commission apprised of the flow of that process and about the opportunities ~~for input~~ to engage with the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Ting agreed and suggested the vision needs to take into account how the Comprehensive Plan defines the future in terms of ~~different~~ transportation priorities. Consideration will need to be given to how transportation works with other principles in the Comprehensive Plan to ensure full consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Ting added that going forward he wanted staff to define the concept of sustainability in the context of the Mobility Implementation Plan; how to ensure that the multimodal demand mix will be matched by the supply mix; and the thinking behind repealing policy TR-30 in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. McDonald said sustainability applies both to environmental and fiscal sustainability, neither of which are addressed well by the current transportation concurrency approach. With regard to supply and demand, staff and the Commission will work through the issue to describe the ~~provision of~~ supply to accommodate the demand. He said policy TR-30 calls for establishing a multimodal level of service and concurrency program, which the Mobility Implementation Plan process will do, obviating the need for the policy.

Commissioner Wu asked if widening city streets will be one option for adding transportation capacity. Mr. McDonald said the Commission in the past talked about what would constitute the ultimate arterial system, and when it could be known the system has been completed and not widened further. At the time, the Commission was not willing to venture too far out on that limb. It ~~certainly~~ is a topic that ~~can~~ may be revisited as part of the Mobility Implementation Plan.

Chair Marciante commented on the strange wording of the budget survey questions relative to transportation. Surveys should be aligned with the categories to be budgeted for. It would be good to be able to go back to the public and ask the questions in the proper framework. If there is a category for widening streets in the plan, that question should be asked. If the category is different, the question should be different.

Commissioner Ting asked the other Commissioners to comment on his notion of laying out a vision for what the transportation system should look like in 20 years.

Commissioner Beason said she agreed with the notion of creating something proactive aimed at meeting a goal set for 20 years out. The Mobility Implementation Plan should be a living document that is updated as needed over time. She said it will be critical to build the necessary infrastructure in the short term in order to make it through the next 20 years. Commissioners Klutznick and Teh concurred. Commissioner Wu agreed as well and stressed the need to have a blueprint showing how each piece fits together.

Chair Marciante said she did not disagree with the desire to have a system network vision. She stressed, however, that there is no specific plan for building the city that can be looked to to inform what the city will look like in 20 years. City growth is a living thing that changes every day. The city has plans in place that are based on adopted policies, and those plans identify projects to be developed. It is important to have a grand vision of what the Commission believes to be important, but given the way the world changes very quickly, it is necessary to be flexible and adaptive. Covid-19 has shown how quickly things can change.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 12, 2020

The minutes as submitted were approved by consensus.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None
10. NEW BUSINESS – None
11. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
12. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commission the agenda of upcoming meetings and topics. He asked the Commissioners to ~~review-reserve~~ on their calendar the second and fourth Thursdays of the first few months of 2021 for Commission meetings.

Commissioner Wu commented that the virtual meetings have been conducted very smoothly and the Chair should be complimented for that. She suggested, however, that there is a limit to the number of study session items that can be handled during a single meeting. Where possible, less intense items should be paired with more intense items to assist in the flow of the meeting. Mr. McDonald said staff has in the past found it useful to conduct workshops that are focused on single topics only. ~~More of those will~~Workshops may be scheduled as part of the Mobility Implementation Plan process to ~~avoid being distracted by other~~focus on specific issues.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Marciante adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.