

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 11, 2021
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Beason, Klutznick, Stash, Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Marciante, Commissioner Teh

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Paula Stevens, Andrew Singelakis,
Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Breiland, Don Samdahl, Fehr & Peers;
Councilmember Robertson

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Vice-Chair Stash who presided.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Marciante and Commissioner Teh, both of whom were excused.

Commissioner Stash noted the meeting was being held remotely in order to comply with the Governor's order concerning open public meetings.

Councilmember Robertson acknowledged the recent resignation of Commissioner Wu. She said Commissioner Wu is very involved with other community efforts, including the cross-cultural center project, and decided that she should be putting her efforts into that. She said the open seat will be advertised and the applicants will be vetted and interviewed ahead of appointing a new Commissioner.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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 she recently was elected to serve as vice-chair of the Regional Transit Committee, which is dealing with King County Metro policy documents. She added that she was excited about the important work that is on the Commission's plate for the year, particularly multimodal concurrency.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Principal Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald reported that at the January 27 meeting of the Bellevue Downtown Association transportation committee he provided an update on the work of the Commission on multimodal concurrency. He said the presentation was well received. He said on February 4 the staff managing the Transportation Facilities Plan update provided a report to the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce transportation committee.

Mr. McDonald reminded the Commissioners that the online open house for the I-405 south downtown access study will remain open until February 19, after which the staff managing the project will consolidate the information received and will begin to create a recommendation for a new access to I-405 on the south side of the Downtown.

Vice-Chair Stash asked if any concerns were raised either by the Bellevue Downtown Association or Chamber of Commerce transportation committees. Mr. McDonald said a number of interesting questions were asked about the end product, how it would be implemented, and what the implications might be, particularly for transportation impact fees.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Multimodal Concurrency

Chris Breiland with Fehr & Peers introduced his colleague Don Samdahl, a city of Bellevue staff alumnus who has worked on a number of concurrency projects and transportation planning studies.

Mr. Breiland noted that in January the staff recommendation regarding multimodal concurrency was presented to the Commission. He noted that a number of questions were raised at that time, including how to know the right network of transportation supply is being built; what outcomes can be expected; how to ensure that what is built is related to growth and will be utilized over time; and how progress will be measured. He noted that Bellevue is not the first city to move in the direction of multimodal concurrency and there is benefit from learning from those who have gone before.

Mr. Breiland said there are seven steps in the sequence toward multimodal concurrency. The first step is to generate a forecast for the demand. That is followed by reviewing what has already been planned and committed to by the city, and how the system is expected to perform given those improvements. The third step is to apply performance metrics to the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) baseline. Step four focuses on the amount of funding available for continued enhancements to the transportation system. Steps five and six are iterative and similar to the city's current approach with the TFP in regard to testing via modeling how different investments would work to improve the performance of all modes until a system is found that meets the general performance expectations. The seventh step is to actually create the supply by implementing projects through the Capital Investment Program (CIP).

The demand for mobility comes from the Puget Sound Regional Council forecasts for regional growth for a 12-year period. Bellevue staff takes that forecast and determines where growth is likely to occur in the city and then allocates it accordingly. The 12-year forecast aligns with the planning horizon for the TFP. Development that is under way and in the planning pipeline are

translated into person trips using the BKR Cast travel demand model. For purposes of multimodal concurrency, the model's growth in person trips are referred to as mobility units of demand, which ultimately will be balanced against the mobility units of supply. The person trips are broken down by mode based on a number of factors. The model also considers the impacts of investments by other agencies in the transportation network in and around Bellevue by WSDOT, Sound Transit and King County Metro. Additionally, the model considers updates to the transportation demand management program.

Evaluation of the baseline performance is the third step and it involves looking at and evaluating the trips that are loaded onto the transportation system. The outcome is a glimpse of the performance of the transportation system. The baseline is predicated on the existing TFP without any additional projects. The baseline is an indication of how the system operates with the current planned investments. As part of the Mobility Implementation Plan, consideration will be given to other metrics that are important to the city to identify gaps in performance.

The MMLOS approach represents the state-of-the-art approach for how to evaluate transportation system performance within the city; most cities do not yet embrace the multimodal approach. The MMLOS approach identifies performance metrics in the form of corridor travel speed and the volume to capacity ratio at intersections. The expectations vary in different parts of the city. The more familiar V/C ratio measures vehicles moving through intersections during the peak period.

With regard to transit, MMLOS defines a couple of performance measures, namely the speed of travel between key destinations and bus stop amenities. Transit performance is focused on passenger comfort, access and information. Bellevue does not control the number of buses operating on the routes, but does control how amenable bus stops are to waiting, the provision of good information, and how quickly transit vehicles travel through city streets.

Another MMLOS metric involves pedestrian facility performance. It focuses on sidewalks, buffers, intersection treatments, and the frequency and location of midblock crossings. The metric is centered on the arterial streets in the growing parts of the city, and on pedestrian access, comfort and safety, which the research shows is influential in regard to why people choose to walk.

Mr. McDonald pointed out that the expectation for pedestrian infrastructure varies depending on land use. That point was important to the Commission in developing recommendations for pedestrian levels of service. Not all sidewalks are created equal, nor do they need to be. There is a direct relationship between the components of access, comfort and safety and the type of land uses the sidewalks are serving. Mr. Breiland agreed and stated that as land uses change, particularly in commercial areas, businesses can say what used to be acceptable to them in terms of sidewalk amenities are no longer appropriate. Multimodal concurrency can identify and help to implement the changes.

Mr. Breiland said for bicycles, the idea of facility performance stems from the concept of level of traffic stress (LTS) as defined in the multimodal LOS. It looks at the adjacent speed and volume of traffic on the roadway, and the type of cyclist a bicycle facility is designed for. Avid commuting bicyclists are comfortable riding in more mixed flow traffic, while families prefer dedicated and separate facilities. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and the subsequent MMLOS work help to define the intended location and type of bicycle facilities. From a concurrency standpoint, the focus is primarily on the Bicycle Priority Corridors. The Council recently initiated a program for the Growth Corridor High Comfort Bike Network.

Access within and between those growth areas, identified as Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton, is where the Council intended to focus investments through this program.

Mr. Breiland said MMLOS is the foundational element for determining if the travel needs for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and transit are being met. Each mode is measured in a different way given that the expectations for each mode is different. Using the roadway network, it is possible to drive between any two parcels in the city. Trying to bike comfortably between any two parcels in the city, however, one will encounter big gaps in the system. There are also gaps in the pedestrian network and transit access. The maturity of the systems is reflected in the level of service performance metrics.

Multimodal LOS can be utilized in determining how the baseline system performs for all modes. Where growth occurs without additional investments in the systems, gaps will occur in the performance. The city's department of Finance and Asset Management provides the TFP revenue forecast. The total projected revenue is reduced by the revenue that has already been committed, and the constrained revenue. The balance is the amount available for allocation to TFP projects. A portion of the funds are available to further enhance the system, which for the current TFP is about \$109 million of about \$390 million.

The fifth step in the process is to test projects to improve performance to support growth. Supporting growth is important. It is what the TFP is geared for and what concurrency is centered around. Growth in the transportation system is what impact fees help to pay for. The identification of projects to improve MMLOS outcomes will be made based on the available funding. Step 6 documents the results. The Eastgate Transportation Study in 2019 is an example of how MMLOS was used to identify system gaps and identify projects. The TFP process works to highlight projects that can be afforded and slotted for implementation. Steps 5 and 6 represent an iterative process of identifying projects that yield a forecasted set of outcomes.

Concurrency in its simplest form is predicated on building the desired transportation system in pace with development. The supply provided by the projects built is weighed against the demand and should always outpace it. The growth forecast turns into specific demand when a permit is pulled or sought. In order to meet concurrency, a sufficient amount of the system must be committed or is in place. If ten percent of the system is built, ten percent of the forecasted development can be accommodated. Implementing the supply in step with the demand means concurrency will be met. Projects that are coming online can be entered into the concurrency tracking calculators. That yields the number of mobility units the project will consume and makes sure the number of remaining mobility units is above zero. The city of Redmond uses a similar system and has set the goal of always having at least five percent of their total mobility units available.

Concurrency is implementing the system defined through the TFP process. Over the next couple of years, the focus will be on the Mobility Implementation Plan and how to weigh the different MMLOS outcomes, and to determine acceptable outcomes for cars and other modes. While that is not fully defined yet, the fundamental evaluation tools are in place.

Addressing the question of what to do if supply and demand are not tracking as desired, Mr. Breiland said there is a complementary piece in the Mobility Implementation Plan that addresses tracking progress and making adjustments over time. The forecast generated by the BKR Cast model works off of land use growth and investment in the transportation system. The model can be calibrated to reflect what is happening in the real world. Redmond has

developed a dashboard for tracking progress that is partially informed by what is actually going on by individual mode, and that informs needed adjustments and where those adjustments need to be made to keep demand and supply in balance. Every time the TFP is updated, there should be a review of how the city is progressing toward its current priorities by mode to make sure the intended outcomes are being realized.

Commissioner Beason asked for a high-level overview of where the BKR Cast data comes from, how frequently it is updated against project progress, and how the budget is prioritized based on the data. Mr. Breiland said the BKR Cast model is maintained by a team of modelers in the Transportation Department. They essentially are updating the model all the time, particularly in terms of entering investments made by the city in transportation systems. The land use forecasts come from the Puget Sound Regional Council every couple of years. The city also works with the Puget Sound Regional Council to collect household travel information from a survey, and that information also comes in about every two years. As travel behaviors change, the model is updated accordingly. The city updates the TFP every two or three years.

Commissioner Beason said it sounds like there is a bit of a delay between the data gathered and the decision-making process. Mr. Breiland said when the analysis is done it is prepared on an existing conditions framework. The city has an ongoing traffic count program. King County Metro and Sound Transit collect and share ridership data on a monthly basis. The model is constantly updated accordingly, thus all analysis is done using the most recently available data. The lag between the data and decision making is not very great.

Vice-Chair Stash said it was her understanding that the process of calculating mobility units on the demand side is based on hard metrics, such as the number of businesses or offices, proposed for a certain development. On the supply side, however, the calculations are based on the budget numbers in the TFP. Mr. Breiland said the total supply of mobility units is effectively an outline of what is expected at buildout at the TFP horizon. The level of progress made is identified through calculating the percentage of total new projects built. For instance, if the overall budget is \$110 million for new projects, and if \$10 million of that amount has been spent, then roughly ten percent of the program has been built. While that is a calculation of convenience, it is easy to track. The understanding is that over time as the \$110 million is spent, the full planned system will come online. It is less of a standalone metric and more of a percentage of how much of the committed network has actually been built.

Vice-Chair Stash said her concern centered on the fact that the demand side is based on hard numbers, whereas the supply side is a bit arbitrary and tied to the amount of funding available year by year. The ratio of what can be provided by way of supply when compared to the demand can change simply based on the amount of money available in a given year, which is an indication that the supply side of the equation is less tied to data. Mr. Breiland said the statement was a fair one, but it stresses the need to make sure the amount of money allocated to the TFP is equal to accommodating the amount of demand expected to occur. The implementation of the specific supply is not arbitrarily determined by how much in a given year is allocated to different projects. There is a thoughtful process that goes into what investments should be made in a given year.

Vice-Chair Stash said her conclusion was that supply is not really defined by the city, rather the city defines how much money is available to spend and it is divided and used as a ratio against the demand generated by new construction. Mr. Breiland countered that supply is in fact defined by the city, but it is done using a 12-year window. The total supply is not arbitrary, and the projects selected for implementation are intentionally chosen through the TFP and the

CIP.

Commissioner Ting asked how many mobility units the TFP will create is calculated. Mr. Breiland suggested that rather than looking at how many mobility units are created, the focus should be on how mobility is accommodated as described in the MMLOS performance metrics. Ideally, the supply for each mode is huge, far outweighing the demand. The focus is on how many person trips are accommodated at the MMLOS performance outcomes level.

Commissioner Ting stated that there is a number that must be generated from the TFP. The formula requires determining the number of mobility units of supply. He said the background information shared with the Commission states that the system of transportation projects from the TFP constitutes the supply the city determines to be appropriate to accommodate the demand generated by new growth. He asked if that means by definition building out the TFP would satisfy all the demands of new growth. Mr. Breiland said the short answer is yes. He said building out the TFP as defined will achieve the MMLOS outcomes that were identified by the mix of projects and the development that is forecast to occur over the TFP timeframe. So long as the TFP is being built out, the city will always comply with concurrency.

Vice-Chair Stash asked if TMP/TDM items such as vans provided by companies will be included in the calculations such that they will actually be showing a reduction in demand. Mr. Breiland said they will appear in the calculations either as a reduction in demand or an addition to the supply. At the end of the day, the result is the same.

Commissioner Beason thanked staff and the consultant for providing a clear presentation of the proposed approach.

Commissioner Ting stated that the city will by definition always be concurrent by determining that the TFP will have projects sufficient to meet the demand. He said it will be important to tie that to the forecast and the outcomes of the projects being built. On the transit side, for example, the number of buses on the streets is outside the control of the city. The city can control other elements, including the experience and comfort of facilities, but at the end of the day it will be important to consider whether or not people will choose to take the bus given a number of factors. Careful consideration will need to be given to the outcomes of facilities focused on experience and comfort, especially where there are simply not enough buses running. Concurrency is intended to ensure that public facilities and services are adequate to serve new development at the time of occupancy without decreasing service levels below locally established minimum standards. That outcome should be given the focus. Additionally, individual regions of the city should be considered than looking at Bellevue as a whole in terms of mobility unit calculations and performance. Different parts of Bellevue have different land uses and thus different mobility requirements. Breaking up the city for purposes of performance monitoring would be good, and the metrics for each area should be appropriate to the land uses in each area. Finally, utilization should be taken into account. Shifting away from travel by SOV to other modes makes sense and having metrics with concurrency that pushes toward that goal will benefit the city. He said he favors the idea of building a minimally complete bicycle network and then work to expand it, ensuring great utilization of what gets built.

Commissioner Klutznick noted the many data points that go into such work. He voiced concern about the city giving consideration to decreasing the amount of parking in new developments and suggested the system should have some flexibility built in to allow for the fact that many commuters will continue to use their cars and need to park them. A clear understanding is

needed for how all the new officer workers coming to Bellevue will utilize the available transportation options.

Vice-Chair Stash noted her support for the overall multimodal concurrency philosophy. She said there will be times in addition to peak commute hours when people will be out and about, and she emphasized the critical nature of getting networks completed for bicycles and pedestrians.

Commissioner Ting agreed the city should do all it can to get high-tech companies to encourage their employees to walk and bike more. Increasing utilization of the various systems will be critical and that could involve working with other commissions. As the facilities are built out, it will be necessary to make sure businesses are truly incentivized to use them. He agreed with the need to complete systems so that people can actually bike or walk; until the systems are complete, they will not be fully usable. He said he would like to see a comparison of the Bellingham and Redmond multimodal concurrency approaches along with an outline of the pros and cons of each.

Commissioner Beason said as a resident and someone who works in Downtown Bellevue, she also has concerns about the parking ratios, particularly in the face of having 35,000 additional people moving into the area over the next three to five years. She agreed new businesses will need to be incentivized to get their employees to walk, bike or use transit.

Mr. Breiland said he and staff had jotted down notes to follow up on. He said the emphasis on outcomes to help identify projects came through loud and clear. He suggested it might help to go through a proof of concept exercise with the Commission to show how desired outcomes are baked into the process. The staff have had a number of conversations about transportation demand management and tying it to multimodal concurrency. The city has done a remarkable job over the years of managing the amount of vehicle traffic going into and out of the Downtown in spite of all the growth, and that certainly needs to continue going forward.

Vice-Chair Stash asked for a demonstration of the calculator. Mr. Breiland pulled up the concurrency tracking tool and entered some sample Bellevue projects to show how the spreadsheet works. He then explained the results indicating the number of mobility units each project would consume. The tool would be applied to every project seeking a permit. The resulting mobility units consumed must be matched with units of supply from the built and committed transportation system. The individual roadway, pedestrian and bicycle projects would need to be proximate to where the new development is planned. Concurrency becomes the simple calculation of mobility units added to the system and then consumed. The difficult part is in determining what is the right network to build.

Commissioner Ting asked how the number of mobility units of supply is calculated. Mr. Breiland said the number of person trips generated over the growth horizon is calculated along with the dollar cost of building the transportation improvements for the same horizon. The number of mobility units per dollar is a simple calculation. Commissioner Ting asked what steps would need to be taken if the day before the spreadsheet was set to roll out it was discovered that the budget would be cut by a very large amount. He asked if the number of concurrency mobility units would remain the same. Mr. Breiland said the budget reduction would spark a discussion as to whether or not the performance of the transportation system would be such that the number of mobility units could still be accommodated. If the answer is yes, then the cost column would change but the mobility units of demand would remain the same.

Mr. McDonald pointed out that the city is not starting from zero in terms of the number of mobility available in that there is existing capacity in the system. That cushion allows for some flexibility in revenue availability while accommodating the forecast growth. Mr. Breiland concurred and said in the more detailed documentation the concept of a running start is outlined. He said there are two ways to account for the existing capacity. It could be built into the calculator. The other way is to focus on the outcomes and the question of whether or not the city is generally meeting its congestion thresholds and is building out the bicycle network at a pace that will get to a full system in a reasonable amount of time.

Commissioner Beason asked if there is a BKR dashboard. Mr. Breiland said part of the project scope is to build a dashboard. Mr. McDonald added that the city monitors through the BKR cast model many of the performance metrics being discussed.

Answering a question asked by Vice-Chair Stash, Mr. Breiland pointed out that the total number of mobility units is the total forecasted person trips generated over the planning horizon. The budget numbers are independent. The size of the budget, however, should be informed by whether or not the system is performing as desired. It should not be possible to slash the budget and still achieve concurrency.

Commissioner Ting said at some point he would like to get feedback from the Commission and the staff on the points he previously raised. Mr. McDonald noted that one of the questions raised was how the transit service level that is not controlled by the city contributes to utilization of the system the city relies on. He said the BKR Cast model does take into consideration service levels for transit and generates a forecast. Another point raised was the issue of mobility units of supply being somewhat related to the location in which the mobility units of demand are created. That is a reasonable expectation especially for pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are closely tied to the type of land use they directly support. The issue related to the metrics for transit speed and reliability, vehicle corridor travel speeds, and specific intersection performance may occur beyond the location where the trips are generated. It will be necessary to look at the network and how the trips are distributed throughout the city, with an eye on identifying those locations where there may be performance deficiencies. The issue of shifting from the SOV mode to other modes, especially for commuters, will rely in making sure the transportation system will accommodate all modes in terms of utilization. Commissioner Ting said he was not suggesting that utilization is the be-all end-all. There is a clear need to look at completeness, safety and equity along with other inputs. The best facilities will not be those that are completely congested, nor will they be the ones that are completely unused. The aim should be to find the sweet spot.

Commissioner Ting said the process outlined is very reasonable in terms of project selection. He said the question in his mind was whether the concurrency standard should be tied to the specified targets, an approach that would create some level of accountability. Mr. Breiland said the Bellingham approach utilizes specific concurrency standards for auto congestion, transit capacity, and ped/bike network completeness. While on its face the approach offers some transparency, the approach is not being recommended for Bellevue. The transit agency serving Bellingham recently cut back significantly on their transit services as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. While it is true that ridership has decreased, the standard dictates that a certain number of bus seats per hour will cross certain thresholds. The result is that technically Bellingham is not meeting its concurrency requirements. The more hard standards there are, the less the likelihood of being able to control all of them, and where any one of them hits a snag, the outcome could be the denial of building permits. The mobility units approach

simplifies everything into an easy-to-track number for purposes of concurrency. Commissioner Ting said at the end of the day there should be a correlation between being concurrent and the quality of service of the transit system meeting the expectations of the residents, which lends itself more to an outcome-based system than to a budgetary system. Mr. Breiland said Redmond's system is outcome based. The outcome that is most pertinent to most people is the one related to traffic congestion. Redmond's comprehensive plan spells out how much traffic congestion can be tolerated, and the city has been able to maintain above the line. Redmond does not, however, have a standard that calls for maintaining a specific PM peak hour speed on arterials, but the city does have a desired target. What is acceptable to a given city will vary community to community.

Vice-Chair Stash voiced concern about setting up a definition of success in such a way that there can be no failure. That would feel like gaming the system. Mr. Breiland said every city in the state, with the exception of two, has a concurrency objective focused on keeping an eye on the performance of the system but not allowing it to fail. It is simply unacceptable to most communities to have to deny building permits. Seattle used to have a system under which it was mathematically impossible to fail. The courts upheld the system. While most cities do not want to face a concurrency failure, they still want to have defined performance metrics aimed at making sure the system works well.

Vice-Chair Stash said it was her assumption that the city could not allow a particular project to go forward should it decide to do so. Department of Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis said the city would not want to deny development. Under the current concurrency model, things are almost to the point where the city will have to start denying permits.

Mr. McDonald said the concurrency issue would be before the Commission again on March 11. He added that the Traffic Standards Code is where the regulatory provisions for concurrency is housed. If the definition of concurrency is to be changed, the Traffic Standards Code will need to be amended, which would also trigger the need to amend the specific policies in the Comprehensive Plan. That process involves having the Council initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment, with a follow-up study, public hearing and a recommendation by the Planning Commission for action by the Council. The schedule calls for the Council to initiate the Comprehensive Plan amendment on April 5.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 14, 2021

Absent any objection, the minutes 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 briefly reviewed the Commission's calendar and upcoming agenda items.

13. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Beason and the motion carried unanimously.

Vice-Chair Stash adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date