

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 14, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Hybrid Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Stash, Vice Chair Helland, Commissioners Kurz, Rebhuhn

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Marciante, Commissioner Ting

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Magill

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Andrew Singelakis, Michael Ingram, Department of Transportation; Justin Panganiban, Gwen Rousseau, Kate Nesse, Department of Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Nieuwenhuis

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Marciante, who arrived at 6:31 p.m., Commissioner Rebhuhn, who arrived at 6:52 p.m., and Commissioner Magill who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Principal Planner Kevin McDonald noted the receipt of a few written communications from the public regarding the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, all of which were forwarded to the Commissioners. Communications were also received regarding Bike Bellevue.

Charlie Bowman spoke expressed concern over the feasibility of the BelRed street grid. The six-acre site north of the 130th light rail station stands to lose nearly half of its development capacity under the current BelRed street grid plan. The concern is shared by the BelRed Property Committee, a collection of landowners totaling some 135 acres in the BelRed subarea who are disproportionately affected by the current street grid plans. The existing grid will never be built out in its entirety given that doing so would cannibalize individual sites, split property lines, dead-end into critical areas and streams. In many cases it is simply impractical and not proportional to the development impact. The staff were thanked for recognizing the issues with the current grid and for proposing policy changes aimed at alleviating the issues.

The fear is that the policies do not go far enough, which could mean that many parcels will go undeveloped, and any hope of a decent grid will be unattained. At best there will be a cobbled together grid of half streets and dead-ends that will remain uncomplete for the next 30 years. At worst, countless parcels will never redevelop and the admirable housing production goals of the Comprehensive Plan will not be met. The policies should recognize the constraints of the existing grid and provide clear guidance and ample flexibility on a site-by-site basis. A good start would be to remove the phrase “limited flexibility” from S-BR-81 in favor of simply calling for flexibility. It would be better to simply remove the existing street grid map and replace it with clear connectivity goals, block length standard and other priorities that can be adapted in flexible ways to specific projects based on feasibility and site constraints.

Andrew Coates spoke representing KG Investment Properties, owner of the property at 600 116th Avenue NE, voiced a strong endorsement of the staff recommendations for the Wilburton policy updates. The multimodal connections that will be happening with Eastrail and the Grand Connection are exciting and will lead to the creation of a world-class destination. The multimodal focus is good, and NE 6th Street should terminate at 116th Avenue NE.

Charles Prestrud with the Washington Policy Center said the primary concern is that the proposed policies do not provide clear and consistent guidance for how the city intends to address the growing travel demand on city streets. TR-50 directs the city to provide an arterial system that supports local and regional mobility, but the forecasts show very serious peak hour congestion in the years ahead. TR-56 opens the door to the conversion of city streets to other uses, but is not clear about how that important decision will be made. The Growth Management Act provides guidance for city transportation plans and it specifies peak hour capacity performance standards. In contrast, using a 24-hour measure of capacity would obscure the very problem that needs to be addressed. A performance measure based on peak demand would also be consistent with TR-8, which specifies peak periods. TR-56 should be revised to specify the conversion of travel lanes to other uses only when there is peak hour capacity.

Vic Bishop spoke representing the Eastside Transportation Association and noted having earlier in the day submitted a letter articulating the organization’s position on several transportation policies. The BKR travel forecast model is very clear that the existing and projected travel in Bellevue includes at least 75 percent of all trips being made by car. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan policies is to guide the development of a multimodal transportation system to accommodate all trips, including those by car, as well as transit, pedestrian and bicycle trips. The capacity of the street system needs to be increased to carry more cars with less congestion while improving other modes of travel, and the policies should recognize that. The ETA recommends that the mobility management and technology section should be moved to the front of the transportation section, and the existing TR-2 policy should be made the first policy. ETA supports adding “during the peak hour” to TR-56 in evaluating when to convert an existing travel lane. The organization also supports removing “optimize the person throughput” concept as unmanageable, and adding the concept of projected excess vehicle capacity in addition to existing capacity. A new policy should be added relative to proportional funding of the CIP and TFP based on the existing and projected modal use of the system, while recognizing that the city has no responsibility to implement transit service provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit. Therefore, TR-127 should be deleted.

John Sulanis, who lives and works in Bellevue, spoke in support of Bike Bellevue and reported having biked to attend an event in BelRed the previous day where upon arrival it was found that the parking lot was full. Those who drove their cars admitted having to have parked a long

way away. At a BelRed restaurant with friends after the event it was discovered that even at 9:00 p.m. there were four bikes parked near the front door taking up less space than a single car parking spot would require. There is a clear camaraderie of the bike community around their needs. Adding a bike lane to Bel-Red Road would add more than just a commute route, it would offer a means to various destinations. The speaker noted having learned about various businesses simply by biking in the city, including a table tennis club next to Northup Way and a bakery off of 140th Avenue NE. Biking affords one the opportunity to get to know the city better and the businesses in it. Multiple studies have shown that bike lanes increase economic benefits. The Commissioners were urged to listen to the people of Bellevue and start the Bike Bellevue pilot process by putting in high-quality facilities in place on roads like Bel-Red Road, 140th Avenue NE and NE 12th Street.

Ms. Michelle Wannamaker, an Eastgate resident, stressed the need to have the Comprehensive Plan written in a manner the general public can understand. Attendees at a recent Bridle Trails Community Club meeting were asked if they knew what multimodal means. Of the 60 in attendance, only about five raised their hands; most did not know the term. Transportation staff and the Commission seem to assume the new policies in the Transportation Element are written only for the Commission and staff to use. The fact is Bellevue has an actively engaged residential community which is reading and offering input on the policies. There is a major piece of the draft Transportation Element policies missing: a glossary to define acronyms and to explain things like the Mobility Implementation Plan. The public should not have to read all of the online transportation department reports, or attend numerous Commission meetings, in order to understand the meeting materials. The Commission should not vote to approve the draft policies until transportation staff drafts a glossary and the Commission reviews it. The speaker objected to the removal of TR-27. While the city may not have the ability to limit traffic growth, it does have the ability to change the behavior of drivers with traffic calming measures and speed reductions. The policy should be reworded.

Arman Bilge, a Bridle Trails resident who gets around entirely by bike, noted having previously invited the Commissioners and Councilmembers to go on a bike ride to see how critical it is to implement Bike Bellevue. The ride would follow major corridors as well as other parts of Bellevue's bike network. Those who participated included Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmember Hamilton along with about 20 members of the community. The route began at the Redmond Technology Station on the border of Bellevue and highlighted the investments in bike infrastructure Redmond has made. Upon entering Bellevue, however, the bike lanes disappear and the sidewalks narrow. The ride continued onto Bel-Red Road and passed uses such as a middle school, a church and community center that runs a food bank, all of which should be accessible by bike. The midpoint of the ride was Highland Park where there is a community center, but to get there requires traversing a very narrow sidewalk and cars zipping by. The route highlighted the importance of connectivity. Bike Bellevue is a good plan and adds needed missing connections to the network.

Gavin Johns, a Lake Hills resident and high school sophomore, voiced support for Bike Bellevue. The speaker reported being hit by a car while biking to school on a Thursday morning. Thankfully there were no major injuries and continuing on to school was possible. Just yesterday, ambulances were observed outside of the school just as school let out. They were responding to an accident in which a friend was hit by a car and transported to the hospital. Both incidents could have been avoided by having protected bike lanes and better bike infrastructure. More people can be encouraged to bike to school, and the city can work toward Vision Zero, only if there are good bike lanes.

Mariya Frost, transportation director for Kemper Development Company, said the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update is a huge undertaking and the thoughtful consideration of the Commission is appreciated. Policy TR-56 allows the city to repurpose travel lanes where it is determined that excess capacity exists, or where it is determined that doing so would optimize person throughput. The problem is that the two criteria are too vague and have already been applied in a way that is not consistent with existing city code and planning documents. Some controversy arose when the city used a 24-hour day to argue that Bellevue has excess lane capacity on its roads, dismissing the traffic congestion Bellevue residents and workers experience every day during peak hours. The Bellevue city code, the Mobility Implementation Plan and the Growth Management Act all use the PM Peak period in evaluating transportation systems, and the new approach was rightly questioned and rejected. To make the case for Bike Bellevue's road diet, the city averaged speed delays across all project corridors to say that the traffic impacts would be minimal. Ways to make additional traffic delays look less scary were sought, and off-peak traffic volumes and the 24-hour day was used to argue for excess capacity that does not exist when workers and families need it the most. TR-56 needs reasonable guardrails, but it is not too prescriptive. Unfortunately the staff have said they will not recommend a definition of excess capacity, though they do plan to define person throughput. There should be no harm in adding a PM Peak constraint. Staff should be urged to provide a definition on the record, including what time of day excess capacity would be evaluated, so the public can understand the intent of the policy. PM Peak language should be added to the policy, otherwise a definition of excess capacity should be added to the glossary.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn garbage rats, and called Councilmember Nieuwenhuis a dirty Nazi pig. Speaking to the Bellevue people about Bellevue's stupid, dirty fascist government. For the last three months, three public requests were made, first to know when Deputy Mayor Malakoutian became an American citizen.

Chair Stash interrupted to state that public testimony must be relevant to the work of the Commission and transportation issues.

Alex Tsimerman said the rules state that the public can speak about anything relating to the government of Bellevue. Chair Stash reiterated the need to speak about transportation issues only. Alex Tsimerman said continued interruption by the Chair would result in being sued in court and fined \$250. Chair Stash again reiterated that the rules for the Transportation Commission, as well as all other city boards and commissions, require public testimony to be pertinent to the body being addressed.

Vice Chair Helland raised as a point of order the fact that the rules are not made by the Commission, rather than by the City Council, adding that the speaker was not following the rules. Alex Tsimerman said is a wrong reading of the rules that are black and white.

Chair Stash directed Alex Tsimerman to focus on transportation issues or risk being asked to leave. Alex Tsimerman remarked on speaking to many commissions without anyone interrupting. The Chair is not smart enough to understand the rules and does not understand English. The speaker left the room.

Abraham Wilmer Martin, a third generation Bellevue resident, shared that while at Highland Middle School two friends were hit by cars on Bel-Red Road. There is a park across the road from the school that is not accessible by car, only by bike. Yet it is constantly empty because

Bel-Red Road is so unsafe for the very people who would want to use it. The students were not allowed to go to that park because so many kids had been hit trying to go there. For those saying the city cannot afford for various reasons to reduce the traffic on Bel-Red Road and put in traffic calming measures, the question is when should the school district move Highland Middle School. There are uses on Bel-Red Road that are not accessible by any means except by car. Those businesses suffer because kids cannot get to them without their parents, and the park suffers because kids cannot use it at all. It should be asked who is benefiting from having the extra traffic lane on Bel-Red Road given the level of congestion. If it is bike lanes causing the traffic, the bike lanes must be invisible. Bike lanes are not the cause of traffic problems. There is a lot of research into what causes traffic problems and bike lanes do not even make the top ten. Those arguing against bike lanes seem to believe they are entitled to be the primary users of the space that they are used to occupying. If it really comes down to a driver having two minutes added to their commute versus saving the lives of children, the answer should be clear.

Tyler Zender, who resides and works in the Spring District, voiced support for Bike Bellevue. There are a number of benefits associated with the project with respect to every climate and emissions goal at every level of government. The project is necessary. Much has been said about multimodal transportation, yet the predominant mode of travel is by car, which is hardly multimodal. Bike Bellevue is needed to move in the direction of being multimodal. With the coming of light rail and Eastrail, bike facilities will be needed to complete the last-mile trips. Bike Bellevue is basically pocket change in comparison to what it costs to bring vehicle travel lanes online.

Carl VanderHoek with VanderHoek Corporation in Old Bellevue, expressed concern about the staff-recommended policy language in some Transportation Element policies. Referring to TR-56, which allows for repurposing travel lanes for other uses, the suggestion made was to revise the policy to say “where excess vehicular capacity exists during the PM Peak hour in travel lanes each direction.” That would provide for a measurable outcome, predictability and consistency for all. Creative math was used by staff in regard to Bike Bellevue to arrive at a preconceived outcome; the result was false, misleading and inaccurate. Regarding TR-135, the proposed language strikes “interested citizens” and adds in “community partners.” That expressly removes the ability of citizens to participate given that citizens are defined as the inhabitants of a particular city or town. The proposed language adds the ability for special interest groups and lobbyists to influence transportation planning. The existing policy language should be retained. TR-139 refers to traffic calming measures but strikes out “reduce the volume of” and replaces it with “discourage cut-through traffic.” Volumes are measurable, levels of discouragement are not. The policy should not be changed.

Jaqueline Kimsey spoke in support of Bike Bellevue and noted being a bicycling resident who know how dangerous it is on Bellevue’s streets. Cars whiz by at high speeds, barely staying within the wide lanes designed for speed. Riders have no protections and can only hope drivers will see them before it is too late. Bellevue’s Vision Zero initiative aims to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injury collisions by 2030; only six years are left to achieve that goal. Pedestrians and bike riders are defined by state law as vulnerable road users and they are much more likely to be involved in fatal or serious injury collisions compared to people in cars. The past decade of data shows that every 15 days someone will be killed or seriously injured on Bellevue’s streets. Bike Bellevue is the best solution for meeting the goals of Vision Zero. Building protected bike lanes and safe areas for pedestrians is key to repairing decades of low-capacity car-dependent poorly developed transportation systems. The research shows the negative impacts of car dependence include social isolation, discrimination, cost, a decline in

small businesses, and negative effect on the public health. The city should implement Bike Bellevue.

Laura Gardner, a Lake Hills homeowner, noted starting in 2017 the group Eastside Urbanism to help facilitate community for people interested in talking about the built environment and learning about opportunities to help shape it. There are meet-ups every Thursday night at the Crossroads food court. The participants are encouraged to attend Transportation Commission meetings. Anyone is welcome to attend the conversations about infrastructure in the city. On March 3 a group bike ride was organized to mimic real-world journeys people might make using several Bike Bellevue corridors. Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmember Hamilton joined with 17 from the community in the cold and wet, and everyone had a great time. Councilmember Hamilton was surprised to see the level of diversity; there even was one family with a baby. A variety of different types of bikes were used. The route began at the Redmond Technology Center on brand new nationally recognized protected bike lanes on 156th Avenue NE. The bike infrastructure disappeared upon crossing the border into Bellevue. The sidewalk narrowed, there were multiple 90-degree turns in short succession, and there was no bike infrastructure beyond a marked sensor at the large intersections. Anxiety levels rose as the group rode alongside cars but spirits were still high. The group rode through several large intersections and observed the narrow curbside sidewalks along Bel-Red Road between Highland Middle School and Highland Park. Time was taken at the park to talk about what had been observed before continuing the journey, noting destinations that line Bel-Red Road and watching people trying to access them from unsafe infrastructure. Approaching Northup Way was an uncomfortable challenge to get from the right-hand lane to the left lane in order to make the turn. The same had to be done again on Northup Way. The roadways are very large and having to share the space with cars makes riders aware of just how vulnerable they are. On Northup Way a Jeep driver speed past the group, obviously not happy to be sharing the space. Separated bike infrastructure would benefit drivers as well. Riding on Spring Boulevard was slightly more comfortable but there are very few destinations there. The group observed the new bike infrastructure that seemed to be aiming for what the 156th path got so right, but somehow managed to completely miss the mark. The most glaring issue was the mountable curb on the bike path for which vehicle drop-offs and pick-ups can be envisioned. Arriving at the destination, there was a need to be creative in parking 20 bikes in a place without accommodation for even one bike and a parking lot full of cars. The Commissioners were invited to join the group for the same ride.

Nicole Meyers called attention to TR-23 and the addition of the word “arterial.” As drafted, the policy is too prescriptive. There may be places where some of the active uses can be kept focused on side streets, leaving the arterials for cars. That should be kept as an option. Cut-through traffic should be discouraged wherever possible with more aggressive wording as a matter of safety. Reasonable parallel routes can be part of the network. The word “arterial” should be stricken from the policy.

Heidi Dean pointed out that the park by Highland Middle School is the Commissioners Waterway mini park that is literally used by no one. The issue is not access, rather the site is a half-acre wooded plot that no one knows is even a park. Concurrence was expressed with the comments made by Vic Bishop, Mariya Frost, Michelle Wannamaker and Nicole Meyers. The Newport Hills community borderes Renton and Newcastle gets a lot of traffic coming through on Coal Creek Parkway, and a lot of cut-through traffic. Any policies that have to do with cut-through traffic should also consider the border neighborhoods.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis reported that the Council meetings will be shifted from Monday nights to Tuesday nights starting in April. It was also noted that the 2 Line will hold its grand opening on April 27 with a ceremony just outside City Hall. The seven-mile track between South Bellevue and the Redmond Technology Center will be served by eight stations.

The Council recently had a study session item on reducing speed limits on local streets from 25 mph to 20 mph. The Council instructed the staff to begin with outreach to residents. The approach was tested in three locations in the city, each of which showed significant reductions in speeding. Once that is implemented, the Council will be looking at reducing some arterial speeds from 35 mph to 30 mph.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said the Council approved using a firm to search nationally for City Manager candidates. A Request For Proposals has been issued and the process is moving forward.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Kevin McDonald informed the Commission that the city of Bellevue won an award from the Washington State chapter of the American Public Works Association for the Bellevue Transit Center raised intersections at each end of the transit center. The award category was for projects of less than \$5 million. The project has a history that traces back to the work of the Commission on the Downtown Transportation Plan in 2012/2013.

With respect to Bike Bellevue, it was noted that the Council tentatively has the topic on its March 25 agenda for a discussion of its future.

6. PUBLIC HEARING – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Wilburton Transportation Policies

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban noted that the recommended draft transportation policies were presented to the Commission in November. The current draft policy recommendations include the staff recommendation for the extension of NE 6th Street between 116th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE.

Justin Panganiban focused on three policies for which the Commission previously had recommended revisions, beginning with S-WI-66, which is New WI-TR-3. In November the Commission had asked the staff to consider broader language than “garage and service vehicle access” in referring to how vehicles access and circulate through future development. The staff concurred and now recommends replacing that phrase with “vehicle access.”

Policy S-WI-67, which is New WI-TR-4, has been updated to use the term “active transportation” to be more encompassing of different types of mobility, and to be better aligned with recent state legislation. Along the same lines, S-WI-68, which is New WI-TR-5, has replaced “connections for pedestrians and bicyclists” with “active transportation connections.”

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Marciante, Justin Panganiban stated that HB-2160 is state legislation that includes a definition on “active transportation.” It includes

pedestrian mobility in all forms, such as walking, running, and the use of mobility devices such as wheelchairs and cycling, the personal devices such as scooters and skateboards. That serves as the context for the use of the phrase “active transportation” in the policies. Kevin McDonald added that there is also a definition of “active transportation” in the glossary.

Commissioner Ting asked where things landed with regard to e-scooters. Justin Panganiban said the devices fall under the definition of active transportation.

Justin Panganiban said S-WI-71, which is New WI-TR-8, is the most substantive refinement being brought forward, and noted that it relates to staff’s recommendation on the future of NE 6th Street. The policy was previously included in the staff recommendation, allowing for a new Eastrail vehicular crossing only at the NE 6th Street alignment in agreement with existing subarea plan policy and a project in the Transportation Facilities Plan to identify an arterial extension of NE 6th Street to 120th Avenue NE. Outside of NE 6th Street, there are no other new general vehicle crossings of Eastrail that have been identified or supported through policy. The extension was evaluated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement that was published on February 1. The staff are recommending that NE 6th Street not be extended between 116th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE, and accordingly the removal of S-WI-71, New WI-TR-8.

An aerial view of NE 6th Street was shared with the Commission showing WSDOT’s planned extension to 116th Avenue NE for HOV, HOT and transit access. The city is coordinating with the state on that portion of the extension, and there is support for it in the draft policies. The arterial extension of NE 6th Street, with an at-grade crossing of Eastrail, was studied in the DEIS and was further evaluated in the FEIS preferred alternative. As currently envisioned, the extension would be similar to NE 4th Street between 116th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE. The FEIS included several metrics to determine if an arterial to 120th Avenue NE would provide significant public benefit to the Wilburton TOD area. The quantitative metrics consisted of vehicular performance targets that were established in the Mobility Implementation Plan, and qualitative inputs related to Comprehensive Plan policies around land use, environment, transportation and urban design.

The FEIS found that the extension of NE 6th Street to 120th Avenue NE would neither alleviate or exacerbate congestion elsewhere in the Wilburton TOD area, despite creating an additional connection and connectivity. The EIS provides some positive impacts regarding the arterial extension in terms of connectivity and access; it does create a new east-west vehicle connection; it provides additional vehicular capacity; and it would be designed as a complete street with all relative components. However, the FEIS also pointed out certain adverse impacts. The extension was determined to be incompatible with upcoming investments in the Grand Connection and Eastrail, and with an area in Wilburton that is envisioned to be a walkable urban neighborhood with street-facing active uses. In terms of climate and environment, the FEIS describes an increase in impervious and pollution-generating services, as well as the opportunity for an arterial to produce more vehicle trips, contributing to greenhouse gases emissions and vehicle miles traveled. For connectivity and traffic criteria, the FEIS describes adverse safety impacts to active transportation users by potentially inducing more vehicle trips on the arterial and by introducing a new modal conflict point between vehicles and active transportation users. From a constructability and cost standpoint, the FEIS determined that an arterial extension across Eastrail would be costly in terms of right-of-way acquisition and substantial engineering given the significant elevation changes.

Vice Chair Helland asked if there had been any public feedback relative to striking S-WI-71. Justin Panganiban said comments were made by the public earlier in the evening, and there

have been public comments made during past Commission meetings, both in support of the extension and opposing it. The policies have been before the community at an open house and on Engaging Bellevue. In those instances, there was no specific direction from the public regarding NE 6th Street.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked about the layout of NE 6th Street. Justin Panganiban explained that the segment between I-405 and 116th Avenue NE is envisioned to be specifically for HOV, HCT and transit use. The proposal for the segment between 116th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE envisioned a five-lane arterial for general vehicular travel.

A motion to approve the Wilburton transportation policies as presented was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the transmittal letter to the Planning Commission on the Wilburton transportation policies was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn and the motion carried unanimously.

Justin Panganiban said the Commission's recommendation will be presented to the Planning Commission on March 27. The Planning Commission is anticipated to hold a public hearing on all of the Wilburton policy recommendations along with the Land Use Code amendments on May 24.

B. BelRed Transportation Policies

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau noted that the BelRed Look Forward planning process was introduced to the Commission on November 9. The intent is to update both the subarea plan policies and the land use designations for the BelRed subarea as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. The updates are focused on new information that reflects changed circumstances. They are intended to strengthen and clarify the implementation strategies, and increase the capacity for housing and job growth. When the BelRed subarea plan was developed between 2007 and 2009, the city was in between Comprehensive Plan updates. As such, many of the innovative policies for the subarea were incorporated within the plan itself. Since then, many of the policies have become standard policies for the city as a whole and no longer warrant separate inclusion in the subarea plan.

In response to direction given by the Commission in November, new policy S-BR-81 was added to allow for limited flexibility in implementing the required local street grid; the original language of S-BR-60 was retained while removing references to the curb management plan; and the phrase "pedestrian amenities" was added back in to S-BR-63. A review of S-BR-62 found that it is covered by TR-94 in the Transportation Element and does not speak to a unique attribute of the BelRed area and as such should be repealed.

Answering a question asked by Chair Stash about S-BR-81, Gwen Rousseau said the community highlighted the need for flexibility when implementing the local street grid. Staff have recognized that as well while doing development review.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked how "limited flexibility" is defined. Gwen Rousseau said one of the objectives of the BelRed plan is to provide clear direction. Staff felt that just incorporating the word "flexibility" alone would not provide clear direction in regard to where flexibility is needed or where it should be applied. The addition of the word "limited" in conjunction with

the phrase “where site constraints exist” is intended to define what is meant by limited flexibility. There are instances where there are issues aligning with property lines, and topography can present challenges to implementing a street.

Kevin McDonald added that the provision for local streets is a requirement of the Land Use Code. The Land Use Code includes a map that shows where local streets are supposed to go. That map does not represent any actual surveys. The intent is to create a local street grid to provide for local access for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles to properties and developments. The code prescribes that a local street grid is necessary, and it implies by virtue of the map where the streets are to go, but it is known from experience that they cannot always be constructed in accordance to the lines on the map. The policy wording is intended to give the development review staff some limited flexibility to make adjustments depending on local circumstances.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked if there are any notes that will be associated with the policies. Gwen Rousseau said there are narrative sections that come before the policies in the plan, and it could be drafted to include clarifications and examples.

Commissioner Ting praised the idea of having a commentary and said there should be the same for all of the policy elements, capturing the institutional knowledge, the history and the intent. Examples of what is meant by “limited flexibility” can be included. Gwen Rousseau built on what was said by Kevin McDonald by saying while the lines on the map are very rectangular and strict, but noted that while implementing them there often have to be adjustments made relative to actual property lines. So long as safety is maintained, flexibility is fine.

Commissioner Ting asked if the policy as drafted address the concerns brought up during the public comment period, or if additional flexibility is being sought by that party. Gwen Rousseau noted the commenter mentioned property lines, topography and streams. They also mentioned the development impact resulting from the local street grid. No permits have come in to date where it has not been possible to develop a site. There has been action taken by developers to aggregate parcels specifically to retain development potential when developing the grid happens.

Commissioner Marciante noted having some concerns. It is important to consider what the intended alignments of the street grid do to the value of the properties and the potential for development. That is not to say property owners should be allowed to do whatever they want. There is a clear need to have a functional and accessible grid, but there should be something included about the intent of the grid, what it should be and how flexibility might come into play. Developers should be assured that they will have opportunities to meet the street grid intent. The Commission could act to move the policies forward to the Council, and also ask staff to create a more specific description of what the grid must look like.

Gwen Rousseau pointed out that S-BR-80 addresses why local streets need to be provided. It specifically calls for providing local streets to establish a new grid system with smaller block sizes, particularly in the development nodes. The policy emphasizes continuity, connectivity and community character. Policies always take the high level view. The implementing regulations in the Land Use Code do give maximum block perimeter lengths and other specific details. In addition, the Transportation Design Manual goes into great detail regarding the BelRed streetscape plan and the design concepts.

Gwen Rousseau added that the intent is to remove the street grid map from the plan itself given

that it also exists in the implementing regulations. The subarea plan dictates or guides the direction of implementation. Implementation is directed by code, which is predicated on the policies in the plan. The BelRed streetscape plan is drafted to follow the intent of the design guidelines.

Commissioner Rebhuhn asked if there is any timeline for when the Spring District extension will be funded. Kevin McDonald said the section between 124th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE is in design currently. The work is leading to a better understanding of what the roadway will look like and how much it will cost. The Capital Investment Program proposal that will go into the budget will include a substantial amount of funding toward construction. It could occur around 2030. The importance of the link is clear in that it provides a connection for all modes, including pedestrian and bicycle.

Commissioner Ting said BelRed is a key growth area and as such having increased infrastructure is particularly important. Referencing S-BR-54, the question asked was if it is still part of the plan to focus on having arterial improvements, and if so where it is called out. Gwen Rousseau the first policy calls for supporting the BelRed land use plan with a multimodal transportation network that provides enhanced multimodal travel connections within the subarea and to other parts of the city and the region. That is the overarching framework for making sure the entire network is provided. Within the subarea plan are the specific projects, including the extension of Spring Boulevard. S-BR-54 is redundant to policies in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Kevin McDonald added that BelRed is certainly a key growth area. Where the rubber hits the road in terms of policy is the project descriptions and the allocation of resources. The Transportation Facilities Plan lists all of the arterial projects in BelRed along with funding dedicated either to design or construction. The Capital Investment Program also has some BelRed projects that are fully funded and ready to go.

A motion to approve the BelRed transportation policies was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the transmittal letter to the Planning Commission was made by Commissioner Kurz. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Helland and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Transportation Element Policies

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse said the Transportation Element policies have been under review for almost two years. The last time the policies were before the Commission a recommendation was made to change to the staff-recommended section header “Residential Safety” to “Residential Safety and Livability.” That change has been made. There also were a couple of suggested changes to definitions in the glossary, which is part of Volume 1. Staff recommended an additional change to TR-119 to include the Transportation Improvement Program in the listing of functional plans and implementing documents.

Commissioner Ting suggested adding “PM Peak” after the word “excess” in TR-56 in line with the public feedback. It is clear that the PM Peak is one of the standards used by the city. New TR-8 also references the peak period commute trip.

A motion to amend TR-56 to include “PM Peak” between “access” and “vehicular” was made

by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn.

Commissioner Marciante voiced understanding the intent but suggested that making the change would actually limit the policy. There are some streets where the peak travel flows occur in the morning.

Chair Stash agreed but suggested a way should be found to reference the PM Peak period as a way of leaving the door open.

Commissioner Marciante proposed simply using the term “peak period.”

Commissioner Kurz stressed the need for the policy to be in line with the MIP, which could be done by just referencing the MIP and leaving TR-56 otherwise unchanged.

Vice Chair Helland asked how “excess vehicular capacity” is defined operationally, and how the process would be changed by restricting the policy focus to any kind of peak load. Kevin McDonald said there is a technical theoretical capacity for a lane of traffic to move a number of vehicles per hour based on certain factors. Essentially, if the actual traffic volume is less than the theoretical capacity, there is excess capacity. The quantity of excess capacity is important to consider, whether it is ten vehicles or 200 vehicles, but that is contextual and depends on, when, where, what the roadway is intended to accomplish, the land use context and what other modes are available. That is why TR-56 has not been drafted to be overly prescriptive.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Helland, Kevin McDonald said the city has in limited circumstances repurposed travel lanes for another mode. One example is on 108th Avenue NE where there was repurposing to effect an important bicycle priority connection and to improve speed and reliability for transit. The roadway used to be four lanes is now is three, and in some places only two, but the roadway carries more people in modes other than cars. The second half of TR-56 is focused on person throughput.

Chair Stash voiced the assumption that the decision to repurpose a lane would be based on both peak and non-peak times. Kevin McDonald said it could be based on the PM Peak where the desire is to facilitate vehicle movements, or it could be the AM Peak where transit demand is high. The calculations could be based on different times of the day. On a weekend it could be Saturday afternoon. The first thing is to look at the intended function of the street before making a determination about how to best use the street based on the limited space of the street. It is subjective; there is no one metric. Decisions to repurpose travel lanes take into account a number of factors, and it is all done in the public forum.

Commissioner Rebhuhn commented that TR-56 is focused on repurposing travel lanes for other uses. What is missing is some kind of guardrail indicating when repurposing can be done and when it cannot be done. Kevin McDonald said one of the guardrails is the performance targets in the MIP, which deal with the speed of vehicle travel along a corridor and the V/C ratio at the intersections. The MIP calculations are based on the PM Peak.

Commissioner Kurz asked if the phrase “excess vehicular capacity” is in the MIP. Kevin McDonald said the phrase is not included in the glossary because it is variable.

Commissioner Ting said the MIP does reference the PM Peak, but to the point that including the PM Peak reference in the policy might be too limiting, suggested the policy reference

should be to the worst peak period. The proposed policy amendment using PM Peak is in line with the MIP.

Chair Stash stated that referencing either the AM Peak or the PM Peak would be too restrictive given that traffic flows can change for various reasons. Use of the word “worst” would force designing toward the 99th percentile. The policy should acknowledge that peak periods will be considered, possibly by referencing the MIP.

Commissioner Marciante proposed something like “where vehicular performance will not be significantly impacted per the MIP...” The MIP is focused on the vehicular performance of corridors, not the vehicular capacity.

Commissioner Rebhuhn said under that approach it would be necessary to define “significantly.”

Commissioner Marciante suggested the concerns raised by the public with regard to TR-56 came about as a result of the unfortunate use by staff of a measure that is not in the MIP as part of Bike Bellevue. The result was confusion and for some an assumption of malfeasance on the part of the city. The fact is that the guardrails put in place by the MIP actually worked. Bike Bellevue is not a done deal yet and there still is ample opportunity for the public to comment and seek revisions. In every instance where a travel lane is proposed to be repurposed, there will be a significant public process. It will all be done on a case-by-case basis.

Senior Planner Mike Ingram proposed having TR-56 read “Allow for repurposing of travel lanes for other uses such as parking, transit or pedestrian and bicycle facilities where excess vehicular capacity exists at peak periods and/or to optimize person throughput along a corridor.”

A motion to amend the motion on the floor to insert “at peak periods” following “capacity exists” was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebhuhn and the motion to amend the motion carried unanimously.

The original motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

A motion to amend TR-56 by adding “and/or for safety” at the end was made by Commissioner Marciante. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Helland.

Commissioner Marciante noted that the public has been clear about wanting to see safety improved, but there are no policies that allow for the repurposing of travel lanes to address safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. The proposed amendment to the policy language would allow for safety to be a consideration.

Vice Chair Helland asked if safety is addressed in any other policy. Kevin McDonald said there are a couple of policies, including TR-59, that deal broadly with safety in the context of Vision Zero.

Chair Stash agreed with the point made by Commissioner Marciante, but suggested TR-59 can be relied on to serve the same purpose.

Commissioner Marciante said there is a need to be completely clear about allowing the repurposing of travel lanes for reasons of safety.

Commissioner Ting suggested the issue of safety should stand on its own in a separate policy. TR-57, old TR-64, is on point. The city should lean on the Vision Zero strategic plan as creating the holistic framework for how to eliminate serious injuries and deaths.

Commissioner Rebhuhn agreed. There is already the overarching Vision Zero that addresses safety. Adding language to the end of TR-56 will just be one more thing to be looked at when considering repurposing a travel lane. Clearly safety is always in mind, and adding the specific proposed language is not necessary.

Commissioner Kurz asked if the repurposing of travel lanes will be solely dependent on what is spelled out in TR-56, or if it could be done through Vision Zero or the MIP. Kevin McDonald said TR-56 is a legacy policy that dates to the last Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. It was included by the Commission to facilitate repurposing travel lanes for bike and transit lanes on 108th Avenue NE and Main Street. Those actions have been accomplished, showing that repurposing travel lanes can be done successfully given the right locations and the right metrics. The MIP does not on its own give any authority to repurpose a travel lane, rather it gives direction on the performance to be achieved. It offers a suite of options for how to do that. The same is true for Vision Zero.

Commissioner Marciante asked if instead of adding “and/or for safety” to TR-56 language could be included that references the context of Vision Zero. Chair Stash said a reference to Vision Zero could in fact be added to every single policy given that every action must be done in line with Vision Zero. Commissioner Marciante countered that specific to allowing the repurposing of travel lanes, there should be a reference to Vision Zero. Chair Stash pointed out that the same could be said to making changes to any crosswalk or putting in a stop light.

Commissioner Kurz agreed with the need to add the safety element to TR-56 as something to consider when repurposing travel lanes.

Chair Stash said doing so would be duplicative of other policies, but noted being okay with going either way.

Commissioner Ting commented that the wording of TR-56 represents a fairly broad change. The original intent of the policy was specific to bike lanes on 108th Avenue NE and Main Street. Including the policy should not be done without fully understanding the implications. Adding the reference to safety to the policy could mean that travel lanes could be repurposed for the purpose of safety alone. Streets need to be completely safe, but care must be taken to also allow for functional streets. Safety is addressed in other policies within the context of Vision Zero.

Chair Stash said the motion on the table would have TR-56 read “Allow for repurposing of travel lanes for other uses such as parking, transit or pedestrian and bicycle facilities where excess vehicular capacity exists at peak periods, and/or to optimize person throughput along a corridor, and/or for safety.”

Dr. Kate Nesse proposed deleting the first “and/or”, using only a comma, to make the sentence read better.

Commissioner Kurz disagreed, pointing out that if a comma was used there, excess vehicular capacity would become a condition, changing the context of the policy.

Vice Chair Helland agreed that as worded, the amendment would mean repurposing a travel lane could be done for safety reasons alone. Additionally, it was suggested that and/or should not be used. The policy should read “Allow for repurposing of travel lanes for other uses such as parking, transit or pedestrian and bicycle facilities where excess vehicular capacity exists at peak periods, or to optimize person throughput along a corridor, or for safety.”

Vice Chair Helland and Commissioners Marciante and Kurz voted in favor of the proposed change to the policy language. Chair Stash and Commissioners Ting and Rebhuhn voted against the proposed change. The proposed amendment failed.

Commissioner Ting proposed amending the glossary definition of “person throughput” to read “Person Throughput: The number of people that move along a street. Person throughput may be documented for a specific period of time, as in people per hour, or using a specific mode of travel, as in transit passengers per hour.”

As a point of order, Dr. Kate Nesse noted that the Commission was not required to take action on the glossary.

Commissioner Ting stated that TR-56 includes terms that must be defined. As such, it is important to have agreement as to what the term means.

Chair Stash proposed extending the meeting for 15 minutes. There was consensus to do so.

Commissioner Ting said for most people, “person throughput” evokes an actual number of people in the form of a measurement. In the context of TR-56, “person throughput” should be defined as the number of people that actually do move along a street, as opposed to the theoretical capacity of the number of people that could move along a street.

Vice Chair Helland asked what term is used for planning level capacity. Kevin McDonald said person throughput can be an actual or a modeled theoretical capacity. The BKR model uses the existing as a baseline on which to project future throughput. Dr. Kate Nesse added that the definition in the glossary addresses both of those.

Commissioner Kurz suggested there can be no optimizing that which is not modeled.

Commissioner Ting noted being fine with the modeling. The only question is whether throughput means the theoretical capacity or the number of people it is thought will use a corridor. Chair Stash said it is both. Commissioner Ting said the projected throughput is the number of people it is thought will use a corridor, which is not the same as the theoretical capacity of a corridor.

Vice Chair Helland said for purposes of TR-56, the focus must be on planning. It cannot be known what making a change will do other than by modeling it. It cannot be the actual.

Commissioner Ting suggested that because “person throughput” can be confusing, the glossary definition should be defined as the number of people that actual do move along a street, as opposed to the theoretical capacity of the number of people that could move along a street.

Commissioner Ting favored making the glossary change as proposed. Chair Stash, Vice Chair Helland and Commissioners Kurz, Rebhuhn and Marciante did not.

Vice Chair Helland asked for the opinion of staff relative to the public comments made about TR-139 and the claim that discouragement cannot be measured.

Chair Stash commented that while the volume of traffic cannot be controlled along residential streets, it is possible to discourage cut-through traffic, which hopefully would reduce the volume. Policy language stating that volumes will be reduced is not practical.

Kevin McDonald said there is a whole division in the Department of Transportation that deals with neighborhood traffic safety. The policy as drafted was recommended by that division.

Commissioner Ting asked if Complete Streets applies to residential streets. Kevin McDonald allowed that the application of Complete Streets is intended to be for arterials. Residential streets have a purpose that may not be complete in the context of the policy, which “complete” being defined as accommodating pedestrians, bikes, transit, cars and freight delivery.

Commissioner Ting referenced TR-23 and suggested that the creation of a Complete Streets network is equivalent to an arterial network. The question asked was why the word “arterials” was added given that Complete Streets only applies to arterials. Kevin McDonald said the language is intended to make it clear that Complete Streets applies to arterials. Taken together, arterials create a network. Residential streets do not.

A motion to adopt the Transportation Element policies, including the modification made to TR-56, was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the transmittal letter was made by Vice Chair Helland. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 8, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Rebhuhn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kurz and the motion carried unanimously.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. REVIEW OF COMMISSION CALENDAR

Kevin McDonald took a moment to review the Commission’s calendar of upcoming meeting dates and agenda topics.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Stash adjourned the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

Kevin McDonald

April 11, 2024

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date