



Bellevue Planning Commission

April 14, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Amend the Comprehensive Plan policies, narrative and maps in the Transportation Element related to multimodal concurrency and repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List in Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

STAFF CONTACT(S)

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POLICY ISSUES

There are two separate areas of transportation policy that would be amended in this CPA:

- Mobility Implementation Plan (MIP): policy amendments will be recommended by the Transportation Commission regarding a multimodal approach to transportation concurrency. Multimodal concurrency would replace the vehicle-focused concurrency metrics and standards embedded in Transportation Element policies, narrative and maps.
- Comprehensive Transportation Project List (CTPL): Created in 2015 in the major update of the Comprehensive Plan, the CTPL consolidated nearly 800 transportation projects from subarea plans and transportation facility plans spread throughout the Comprehensive Plan. To add, change or repeal a CTPL project requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment. A project list outside of the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), is recommended by staff as the “inventory” of all transportation projects to replace the CTPL. The TIP is the first step toward project funding and implementation through the Transportation Facilities Plan and the Capital Investment Program Plan.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY

The April 14, 2021 study session item will review the scope of work and the intended policy outcomes as directed by the City Council for the Mobility Implementation Plan. A specific policy recommendation from the Transportation Commission regarding multimodal concurrency (a component of the Mobility Implementation Plan) is forthcoming.

It is a recommendation from the Transportation Department staff, in collaboration with Community Department and the City Attorney’s Office to repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List (CTPL) from Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, and to move projects to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) a document that is updated annually with a recommendation from the Transportation Commission (after study sessions and a public hearing) and adoption by the City Council.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Mobility Implementation Plan - Multimodal Concurrency

On January 4, 2021, the City Council approved a consultant contract and scope of work for the Mobility

Implementation Plan (MIP). The MIP is envisioned as a planning document that will articulate a safe, equitable, and sustainable multimodal approach to mobility in Bellevue. The MIP will broaden the City's vehicle-focused transportation concurrency standards to include a multimodal approach and it will embed transportation system performance metrics and thresholds for all modes into long-range planning and implementation. A new multimodal approach to concurrency would match the "demand" for mobility from new development with the "supply" of transportation facilities, thereby ensuring that projects for all modes are identified, prioritized and implemented to accommodate and support planned growth. A Comprehensive Plan amendment for 2021 to embed multimodal concurrency policy in the Transportation Element is a component of the Transportation Commission's current work on the MIP.

On April 5, 2021, the City Council unanimously approved a motion to initiate the recommended multimodal concurrency Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Transportation Commission Prior Work

Through work on the 2015 major update to the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Commission noted the multiple benefits that would accrue if transportation concurrency metrics and standards were expanded to include all modes, and if the several adopted modal plans were better integrated with each other and with land use plans. Thus, the Commission recommended policies for the Transportation Element that set into motion a series of studies that have led to the initiation of the Mobility Implementation Plan. The Commission studied transportation concurrency best practices and prepared a report on Multimodal Level-of-Service (MMLOS) Metrics, Standards and Guidelines in 2017. In the 2019 transmittal to the City Council of the Transportation Facilities Plan, the Transportation Commission reiterated the need for and benefit of a Transportation Master Plan (aka: Mobility Implementation Plan).

Transportation Concurrency Policy – Amendments

Washington state law, through the Growth Management Act (GMA), requires local jurisdictions to ensure the planned transportation system will accommodate planned land use. Rather than prescribe a universal approach, the GMA allows jurisdictions to describe and establish the transportation concurrency metrics and standards.

In the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, policies provide direction on transportation concurrency and define the metrics and standards the City uses. Existing policy describes a vehicular approach to define the performance of the transportation system. A multimodal approach would consider the performance of the system for people walking, riding a bicycle, or taking transit.

The Transportation Commission previously identified metrics, standards, and guidelines for all modes (in the MMLOS report in 2017). Ongoing work on the Mobility Implementation Plan/Multimodal Concurrency is preparing the Commission for a recommendation for a multimodal approach to concurrency. While the Transportation Commission has not yet articulated specific policy amendments, it is intended that an expanded definition of transportation concurrency will include all modes, thus Transportation Element policy amendments will be needed to implement multimodal concurrency.

The Transportation Commission is expected to recommend amendments for Transportation Element policies in Q2 2021. In addition, the maps and the "narrative" language in the Transportation Element reflects the vehicle performance approach and these would also be amended to reflect multimodal concurrency.

The Comprehensive Transportation Project List

The Comprehensive Transportation Project List was developed by the Transportation Commission as part of the 2015 update to the Comprehensive Plan. The six transportation facility plans and projects in several subarea plans scattered within the Comprehensive Plan cumulatively contained 781 projects, many of which were completed, outdated, redundant, conflicting with one another, or inconsistent with current land use planning. Subsequent transportation planning work –for example, the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Eastgate Transportation Study – added new projects to the CTPL through amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Initially, the consolidation of these project lists made it possible to repeal completed or outdated projects, and eliminate redundancies and conflicts that existed between the project descriptions in different plans. Now that all the projects have been consolidated and the CTPL is up to date, this project list may be moved outside of the Comprehensive Plan to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project list for which an required annual update keeps the TIP current.

On April 5, 2021, the City Council unanimously approved a motion to initiate the recommended repeal of the Comprehensive Transportation Project List from the Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Improvement Program

The six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) serves as a project inventory and a draft work plan for the development of the local transportation system. The primary importance of the Bellevue TIP is that, in most instances, projects must be included on this list to be eligible for state and federal grants.

Unlike the city's funded Capital Investment Program Plan and the revenue-constrained 12-year Transportation Facilities Plan, the Bellevue TIP is not "revenue constrained," nor is the list of projects prioritized in any way. The city may include all projects that it would choose to implement within the six-year time frame if funding was available. Projects are typically created through long-range planning with the community focused on specific geographic areas such as subareas or in transportation corridors.

The TIP is required by state law (RCW 35.77.010), a mandate for local jurisdictions to annually adopt and submit to the state a six-year program of transportation improvements. The state Department of Transportation and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) use local TIPs to coordinate the transportation programs of local jurisdictions with those of regional agencies. The PSRC monitors local TIPs for projects of regional significance, which need to be modeled for regional air quality conformity with federal standards, and to track projects supported by federal funds.

TIP Annual Update

Each year, the Transportation Commission recommends a TIP to the City Council. To prepare its recommendation, the Commission considers that some projects have been completed (these are recommended to be deleted) some projects have been identified through long-range planning (these are recommended to be added (an example is the Eastgate Transportation Study), and some project descriptions are changed through planning and engineering. The required annual update is presented for a public hearing before the Commission makes a final recommendation. This process occurs in Q1 through Q3 of each year, so the project list in the TIP stays current. The Transportation Commisison held a public hearing on the update to the TIP on April 8, 2021.

The TIP update essentially duplicates the CTPL, however the TIP is more responsive to changing circumstances because it is required to be updated annually. In contrast, the process to update the CTPL requires an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan – a process that may be done annually, but that requires several additional steps, including initiation by the City Council, and study sessions, public hearing and recommendation from the Planning Commission.

It is because of this extra, and essentially duplicative process, that staff recommends repealing the CTPL and using the TIP as the one aggregated transportation project list for Bellevue.

NEXT STEPS

Multimodal Concurrency

The Transportation Commission is preparing a recommendation for multimodal concurrency as part of the larger Mobility Implementation Plan. Discussion of Transportation Element policy recommendations is expected to commence at study sessions in May and conclude with a policy recommendation in July.

Comprehensive Transportation Project List

The staff recommendation to repeal the Comprehensive Transportation Project List will proceed directly to the Planning Commission as the Transportation Commission has not been tasked with a role in this process.

Planning Commission study sessions and public hearings will be scheduled to consider both of the recommended Comprehensive Plan Amendments and the Commission will prepare a final recommendation (expected July, 2021).

City Council action by ordinance on the Planning Commission recommendations (expected late fall, 2021).

ATTACHMENTS

1. None