

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES
*February 2021***

This briefing summarizes recent actions taken by the three regional committees formed as a result of the merger of King County and Metro. The three regional committees are the Regional Policy Committee, the Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Regional Transit Committee. Staff will also include updates on other regional issues as appropriate (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District, Affordable Housing Committee, King County Board of Health, King County Regional Homelessness Authority). Summaries also include the work of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). Formed in the early 1990s to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements for collaboration of counties and their cities on Countywide Planning Policies, the GMPC meets three to four times per year to consider amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies and to monitor progress on implementation. These updates are intended to be summary briefings; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

February 10 meeting summary:

COVID-19 Pandemic Assistance Update: Dwight Dively, King County Director of the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget provided an update on pandemic assistance. He focused on the rental assistance programs that have been funded as well as an overview of the sixth county supplemental appropriation that will be transmitted to Council soon. Details from the presentation included:

Rental Assistance - 2020

- The Department of Community and Health Services (DCHS) used federal funds to provide rental assistance totaling approximately \$34 million by the end of December.
- Three programs were set up: assistance to tenants (1,806 tenants served), small landlords (838 tenants served), and large landlords (5,780 tenants served).
- Average assistance was \$4,078, equal to roughly 3 months' rent.
- Plan to use a similar approach with an additional \$45 million of federal funds in early 2021.

Next COVID Supplemental Appropriations Ordinance

- The County Executive is planning to transmit a supplemental appropriations ordinance soon.
- Will focus on programs supported by known funding sources, such as federal funding for rental assistance, state funding for health programs, and county funds.
- Still working to determine how much of the \$262 million of CARES Act flexible funds remain unspent at the end of 2020; some may be reappropriated.
- Still waiting to see how state and local funds in the proposed \$1.9 trillion federal COVID-19 legislation can be used; amendments may be proposed once this is known.
- County Council action expected in late March.

Discussion of the Best Starts for Kids (BSK) Levy Renewal Ordinance

The Best Starts for Kids Levy was approved by King County voters in November 2015 and raises an average of \$65 million per year countywide to support services for King County families and children. Services range from prenatal care throughout childhood and young adulthood. The levy rate is 14-cents per \$1,000 assessed property value. The Levy is set to expire December 31, and a levy renewal development process was initiated by the county with the expectation that a measure to renew the levy will likely go on the countywide ballot in August.

The levy renewal proposal transmitted by the County Executive would authorize an additional six-year property tax levy for collection beginning in 2022 at 19-cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation (a 35% increase over the 2015 rate). The amount collected in 2022 will serve as the base amount for calculating annual increases of up to 3 percent in 2023 through 2026. In total, the levy would raise approximately \$811 million compared to the 2015 six-year levy that totaled \$440 million. The proposed levy would maintain and expand current BSK programs that support prenatal care through early adulthood. These programs include:

- Home-based services for new parents
- Programs that promote healthy development for youth
- The Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative

The new funding from the increased rate would primarily be used to expand access to childcare with the aim of reducing the number of children under age five who have no access to affordable childcare by two-thirds. In total, the proposal includes funding for 3,000 children who have no access to childcare.

Under the Executive's proposal, 22.5 percent of revenues would continue funding the Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative and provide new funding for affordable childcare. Of the remaining revenues, 50 percent would support programs for children aged prenatal through five; 37 percent would be directed to services for children, youth, and young adults aged five through 24; 8 percent would continue funding for Communities of Opportunity; and 5 percent would fund evaluation.

Schedule

RPC will take up the ordinance for potential action in March, either at the regularly scheduled meeting on March 10 or a special meeting later in the month. The Children and Youth Advisory Board (CYAB) will be advising on the levy ordinance proposed implementation plan over the next few months.

The next RPC meeting is scheduled for March 10. Councilmember John Stokes serves on the RPC.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

January 20 meeting summary:

- **Selected the RTC Vice Chair for 2021.** Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson was elected to serve as RTC Vice Chair. County Councilmember Dave Upthegrove will continue serving as RTC Chair.
- **Approved the 2020 System Evaluation.** Per King County policy, Metro makes an annual report on service hour needs. The analysis is based on Metro's Service Guidelines and identifies transit needs related to Metro's top investment priorities, which are crowding, reliability, and service growth. Typically, the annual System Evaluation is based on data from March through June. Due to the significant decline in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 System Evaluation report is based on data from September 2019 through mid-March 2020. Metro was operating 4.2 million annual hours of bus service at that time. The report identified a need to invest 438,000 annual service hours, a slight decrease from the previous year.
- **Discussed the RTC's 2021 Work Program.** The County Council's rule for regional committees calls for the RTC Chair to consult with the RTC Vice Chair "in developing a draft work program for consideration by the full committee." County staff presented a draft work program that follows up on previous RTC work and includes briefings and actions required by County legislation. RTC members discussed the draft and supported focusing on Metro's key policy updates, which include:
 - The Strategic Plan for Public Transportation which sets goals (and performance measures) in eight areas, such as safety, environmental sustainability, and service excellence.
 - The Service Guidelines which define Metro's process and criteria for incrementally adding or reducing transit service.
 - The METRO CONNECTS Long Range Plan which proposes to increase transit service by 70 percent by 2040, based on the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) growth projections and cities' comprehensive plans.

The RTC will consider adopting the work program at its meeting on February 17.

- **Discussed Updates to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation.** The Strategic Plan provides policy direction for Metro and was last updated in 2016. The Plan sets goals and performance measures in eight areas, such as safety, environmental sustainability, and service excellence. The Plan requires Metro to report every two years on 68 performance measures, which are aligned with the goals.

The RTC discussed changes that:

- Incorporate recommendations from the Mobility Framework to strengthen Metro's equity and environmental sustainability policies.

- Include updated information on the Marine Division and set goals for King County ferry operations.
- Align the Strategic Plan with the METRO CONNECTS Long Range Plan.
- Simplify performance measures and make them more transparent.

The RTC will review the draft updates later this year.

The RTC met on February 17. A summary will be included in the March Regional Issues packet. The next RTC meeting is scheduled for March 17. Bellevue City Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the RTC.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

February 3 meeting summary:

Discussion of the 2021 RWQC Workplan

Each year, the RWQC adopts a workplan to guide its activities during the year. King County Council staff presented a draft workplan for 2021 that is very ambitious and possibly trying to cover too many issues which may not allow time for RWQC members to become fully informed and aware of several critical issues in the water quality and wastewater arenas. There are three key issues that RWQC members expressed a need for additional information in order to fully participate in decision making that will impact wastewater rates. These are listed below:

The “**Asset Management Plan**” was the subject of briefings in 2020. The investments called for in this plan will lead to substantial rate increases. This plan is also integral to the rate-setting process that is now underway in the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD). Each of these informs the other. RWQC members requested additional meetings focus on the impacts of the Asset Management Plan on the rate-setting methodology and process as well as a cost/benefit analysis of the potential wastewater rate increase. Waiting until the second quarter of 2021 to have briefings on the rates is too late for any real participation by the RWQC in this process.

Another critical area to focus on for 2021 is development of the “**Clean Water Plan**”. This plan will result in new/revised capital project investments. The plan will very likely lead to significant future rate increases and the RWQC members expressed the need to be fully informed on the potential risks versus costs of components of the plan and requested additional briefings on the proposed plan, its chapters and potential investments. Ideally, King County staff would provide an update on the Clean Water Plan at each RWQC meeting so members would be apprised of issues and trade-offs BEFORE the Plan comes out in draft form.

Another key workplan item is the issue of “**Nutrients in Wastewater**”. The state Department of Ecology (DOE) is proceeding with development of regulatory caps to control the discharge of nutrients, such as nitrogen, from wastewater treatment plants into Puget Sound. The DOE will be changing discharge permit requirements to control these flows into the Sound. The committee requested that

WTD staff continue to provide information for RWQC members on this issue as the new permit requirements to implement the caps on nutrients **will** result in very significant impacts on rates.

Briefing on the Treatment Plant Flows and Loadings Report

The Treatment Plant Flows and Loadings Study Summary Report was completed in 2019 and summarizes projected flows and identifies capacity limitations for each major treatment process at the three regional treatment plants operated by King County—the South Treatment Plant in Renton; the West Point Treatment Plant in Seattle; and the Brightwater Treatment Plant in south Snohomish County.

The WTD has historically updated its flows and loads projections every 10 years. Wastewater flows were historically taken as the key indicator in evaluating processing capacity and the flows and loads were anticipated to vary in approximately equal proportions. However, in recent years, jurisdictions have implemented aggressive water conservation measures. As a result, the relationship between the liquid flows and solids loading has shifted. Loading of solids is now the greater concern in the near-term as population growth has accelerated over the past decade.

The various components of a treatment plant have different capacity limits. Overall capacity limits are defined by the components with the most constrained limits and upgrading/ expanding these components to address the lower load limits can mitigate the short-term capacity constraints. The report identifies key systems at each plant that are nearing or at capacity. **The report does not identify specific projects or approaches to address those needs.** The report indicates that detailed alternative analyses, including cost estimates and asset management considerations are needed to determine specific operational and/or capacity expansion projects.

The information from the flows and loads report must be integrated with the Asset Management Plan. Some of the identified problem areas identified in the report need to be addressed during the next 10 years to avoid potential system failures or capacity limits at the treatment plants. The WTD staff need to evaluate and integrate these projects into the Asset Management Plan with the necessary work scheduled to identify costs, risk analyses and alternatives analyses.

Briefing on COVID-19 Sewer Surveillance

This briefing provided an overview of existing and potential monitoring of wastewater streams that serve public jurisdictions for indications of the presence of the COVID-19 virus in the wastewater. In the months since the initial occurrence of the COVID-19 outbreak early last year, the County's Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) staff have been cooperating with the University of Washington in accessing samples of from treatment flows to assess for the presence of COVID-19 indicators in the wastewater. The monitoring samples from February 2020 indicated the presence of the COVID-19 virus in King County sewage **before** human testing was initiated. Samples are taken weekly from the three regional treatment plants operated by King County—however sampling in more localized areas closer to the site of origin is not occurring so the ability to characterize specific intensities by location is limited.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a “National Wastewater

Surveillance System (NWSS) as a new public health tool to better understand the spread of COVID-19 in communities. This group coordinated with partner public health departments to collect specific data needed for interpretation by public health professionals. The CDC analyzes information reported to the NWSS from state, tribal, local, and territorial health departments using standard collection methods and returns the results to the agencies.

Officials see wastewater testing as complementary to conventional coronavirus testing. This is needed because many people with the virus are asymptomatic and less likely to seek testing. WTD staff will describe the challenges and opportunities for monitoring wastewater for the presence of COVID-19 indicators.

Next steps include support for ongoing sampling for UW; participating in update meetings with public health; confirm a scope of work and level of effort for King County WTD work groups to participate in the sewer surveillance pilot program; and track information from the CDC.

The next RWQC meeting is scheduled for March 3. Councilmember Conrad Lee serves on the RWQC.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL (GMPC)

January 27 work session summary:

Work Session on the 2021 Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) Update

The work session was led by County Executive Dow Constantine and Bellevue GMPC member Councilmember Jennifer Robertson participated. The GMPC did not hold a formal meeting and did not conduct official business. GMPC members were provided in advance with an interim Chapter summaries document and a preliminary working draft of the CPPs. These documents were not used or presented in the breakout room work sessions.

GMPC members were asked to participate in each of four breakout room topic areas over the course of the two-hour meeting:

- Breakout room #1: Development Patterns Chapter
- Breakout room #2: Housing Chapter
- Breakout room #3: Environment Chapter and Economy Chapter
- Breakout room #4: Transportation Chapter and Public Facilities Chapter.

The discussion framework for each of the topic areas was based on three questions members were asked to consider:

- Do you have questions about the themes in the chapter?
- Are there any concepts that may be missing?
- Do you foresee any implementation challenges?

Councilmember Robertson, in the Transportation and Public Facilities breakout room session, noted the following regarding addressed themes in these chapters, and how Bellevue's implementation work aligns with the CPP updates:

Transportation: CM Robertson indicated satisfaction with the direction the CPPs are going regarding implementation/integration of land use and transportation. That is what will make the system work most efficiently and meet VISION 2050 goals. An additional emphasis on safety (new policies are specifically identified so they stand out) aligns with Bellevue's adoption of Vision Zero. Providing tools to encourage other jurisdictions to do this work was noted as a good idea.

Public Facilities: The emphasis on broadband and access for all areas and all incomes is good. Councilmember Robertson noted that Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan includes policies regarding high speed access in all areas, and the city has been working hard to get 5G going. With the pandemic, the need for high speed internet needs is emphasized. Councilmember Robertson also suggested further analysis of 5G and referenced the T-Mobile innovation center. Broadband should be treated as a utility, and this is an essential approach, with children as well with schooling, especially for those who are low income. Bellevue has free public Wi-Fi in parks and public buildings, so having this as a theme in the CPPs is good.

Briefing on the CPP review schedule: There is much work to be done to meet the schedule for the review of the draft CPPs in order to make a recommendation to the King County Council, affirming the Urban Capacity Report work, and adopting 2044 Growth Targets. The schedule includes monthly meetings of the GMPC through June. The King County Council will review and adopt during the summer, and cities will be asked to ratify the CPPs in the fall. King County plans to submit the CPPs for ratification by PSRC by the end of the year.

The next GMPC meeting is scheduled for February 24. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the GMPC.

EASTRAIL REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (ERAC)

January 29 meeting summary:

- **Discussed Community Engagement.** The ERAC's 2020-2022 workplan includes outreach to underrepresented communities. Underrepresented communities include people of color, people born outside of the United States, non-native English speakers, low-income people, and people with disabilities.

Debbie Lacy, the founder and Executive Director of Eastside for All, briefed the ERAC on best practices for equitable community engagement. Eastside for All is a racial equity advocacy

organization based in east King County. Eastside for All recommends the “co-creation framework,” which supports:

- Building relationships with underrepresented communities rather than the more limited engagement that is characteristic of traditional public outreach efforts;
 - Meeting regularly with community liaisons and leaders; and
 - Participating in cultural events and open meetings hosted by community-based organizations.
- **Discussed the Eastrail Partners Service Agreement.** The Eastrail Partners is a nonprofit trail advocacy group. Its Board of Directors includes representatives from Amazon, REI, and Seattle Children’s. In 2019, the ERAC adopted a consensus resolution on a cost-share agreement to provide \$100,000 to the Eastrail Partners. Bellevue contributed about \$11,000 for stakeholder engagement at the community and legislative levels regarding the Eastrail vision and advancement opportunities. The ERAC members’ agreement with Eastrail Partners ended in December.

Eastrail Partners Executive Director Katherine Hollis briefed the ERAC on the group’s accomplishments in 2020, including advocacy for corporate investment in the trail. Last year, the Eastrail Partners worked with REI and Facebook to secure \$2 million for the Northup Way Connector in Bellevue. This project will link the Eastrail and the SR 520 Trail, serving as a gateway into Bellevue and the Spring District neighborhood. The ERAC may consider additional partnership with the Eastrail Partners in 2022.

- **Discussed Trail Use Counts.** ERAC member staff and volunteers conducted Eastrail counts in September and October. King County staff will brief the ERAC on the results and recommend next steps. Trail count data can be used for the following purposes:
 - Build awareness of trail use levels and visitor experience;
 - Inform decisions about trail design, development, and operations and maintenance;
 - Measure impact of connecting Eastrail segments and connecting Eastrail to other trails; and,
 - Generate information needed for grant applications.

On September 29 and October 3, ERAC member staff and volunteers observed trail users at 10 Eastrail locations. About 3,600 bicyclists and pedestrians were counted. Volumes varied based across the sites. In Bellevue, the following volumes were observed:

- About 30 people per hour at 118th Avenue SE and SE 32nd Street, near the Emerald Ridge Apartments; and
- About 45 people per hour at the Eastrail and 108th Avenue NE, near the South Kirkland Park and Ride.

These volumes are promising. Bellevue staff anticipates more users when the trail is connected through Bellevue. For comparison, the East Lake Sammamish Trail had about 170 users per hour at the times of the Eastrail counts.

Bellevue staff expects upcoming Eastrail projects to attract more users. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will pave 2.5 miles of the Eastrail from Coal Creek Parkway to Renton and construct a trail crossing between SE 8th Street and I-90 to carry the trail over the southbound lanes of I-405. The trail segment south of Coal Creek Parkway will be completed later this year, and the crossing over I-405 is expected to be complete by 2023.

- **Member Updates.** ERAC members were invited to share updates about trail projects. Chair Balducci and County staff briefed the ERAC on efforts to recognize Japanese American heritage as part of the NE 8th Street Overcrossing project. The overcrossing is west of the former site of the Bellevue Growers Association Packing and Shipping Warehouse, which was owned and operated by Japanese American farmers who used it to store and ship their produce to markets locally and nationally.

The overcrossing has been identified as an opportunity to memorialize the contributions of the Japanese American community in Bellevue, as part of a larger project—the Bellevue Japanese American Legacy Project—that is exploring potential sites throughout the area. City Council received an update on this project last year. The Bellevue Arts program is contributing \$40,000 to this effort.

King County allocated an additional \$500,000 for Japanese American commemoration in the County's 2021-2022 budget. The Japanese American heritage group submitted a preferred concept to the NE 8th Street Overcrossing design team. It includes painting part of the bridge structure a bold red. However, red paint fades rapidly compared to other colors. King County does not have funding for frequent repainting and the location of the overcrossing will make repainting a challenge. King County staff is working with the heritage group on this issue. Construction of the NE 8th Street Overcrossing will begin later this year and must be completed in 2022, in advance of energizing the East Link light rail electrical system.

Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes represents the City on the ERAC. He provided an update on the Mountains to Sound Greenway (MSTG) Trail first phase, from I-405 to 132nd Street SE. This segment provides new multiuse trail, including a tunnel under an I-405 ramp and a bridge over another ramp and Factoria Boulevard SE. Bellevue recently awarded the contract of the next phase of the MTSG Trail, from 132nd Avenue SE to 142nd Avenue SE, which provides access to Bellevue College and the Eastgate Park and Ride. Construction will begin next month.

The next ERAC meeting is scheduled for April 29. Councilmember John Stokes represents Bellevue on the ERAC.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE (AHC)

January 29th meeting summary:

- **Action on adopting a recommendation to the GMPC to amend the AHC Charter.** According to the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC or Committee) Charter, the Committee should periodically review and evaluate its effectiveness in furthering the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force's Five-Year Action Plan. Based on the evaluation the Committee could recommend revisions to the GMPC Charter that may be needed to better accomplish the Action Plan and Committee goals. The proposed revisions would provide clarity and better reflect the intended practices and operations of the Committee. The Committee voted to approve changes to the charter.
- **Action on adoption of recommended Countywide Planning Policies Housing Chapter Amendments to the GMPC.** The GMPC asked the AHC to recommend updates to the Housing Chapter of the CPPs to support efforts to address the affordable housing crisis. The Committee's adopted recommendation must be transmitted to the GMPC in February. The AHC voted to approve the proposed amendments with minor modifications to the policy language and forward them to the GMPC for action.
- **Action on adoption of a proposed 2021 State Legislative Agenda.** At the November 13 AHC meeting, members considered a draft 2021 State Legislative Agenda. A revised agenda was circulated in early December and the AHC approved the 2021 state legislative agenda.

The next AHC meeting is scheduled for March 24. Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson serves on the AHC.