

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES

June 24, 2021  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Marciante, Commissioners Beason, Kurz, Rebhuhn, Stash, Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Breiland, Fehr & Peers

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.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

Assistant Transportation Director Paula Stevens explained that Department of Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis was taking care of a personal matter and was not able to attend the meeting.

A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Principal Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald reported that he had received only one nomination for the position of Chair and one for the position of Vice Chair. No additional nominations for either position were made and Mr. McDonald explained that a vote would not be necessary and declared Chair Marciante and Vice Chair Stash reelected for another year.

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

Chair Marciante reported that she represented the Transportation Commission at the Planning Commission's June 23 meeting in presenting the recommendations for the multimodal concurrency policies. The presentation was well received and the Planning Commissioners were very thoughtful in the questions they asked. The thorough work of the Transportation Commission was praised by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Stash noted that she and Mr. McDonald provided a briefing to the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce to let them know about the Mobility Implementation Plan that the Commission is working on. Commissioner Stash noted that a comment letter from both organizations for will be forwarded to the Planning Commission ahead of their July 28 public hearing on the policies.

Mr. McDonald commended both the Chair and the Vice Chair for their work with the Bellevue Downtown Association and Bellevue Chamber of Commerce committees, and with the Planning Commission on June 23. The presentations were very articulate and accurately conveyed the complex and important work being done by the Commission.

## 5. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. McDonald reported that the Utilities department is working on a watershed management plan for the city. He said he is serving as a member of the staff core team for the project. The intent is to consider the two major watersheds in the city, Coal Creek and Kelsey Creek, and to conduct an assessment of existing conditions in both. The goal is to establish metrics and targets for the functions of each stream as well as a long-term strategy for meeting the targets. The report received from the consultant team with respect to the Coal Creek watershed highlighted the fact that much of it is intact and has functions and values that support a wide range of fish and wildlife. The report also noted, however, that there are some legacy problems, including runoff and erosion issues having to do with the area's history of coal mines. The other issue with the Coal Creek watershed has to do with the development pattern that occurred under King County in the 1950s and 1960s when much of the lower part of the watershed was developed. No attempt was made at the time to provide any water quality or quantity treatment for storm water runoff from roads, driveways and rooftops, thus all of that water goes untreated and undetained into the stream system. The focus will turn next to the issues and challenges facing the Kelsey Creek watershed, which drains 40 percent of the city.

One of the supplemental metrics for the Mobility Implementation Plan will be focused on water quality and quantity related to stormwater runoff from streets. Over the long term the focus will be on reducing the quantity and improving the quality of the runoff from streets before it goes into the streams. He said Transportation will be working with the watershed management team to address the targets that are expressed in the Environmental Stewardship Plan and to craft performance metrics and targets that may be included in the Mobility Implementation Plan.

With respect to the growth forecasts for the city of Bellevue, Mr. McDonald reported that the Growth Management Planning Council recently released recommendations to be tested in the Mobility Implementation Plan and the Transportation Facilities Plan. That analysis will take place over the summer months and the results will be reported to the Commission in the fall.

## 6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

## 7. STUDY SESSION

### A. Mobility Implementation Plan

Mr. McDonald said public involvement is an element of the Mobility Implementation Plan the people have been craving. He noted that to date the Commission has done all the work in

hosting study sessions and taking public comment about the Mobility Implementation Plan. Going forward there will be a more outward-facing public involvement process. The Mobility Implementation Plan website is in place and is constantly being updated. The July issues of *It's Your City* and the *Neighborhood News* will include an article about the Mobility Implementation Plan work. Staff and the consultant team are working on a fact sheet that will summarize the work involved in creating the Mobility Implementation Plan. At the end of July a community questionnaire will be made available online and it will be focused on gaining the sense of the community relative to how people use the transportation system is and how they would like it to function in the future. The questions will be crafted to yield information the Commission can use in putting the finishing touches on the Mobility Implementation Plan in the fall. There will be continued meetings with other city boards and commissions to keep them informed, as well as with the Chamber of Commerce, the Bellevue Downtown Association and other groups and organizations.

Chris Breiland, consultant project manager with Fehr & Peers, said the work to date has focused on the pedestrian, bicycle and transit modes. The more difficult element is the vehicle mode and travel congestion. Questions have been raised as to whether the proposed shift to a multimodal approach to concurrency is consistent with what the Growth Management Act (GMA) asks cities to do relative to vehicle congestion. The GMA is state law that defines the relationship between land use and transportation planning, and it states that jurisdictions must implement multimodal transportation improvements concurrent with development. The law came from concerns raised in the 1980s relative to growth taking place without paying attention to supplying sufficient transportation infrastructure to support the growth. While the law requires the building of transportation system improvements concurrent with development, it leaves open exactly how jurisdictions are to accomplish the task. The law says jurisdictions must adopt a performance standard and it specifically calls out level of service, and says there must be ordinances that support the concurrency standards. Where a concurrency standard is not met, the development application must be denied.

Continuing Mr. Breiland said sometimes lost in the conversation is that transportation concurrency should encourage sufficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with city and county comprehensive plans. While there have been comments made that transportation concurrency must adopt levels of service akin to automobiles, the GMA encourages a multimodal planning approach to concurrency. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) has language that is very much in line with what the Commission has been doing. It says that cities and counties may select different ways to measure travel performance and may choose to focus on the total multimodal supply of infrastructure available for use during a peak or off-peak period. That clarifies that the definition of level of service does not need to match the Highway Capacity Manual definition of level of service and indeed can simply be whether or not enough supply of infrastructure is being built. The WAC goes on to state that multimodal level of service methodologies and standards should consider the needs of travelers using the four major modes of travel (auto, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian), their impacts on each other as they share the street or intersection, and their mode-specific requirements for street and intersection design and operation. The language clearly supports the work previously done by the Commission in 2014 and 2017, and sets up the work currently being done by the Commission.

Mr. Breiland said the context of all the recent transportation planning work done by the city has been the idea of a layered network, which is what the 2017 MMLOS document was based on. The Mobility Implementation Plan brings it all together. In terms of transportation planning, the notion is to look at the context starting with land use as a fundamental driver,

which is what the Growth Management Act directs in stating that transportation systems should be planned in service of the land use growth to be accommodated. The layers will look different in different parts of the city because the land use context is different. The layered network involves a very transparent look at multimodal priority. The shift from a unimodal approach to a multimodal approach brings into stark relief the issue of how to accommodate all modes across the entire network. Where tradeoffs are required, the need for them should be clear.

The performance metrics for the Mobility Implementation Plan are derived from the Commission's 2017 work on the MMLOS Metrics, Standards and Guidelines report. For pedestrians, the metric is combined width of sidewalk and landscape buffer, and the frequency and treatment of arterial crossings. For bicycles the metric is focused on the level of traffic stress along corridors and at intersections. For transit the metric involves bus stop components and transit speed on the Frequent Transit Network between activity centers. For vehicles, the focus is on the V/C ratio at system intersections and corridor travel speed.

Under existing conditions, the key metric for vehicle LOS is the V/C standard that serves as the concurrency standard. In the denser parts of the city there is a lower V/C standard, and the lower-density parts of the city that have fewer modal opportunities have a higher V/C standard. The measurements are made at system intersections. The metrics are and targets are applied in the Mobility Management Areas (MMA). There are 14 MMAs across the city and 99 system intersections. The number of system intersections varies by MMA, from zero in MMA 14 to 15 in MMA 12. The V/C ratio is measured at each intersection, but the standard is an average set for each MMA. The congestion allowance approach allows a set number of intersections within an MMA to exceed the V/C ratio for that MMA.

The Commission's recommendation for MMLOS introduced the metric of corridor travel speed. Both the V/C ratios and the corridor travel speeds are measured during the evening peak period. Both are an attempt to measure driver comfort.

Mr. Breiland offered a proposal to simplify the 14 MMAs structure by establishing seven Performance Management Areas, an approach that is consistent with the recommendations of the 2017 MMLOS report. There are effectively three bands of V/C ratio standards in the current system which could be collapsed into a smaller number of Performance Management Areas while retaining some granularity where most of the growth in the city is occurring. He noted that the initial proposal had the Wilburton Performance Management Area having a slightly lower V/C ratio than BelRed and Downtown. The proposal has since been updated to have the V/C ratio for the Wilburton Performance Management Area match BelRed and Downtown. That recommendation initially came from the Wilburton Commercial Area Citizen Advisory Committee. Additionally, the East Main transit-oriented development area has been added to the Wilburton Performance Management Area given that the area is recommended to have densities akin to recommendation for Wilburton. The Wilburton and East Main areas are well-served by light rail. It is appropriate for the Factoria Performance Management Area to a lower V/C ratio than the PMAs that are well-served by multiple mode options, including light rail. Monitoring of all system intersections will continue across the city to identify congestion hotspots in the areas with the greatest traffic growth and the greatest traffic congestion.

Mr. Breiland said the idea of looking at corridor-based performance targets rather than geographically based targets was discussed and endorsed by the 2017 MMLOS report, but the concept was never fully developed. The idea is that it makes sense to evaluate bikes, transit and autos on a corridor basis given that people travel in linear fashion. For autos, corridor

performance was expressed as corridor travel speed.

Some corridors serve the activities going on in the dense activity centers, and some of these also happen to travel through residential areas. Where arterials traverse residential areas, the V/C standard reflects the residential area in which the intersection is located, not reflecting the fact that the corridor is actually serving dense urban parts of the city. The idea is to express corridor performance as a function of activity centers they serve. By way of example, Mr. Breiland noted that Bellevue Way serves the Downtown with connections to both SR 520 and I-90. The existing concurrency standard V/C in Downtown is 0.95, with a corresponding corridor travel speed of 0.75 to 0.5 times the typical urban travel speed, which would translate into six to nine miles per hour. However, to the north and south of the Downtown, the V/C performance target is 0.85 and the travel speed expectation increases to between 13 and 16 miles per hour. The actual travel speed for the north section of the corridor met that performance level, though the intersection with Northup Way can get congested. The south segment of the corridor, however, does not meet the target, particularly south of the 112th Avenue SE intersection Y.

Mr. Breiland said the staff proposal is to define a vehicle level of service performance target using a corridor-based approach rather than looking strictly within each Performance Management Areas. In the Bellevue Way example, given that the corridor serves to connect the Downtown urban center to the regional network, the corridor target should reflect that functionality. For corridors, the performance target would be informed by the PMA and all intersections and corridor segments would be evaluated against their targets. The performance target would be averaged over either the corridor functional group or the PMA.

Mr. Breiland said staff would be providing the existing conditions analysis of the V/Cs and corridor speeds at the July 8 Commission meeting, and then on July 22 the future forecasts for V/Cs and corridor speeds, all to set the stage for the recommending the V/C targets and the geographies for the Mobility Implementation Plan.

Commissioner Stash asked where the reference to typical urban travel speed came from. Mr. Breiland said the reference is from the Highway Capacity Manual. The graded levels of service A-D come from that manual. One of the metrics in the manual is how to evaluate the level of service for a suburban or urban arterial corridor that has traffic signals at closely-spaced intersections. The manual indicates that the typical arterial speed is about 40 percent of the posted speed limit under LOS D conditions, thus speeds would be 13 to 16 miles per hour for a corridor with a posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour.

Chair Marciante said ultimately people will just want to know how much time it will take them to travel a corridor. Mr. Breiland said that would be easy to calculate, both for existing conditions and projected conditions.

Commissioner Ting said he understood the concept of a corridor like Bellevue Way connecting the Downtown to I-90. He asked if the corridor approach will create a situation for people in the neighborhoods to experience more congestion or if there are facilities the city could put in place to make things more livable for those who happen to live adjacent to a corridor. Mr. Breiland said the answer lies in what target will be set for the corridors. In the Bellevue Way example as it goes through the Enatai neighborhood, keeping the green performance target would likely mean the roadway would need to be widened in order to meet the target. The target could be set in line with the notion of the corridor serving the Downtown, and the result will be more congestion and a performance target different from the neighborhood area. With

regard to the 148th Avenue corridor, he said it could be deemed a regional facility that is connecting Overlake and BelRed to I-90, while the 156th Avenue corridor could be designated green as it primarily serves residential neighborhoods. There would be implications to taking that approach, but it would be line with the regional nature of 148th Avenue and the more local nature of 156th Avenue.

Chair Marciante pointed out that under that assumption, congestion is a given and that the only available options are to widen the road or have more congestion. The city's focus is broader and looks at where the city should grow, and the conclusion reached is that growth should occur in concentrated areas in order to protect the low-density residential areas. That approach is creating significant strain in particular corridors. The Commission is not charged with making land use decisions, but the Commission needs to be aware of how land use decisions will impact traffic on the corridors. Mr. Breiland said as the city receives its new growth targets, it must make decisions about where to put it. While the Downtown has constrained corridors, the data suggests that from a transportation perspective it is the most efficient place to put growth because every new resident and job put there generates fewer auto trips than they would in other parts of the city.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked Mr. Breiland to expand on his comment that Factoria is being treated like Eastgate. Mr. Breiland said Factoria currently has a V/C ratio standard of 0.95, which is the same as the Downtown and BelRed. The proposal is to take a step back, recognize the Factoria will not have light rail by 2024, and also recognize that the modal connections and the intensity and density of the proposed land uses there is not similar to Downtown, Wilburton or BelRed. With fewer modal choices the implications for vehicle congestion are higher, more in line with Eastgate.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stash, Mr. Breiland pointed out that the V/C standard for each MMA is currently being met. However, looking forward there are challenges associated with meeting that concurrency standard without a lot of intersection and roadway work, or aggressive work in the transportation demand management arena.

Chair Marciante noted that corridor travel speed is not currently in the mix and asked how the targets might fare once they are established. Using the example of Bellevue Way, Mr. Breiland said the targets would not necessarily be set exactly the same as the Downtown but they would also not necessarily be assigned the residential area target. The V/C averaging could be done for the intersections along the corridor rather than in the specific residential areas versus the commercial areas. The intersections in the residential areas of corridors are impacted by the commercial areas and the proposal is that that should be recognized when setting the targets for the intersections on those types of corridors.

Commissioner Ting asked what correlation there is between the LOS C and D standards and the number of traffic light cycles a driver may wait through. Mr. Breiland stated that under LOS D a driver might occasionally miss one of the cycles. Drivers will pretty much always get through an intersection under LOS C conditions. Under LOS E conditions there is a pretty good chance a driver will miss the next signal, whereas LOS F could mean waiting more than one cycle.

Commissioner Ting asked why the focus should be on averaging intersections. Mr. Breiland said the proposal includes evaluating every intersection and using the resulting data to identify the problem areas and to inform what can be done about it. If every intersection is expected to meet a specific V/C target, specific actions would be required to be taken for every intersection

that fails to meet the target, whereas using averages along corridors or within geographic areas is a way of allowing for some intersections to be very congested so long as the corridor or area on the whole is functioning within the targets.

Commissioner Kurz said it was his understanding that each corridor would have its own standard and asked if the corridor will inherit the standard of the PMAs it connects or if each corridor would get its own standard. Using Bellevue Way as an example, Mr. Breiland noted that it can be split into a number of segments: SR-520 to NE 24th Street, NE 24th Street to NE 12th Street, NE 12th Street to Main Street and so forth. The idea would be for each segment to be assigned a target. All four of the segments could have a similar target, or the Downtown segment might have a slightly different target than the segments to the north and south of the Downtown. Setting residential area targets for the segments north and south of the Downtown would be difficult to maintain over time. Commissioner Kurz asked if the standards could be set as travel times. Mr. Breiland said they can be articulated as travel times. Commissioner Kurz said that approach would be easy for people to understand.

Chair Marciante suggested that all the technical talk about targets and standards feels like trying to gamify the system. She said the identified corridors are all very important. She said she would love to get away from the notion of targets and standards that will be hard to meet. If they are hard to meet, there is a transportation problem or a growth problem. She said she liked the concept of having travel time as the target for corridors because that is easy to understand. Drivers become stressed when they have to wait through more than one cycle at an intersection, so making sure intersections clear during each cycle is important. Residents exiting their neighborhoods onto corridors should be able to get out right away without experiencing any backups. There has been a lot of testimony from residents in the triangle between 112th Avenue SE, Bellevue Way and the Downtown who say they feel trapped when trying to get out. In setting targets, the impacts on the residential areas must be kept in mind. Solutions need to be identified that do not simply involve decreasing the level of service.

Commissioner Beason asked how all the current construction and the resulting re-routing going on will be addressed when developing the corridor approach. Mr. Breiland said the Commission will at a future meeting be presented with a forecast of future conditions to help determine which corridors should be given the most emphasis. It will not include a level of detail that tracks the current road closures and detours, which change over time. The data will show whether or not road configurations are going to change permanently, and what the travel patterns will be with more growth.

Commissioner Ting said he assumed growth over time will impact congestion on the corridors. The corridors pass through residential areas and in order to protect them the corridors will be allowed to be congested. Of more concern is preventing cut-through traffic for neighborhoods near the corridors. He referenced West Lake Sammamish Parkway where there are no system intersections and no signals, and noted that traffic on the roadway during peak hours is close to that on 148th Avenue. He asked how West Lake Sammamish Parkway will be measured as a corridor and how it will compare with other corridors. Mr. Breiland said the corridors defined in the proposal emerged from the currently system intersection locations. The 2017 MMLOS report said the corridors for arterial travel speeds are those that connect system intersections. That does not mean that as part of developing the Mobility Implementation Plan that that approach cannot be amended. There is data for West Lake Sammamish Parkway, but the reason it is not currently a corridor is because it does not fit the definitions from the 2017 report.

Chair Marciante suggested the selected corridors should be based on the volume they carry, not on the system intersections they connect.

Mr. Breiland said the point made regarding the perception of gaming the system is valid. He said targets should not be set just so that they can be met. Targets should be realistic, affordable and achievable. If a target cannot be met because of cost or other implications, it should be recognized as being a false target. There are many ways the city can work to manage traffic, but unless the city gets far more aggressive in terms of transportation management, meeting the targets will be difficult.

Chair Marciante stressed the need for transparency in terms of sacrifices, be it continued growth or traffic congestion. Land use choices will drive making certain sacrifices. Targets that can be met should be set, but it should be clear just what the tradeoffs will be.

Commissioner Ting asked if the current 2021 concurrency document readily accessible online. Mr. McDonald said the 2020 concurrency report is online. Chair Marciante added that the latest documents, including drafts and presentation materials, are available on the Mobility Implementation Plan website. Mr. McDonald added that as yet there is no 2021 concurrency report.

Commissioner Stash asked if there is an industry rule of thumb for what V/C ratio tends to push drivers to use side streets. Mr. Breiland said that generally occurs at in the LOS E and LOS F range. V/C ratios in the 0.95 range or an urban travel speed that is less than half of the typical urban speed represent conditions that may trigger cut-through traffic.

Commissioner Rebhuhn said someone driving from Eastgate to Downtown Bellevue will, as soon as they go over the I-90 overpass and see a line of brake lights from people feeding onto I-405, likely will take 148th Avenue SE or jump onto I-90 and drive to Bellevue Way. He asked if any improvements to the freeways will be factored in. Mr. Breiland said the express toll lane project on southbound I-405 is under construction and the resulting capacity it is built into the forecast. The same is true for the East Link and Bellevue Connect projects.

Commissioner Kurz expressed an interest in seeing the community questionnaire before it gets released. Mr. McDonald said he would share an advance copy of the survey with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Ting referenced the request of Wilburton to have a commercial rather than a residential classification and asked what their reasoning was. Mr. McDonald explained that the Wilburton CAC considered two issues: the land use vision and the transportation system to support the land use vision. On the land use side, their focus was on a pattern similar to that in BelRed with mixed uses in medium to high-rise developments. Relative to transportation, they relied on light rail along with a network of streets, bicycle facilities and sidewalks. In recommending that the level of service standard be changed from 0.90 to 0.95 the CAC was acknowledging that in order to achieve the lower V/C ratio roadways and intersections would have to be wider, which the CAC felt would be incompatible with the land use character they envisioned.

With regard to the next steps, Mr. McDonald noted that there will be two Commission meetings in July and none in August. The July meetings will involve further discussion of the concepts and a review of the available data on which to develop recommendations for performance targets. The issue of equity will also be discussed along with some supplemental



environmental metrics.

Commissioner Stash urged the Commission to be cautious about saying it wants to pick targets just because they can be met. Targets should be chosen in line with making the experience of living in and driving through Bellevue the best possible. Exceeding a target is a clear indication that something needs to be done, which could mean adding capacity to corridors and intersections by adding projects to the Transportation Facilities Plan. It would be doing the city a disservice to go into the exercise saying only targets that can be met will be selected. That would be the definition of gaming the system.

Commissioner Beason agreed. She stressed the need to put measurable targets in place, but also stressed the need to develop a framework that people can relate to. Traffic patterns change based on the decisions people make for various reasons, and current patterns may be very different from what they will be in the future.

Commissioner Ting offered his support for the comments of Commissioner Stash. He agreed that targets should be set based on experience. Not meeting a target is a flag highlighting the need to have a conversation. The public needs to understand that addressing transportation is difficult and that the city has a plan to address a target that is not met.

Chair Marciante said targets allow for some leeway, but at the end of the day collectively they add up to a standard. Setting targets will need to be done realistically, which will involve some hard conversations about the tradeoffs.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 27, 2021

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 took a moment to review with the Commission the upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Marciante adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

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Secretary to the Transportation Commission

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Date