

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Extended Study Session

May 8, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-113
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Stokes, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmembers Lee, Robinson, Simas, and Wallace

ABSENT: Councilmember Robertson

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m., with Mayor Stokes presiding. There was no Executive Session.

2. Approval of Agenda

→ Councilmember Simas moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the agenda carried by a vote of 4-0.¹

3. Oral Communications

- (a) Kara Durbin, Senior Local Government Affairs Representative, Puget Sound Energy (PSE), announced that the City released the Phase 2 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for PSE's Energize Eastside project. She said PSE appreciates the thoroughness of the City's analysis and will be considering the EIS recommendations. She said PSE, by using its existing utility corridor, can and will safely construct and operate the project while minimizing impacts. She noted upcoming public hearings on the EIS including one in Bellevue City Hall on Thursday, May 25, and additional hearings in Redmond and Renton. The comment period ends on June 21. Ms. Durbin said PSE will continue to work with property owners to discuss issues related to specific site conditions, vegetation management, and construction access. PSE anticipates selecting the final route and applying for permits this summer.

¹ Deputy Mayor Chelminiak and Councilmember Wallace joined the meeting at 6:14 p.m., at the beginning of Agenda Item 4(b).

- (b) Julie Wheeler read a letter from Heather West, who was not able to attend the meeting. The letter states that there are many reasons for homelessness, including economic and unexpected crises. Those individuals are typically living in cars or staying with friends, while continuing to work and go to school. There are the criminal homeless who cannot obtain housing or jobs, as well as individuals who are homeless by choice. She said there are homeless children because social services agencies try to keep families intact, even if they are living on the street. Ms. West's letter states that she has been homeless in the past, and she has taken homeless individuals into her home. She works directly with homeless individuals and children in her job. While she does not live in the Eastgate area, she believes it is the wrong site for the proposed shelter, which will be serving those who are not allowed in other shelters due to their behavior, addiction, or violent criminal history. Ms. West's letter expressed concerns about drug dealing and petty crime in the adjacent wooded areas and the transit center. She said the shelter needs to be located in a more open and easily monitored industrial area, away from all of the temptations provided by the Eastgate site.

4. Study Session

- (a) Council Business and New Initiatives

[No discussion.]

- (b) East Link Construction Update

City Manager Brad Miyake welcomed Sound Transit staff to provide a construction update on the East Link light rail project.

Peter Rogoff, Sound Transit CEO, introduced Ron Lewis, Deputy Executive Director, East Link Project; Tracy Reed, Executive Project Manager for the Operations and Maintenance Facility East (OMFE); Jennifer Lemus, East Link Community Outreach Corridor Supervisor; and Jason Hampton, Community Outreach Specialist.

Mr. Rogoff said there has been significant outreach regarding the closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride and the Overlake Park and Ride. Sound Transit is trying to minimize the inconvenience to the public and has opened alternate parking lots. However, many are not located along the heavily used ST 550 Express Route. He welcomed input from the community to identify additional potential leased lots, especially along the 550 route. Mr. Rogoff said Sound Transit will continue to monitor how the parking lots are working and will change its operating plans as needed. The South Bellevue Park and Ride currently has approximately 500 spaces, and the new parking structure at the light rail station will have 1,500 stalls.

Mr. Lewis recalled the media event earlier this year to kick off the Downtown tunnel excavation. He said Mayor Stokes, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmember Lee were in attendance.

Mr. Lewis highlighted the East Link project timeline. He said the entire 14-mile line from Seattle to Redmond will be under construction by this summer. The Washington State Department of

Transportation (WSDOT) is nearing the completion of its R-8A Stage 3 project on I-90. The project's new outer HOV lanes will open in June, and the center express lanes will close permanently for light rail construction.

In South Bellevue, the contractor is working on pre-construction photos and surveying. Sound Transit has submitted permits for related demolition work. The South Bellevue Park and Ride will close on May 30, and a Meet the Contractor community meeting is scheduled for May 31. The current lot with 519 stalls will be replaced by a 1,500-stall parking garage adjacent to the light rail station.

The Central Bellevue segment (Main Street to the Spring District) will be completed through a General Contractor/Construction Management (GC/CM) contract. He recalled that the contractor was brought in early during the design phase to participate in planning and value engineering. The contractor will coordinate with other major City of Bellevue projects including 120th Avenue NE, 124th Avenue NE, and Spring Boulevard.

Mr. Lewis presented photos of the four light rail stations (East Main Street, Downtown, Wilburton, and Spring District/120th Avenue). Site preparation work and utility relocations are underway in the BelRed corridor.

Mr. Lewis said Atkinson Construction was awarded the contract for the Downtown tunnel approximately one year ago and completed early work on 110th Avenue NE at that time. The contractor is using the sequential excavation mining (SEM) method and has excavated approximately 150 feet into the 1,985-foot tunnel. Mr. Lewis said settlement monitoring is in place and utility relocations are underway.

A design/build contract is in place for the Overlake/SR 520 segment of the light rail alignment. Sound Transit completed 30-percent design, and the contractor will advance the design while conducting preliminary field work. The Overlake Park and Ride lot closed on May 1.

Mr. Hampton, provided additional details regarding the closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride lot on May 30 for up to five years. He said bus stops on Bellevue Way will be maintained, and Sound Transit is exploring pick up and drop off opportunities, especially along the 550 route. Mr. Hampton said Sound Transit has not secured full replacement parking along the 550 route. However, potential parking spaces have been identified at the Pancake Corral and the Bellevue Church of Christ on Bellevue Way. Sound Transit has opened six new lots and expanded two existing lots to add 367 new parking spaces.

Mr. Hampton said Sound Transit added bus trips to many of the cross-lake routes. He highlighted parking locations for carpool and vanshare users, including new parking spaces near the Bellevue Transit Center.

Mr. Hampton recalled previous feedback from Councilmember Robinson about the www.justonetrip.org web site. Sound Transit has improved the web site and enhanced trip planning support for the public. He said two Metro employees will be assisting with trip planning customer service.

Mr. Hampton highlighted the targeted outreach activities since September 2016. Continued outreach will include City Council updates, community meetings, Park and Ride web page and printed materials, transit staff to assist the public at Park and Ride locations, and partner programs. Sound Transit will monitor the South Bellevue Park and Ride construction impacts on an ongoing basis, including replacement parking, neighborhood parking impacts, transit service operations, new commuter tools and partnerships, and public input.

Jennifer Lemus, East Link Community Outreach Supervisor, provided an overview of the community outreach program as the project enters construction. By mid-June, all 14 miles of the alignment will be under construction. There will be Meet the Contractor open houses for South Bellevue on May 31, the Central Bellevue segment on June 6, and the I-90 segment this summer. A construction kick-off community meeting for the 520 segment will be held this summer as well.

Ms. Lemus said a business resources forum was held on April 25 to provide information to the business community. She highlighted the Loyal to Local campaign to be launched at the end of May to encourage public support of the businesses in the BelRed corridor. A plant salvage event was held in the Surrey Downs neighborhood in January and 44 people attended. Sound Transit partnered with three local salvage companies in 2016 to remove and reuse building materials.

Ms. Lemus noted a 24-hour construction hotline for the public to access staff with questions: 1-888-298-2395. She said individuals may sign up for East Link construction alerts at www.soundtransit.org/subscribe.

Ms. Reed provided an update on the Operations and Maintenance Facility East (OMFE), which will store, service and deploy 96 light rail vehicles. Staffing will include approximately 250 employees. The OMFE is a design-build project. Ms. Reed said staff will be back in June to brief the Council on the outcome of the design-build procurement process.

Ms. Reed highlighted the site layout and the OMFE project schedule, which anticipates the completion of final design this summer.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Ms. Reed said the construction of the OMFE will be completed by late 2020, at which time other private development could begin to move forward.

Mr. Rogoff reiterated that Sound Transit will stay in close contact with the public and the City to coordinate efforts.

Councilmember Wallace said he would like more details on the schedules for closing and reopening the South Bellevue Park and Ride and for the road-over-rail project on 112th Avenue SE. He would like to see a checklist of MOU items, including mitigation measures, to ensure that the City and the public understand those plans.

Mr. Wallace noted the hard work of Sound Transit and the City over the past eight years to develop an improved light rail project through Bellevue. Examples of those outcomes include:

1) the elevated rail at the South Bellevue Park and Ride will be a shorter segment, 2) no at-grade crossing at 112th Avenue SE, 3) 60-foot buffer along the Surrey Downs neighborhood, 4) no impacts to the properties on the east side of 112th Avenue SE, 5) no at-grade alignment in the Downtown, 6) the use of sequential excavation mining (SEM) for the Downtown tunnel to reduce construction impacts, 7) the location of the Downtown station on NE 6th Street instead of NE 4th Street, which would have greater construction impacts, and 8) routing the alignment under 120th and 124th Avenues NE in a trench through the Spring District.

Mr. Wallace noted that the City and its taxpayers contributed \$150 million worth of value to Sound Transit related to the East Link project.

Councilmember Robinson thanked Sound Transit for the improvements to the www.justonetrip.org web site and the additional customer service tools.

Ms. Robinson noted that many of those who park at the Eastgate Park and Ride do not use transit. She questioned whether there are plans for monitoring and enforcing transit-only parking. Mr. Hampton said Metro is updating signage and strengthening its monitoring at that facility. He said he would follow up with additional details.

Councilmember Robinson encouraged Sound Transit to continue to update project information on www.Nextdoor.com.

Ms. Robinson expressed support for a proposed parking location at the Unitarian Church in the Woodridge neighborhood, which would help to address on-street parking in the area. However, she said residents are concerned about traffic impacts. She questioned whether Sound Transit has studied impacts for that area. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Mr. Lewis said traffic impacts will be addressed during the permitting process for parking lots.

Councilmember Lee thanked Councilmember Wallace and Councilmember Robertson for their role in negotiating the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Sound Transit. He thanked the community for their involvement and input and former Sound Transit CEO Joni Earl for her collaborative efforts with the City. Mr. Lee thanked Sound Transit staff for the update and said he is optimistic about the project moving forward.

Councilmember Simas suggested publicizing the lots with available parking capacity. Mr. Rogoff said Sound Transit has identified nearly twice as many parking stalls than what currently exist. However, they are not on express bus routes. He said there are four potential facilities along express routes that Sound Transit hopes to secure.

Mr. Hampton described a map, which is also available online, depicting the six new parking lots and the two expanded lots, as well as the bus routes served at those locations. The map identifies Park and Ride lots with available parking, and an interactive map is available online.

Mr. Rogoff said Sound Transit continues to look for lots serving the 550 route. Potential options previously identified included the Triangle Pool, Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Bellevue Way Community Church, and the New Hope International Church.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, Mr. Hampton said one of the churches has a child care facility and the church was concerned about allowing more vehicles. The Triangle Pool indicated that their lot is extensively used during the summer. He has not spoken with the New Hope International Church. However, Sound Transit has received concerns about that location from the surrounding neighborhood.

Ms. Robinson encouraged Sound Transit staff to contact the churches again and to continue to pursue new locations.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak suggested that the City would be willing to work with Sound Transit to contact potential lot owners. He noted that the 550 bus route is heavily used, including in West Bellevue.

Mr. Chelminiak questioned the extent of the outreach to Park and Ride users. Mr. Hampton said Sound Transit posted signs at the Mercer Island Park and Ride alerting the public about the upcoming changes. Sound Transit continues to partner with King County Metro and commuter information organizations to release information for the public as well.

Mr. Chelminiak noted that many people use the South Bellevue Park and Ride lot to access transit to major events (e.g., Mariners and Sounders games). He suggested posting information to alert the public about alternate transit locations.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Lewis said the work in South Bellevue begins in June. Mr. Lewis said Sound Transit has worked closely with City staff to develop the plan for managing traffic on Bellevue Way. He said the schedule will be refined when the contractor begins its work. There will be a reversible lane on Bellevue Way for a portion of the construction activities. He said staff will provide an update regarding the road-over-rail segment on 112th Avenue SE well in advance of construction of that portion of the alignment. Mr. Lewis said the traffic plans are intended to maintain throughput on the arterial system while making sure there is an adequate buffer between drivers and construction work. He noted that the use of the reversible lane on Bellevue Way will start later this year.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak said the traffic impacts will be challenging for the public. He recalled that many Councilmembers worked hard on this project over many years. He observed that it has turned out to be a good light rail route through the community. He said the SEM tunneling method lessens traffic impacts in the Downtown. He said the City is willing to work with Sound Transit to secure more parking locations. Mr. Rogoff said the Bellevue Church of Christ is another potential location with 50 parking spaces.

Mayor Stokes concurred with the comments made by his colleagues. He commended the collaborative design process outlined in the MOU. He said that he and Councilmembers Robertson and Wallace were involved in the MOU negotiations with Sound Transit. He observed that the City's efforts resulted in an improved East Link project. He noted that Mayor Balducci and Deputy Mayor Chelminiak worked hard on collaborating with Sound Transit as well from 2012 to 2015. Mayor Stokes commended the work of City Manager Miyake, Deputy City Manager Kate Berens, and Transportation Director Dave Berg.

Mayor Stokes thanked Ron Lewis for being responsive to the City's concerns and requests for information. He thanked Sound Transit for its community outreach and education efforts.

Councilmember Lee said he was remiss in not mentioning Mayor Stokes earlier when he noted the involvement of Councilmembers Robertson and Wallace in the MOU negotiations, while Mr. Lee served as mayor. He said many individuals were involved in the extensive planning effort over many years.

Mr. Lee questioned whether lessons have been learned since the May 1 closure of the Overlake Park and Ride facility. He questioned the traffic impacts anticipated for the Spring District development.

Mr. Rogoff said the closure of the Overlake Park and Ride has generally gone well. However, Sound Transit is working with Microsoft and others to ensure there are adequate pickup and drop off spaces for individuals accessing buses. He said Sound Transit is looking for similar space in South Bellevue to ensure safe drop off areas.

Mayor Stokes noted that he forgot to thank Mike Brennan, Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), and his staff for their hard work on the light rail Land Use Code Overlay. Mr. Stokes concurred with Councilmember Robinson's interest in understanding the traffic impacts to neighborhoods with transit leased parking lots.

Mayor Stokes thanked Sound Transit staff for the update and information.

Nancy LaCombe, Regional Transportation Project Manager, provided an update on the post-MOU work program, which includes property conveyances between the City and Sound Transit at different locations. The properties to be conveyed to the City will not occur until light rail construction is completed.

Ms. LaCombe said the City and Sound Transit are negotiating the terms for the transfer of the 130th Avenue NE parcels, which will include a 300-stall Park and Ride lot as part of that development. As part of the mitigation in South Bellevue, Sound Transit is funding the design and construction of the new Mercer Slough Blueberry Farm retail structure.

Ms. LaCombe said the work program also addresses noise and vibration monitoring, neighborhood traffic mitigation, Access Bellevue communications campaign, use of the right-of-way for the maintenance of traffic mobility, overall project permitting under the collaborative construction program, and permitting for the OMFE.

Councilmember Wallace said it would be helpful to have a checklist of the major items in the project permits to ensure they are completed.

Mr. Wallace suggested an enhanced effort to communicate the benefits for the public of the East Link light rail project when it is completed in 2023.

With regard to transportation technology, Councilmember Wallace said King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci recently held a meeting to discuss major transportation projects across the region over the next few years and their impacts. Mr. Wallace suggested exploring options for moving people from their neighborhoods to major transit routes without having to drive their own cars.

Mayor Stokes thanked City staff for their work and said he looks forward to the beginning of construction in June.

(c) Mercer Island I-90 Access Letter Request

City Manager Miyake recalled Council discussion the previous week regarding a request of support by the City of Mercer Island related to westbound access to I-90 after light rail construction begins. Mr. Miyake noted that the Council may choose to not take a position on Mercer Island's proposal to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Transportation Director Dave Berg recalled the 1976 memorandum of understanding that allowed Mercer Island single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) traffic to use the center high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. An amendment in 2004 acknowledged the future R-8A configuration for I-90 to allow high-capacity transit in the center roadway. The amendment specified that WSDOT must consult with all signatories to the MOU, including the City of Bellevue, before changes to the center roadway were implemented. Construction of the R-8A project will be completed this month, and the I-90 center HOV roadway will close in June for East Link light rail construction. HOV traffic will be moved to the outer roadway.

Mr. Berg said the City of Mercer Island is seeking support of its proposal to the U.S. Department of Transportation that would allow Mercer Island traffic to continue to use the HOV lanes at Island Crest Way when accessing westbound I-90. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Transportation indicated that federal law prohibits allowing SOV vehicles in HOV lanes. The Sound Transit Mobility Study in April 2017, required by the 1976 agreement and the 2004 amendment, concluded that East Link light rail construction and operation results in no loss of mobility for Mercer Island.

Mark Leth, Assistant Regional Administrator, Traffic Operations, Northwest Region, for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), described the R-8A configuration of the I-90 roadway. The City of Mercer Island's proposed solution is to allow SOV vehicles using the westbound Island Crest Way on-ramp to use the HOV lane, with a reasonable and safe distance provided for SOV drivers to merge into the general purpose lanes.

Mr. Leth said Sound Transit performed an assessment of the effect of the westbound I-90 travel time, safety and throughput. For modeling purposes, it was assumed that 50 percent of the SOVs would not exit the HOV lane. He noted that the proposed option was not explicitly included in the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review. However, the effects fall between other options that were assessed and documented.

Mr. Leth described the existing morning and evening peak period travel patterns to and from Mercer Island. He described the analysis of projected 2020 travel times to and from Mercer

Island, peak travel times between Seattle and I-405, and morning peak period westbound HOV lane performance. The Mercer Island proposal is anticipated to result in a 1-3 percent increase in crash occurrence. However, traffic throughput is essentially the same for the R-8A configuration and the Mercer Island proposal.

Mr. Leth highlighted potential operational control measures for westbound vehicles entering the I-90 HOV lanes on Mercer Island, then merging into the SOV lanes.

Joyce Nichols, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, noted the Mercer Island letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation in the Council's desk packet. The City of Mercer Island is requesting additional signatories. However, the Bellevue City Council is not required to take a position or to sign the letter.

Responding to Mayor Stokes, Ms. Nichols clarified that the purpose of the letter is to request an exception to the current federal law against SOV traffic in HOV lanes.

Councilmember Robinson questioned whether the 1-3 percent higher crash incidence is statistically significant. Mr. Leth said it is driven by volume on the roadway, so it is not a large difference. Ms. Robinson expressed concern about the safety of cars merging from the HOV lane to SOV lanes. Mr. Leth said it is up to the Washington State Patrol to enforce federal law regarding the usage of HOV lanes.

Councilmember Simas questioned whether the assessment analyzed the effect of more intense metering on crash incidence. If so, was there a reasonable point of metering in which accidents would be reduced?

Following up on Ms. Robinson's comments, Mr. Simas observed that stopping drivers who illegally stay in the HOV lanes will slow down traffic and create the potential for accidents.

Mr. Leth said the State Patrol does consider the impacts on traffic flow in enforcing traffic laws. He said the on-ramp could be metered to the point that the SOV traffic entering I-90 is equivalent to HOV lane traffic volumes, which is essentially the same result as the R-8A configuration. However, that would be somewhat restrictive on HOV drivers.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Leth said there will be a shoulder segment on both directions of I-90, which provides space for the State Patrol to stop drivers.

In further response, Mr. Leth confirmed that the analysis indicates an increase of 3.5 minutes in SOV travel time from I-405 to I-5, and an increase of three minutes for HOV traffic. Mr. Chelminiak questioned the delay for Mercer Island vehicles if they do not have access to the HOV on-ramp. Mr. Leth said the delay varies depending on the ramp a driver is currently using. However, Sound Transit's study indicated an average increase in travel time of two minutes.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak said he understands that an agreement was negotiated in 1976. However, conditions and laws have changed, and SOV vehicles are not allowed in other HOV on-ramps or lanes in the region. He senses that a majority of the Council is interested in signing

the letter and he is not bothered by that. However, he is not in favor of the proposal, noting that it increases travel time for Bellevue drivers traveling to Seattle during peak periods and it increases the rate of accidents, which cause serious traffic delays.

Councilmember Lee concurred with Mr. Chelminiak that the proposal affects Bellevue commuters. He noted that the Council is not required to take a position and Mercer Island does not need Bellevue's support. He questioned the value of taking a position when the effects on regional traffic are not fully known.

Councilmember Wallace expressed concern about the merge from the HOV lane to SOV lanes. He said the proposal has potential impacts on freight as well as on individual cars and transit traveling from Bellevue to Seattle. He noted that King County Metro routes will terminate at Mercer Island for transfers to light rail. Mr. Berg said he believed some Metro routes would continue across the bridge. He said he would follow up with more information.

Mr. Wallace observed that the City of Bellevue was a signatory to the 1976 agreement, and the current proposal adversely impacts Bellevue drivers. He believes Bellevue should take a position on the proposal. He does not oppose the current use of HOV lanes by Mercer Island drivers. However, he is concerned about the safety of forcing traffic to merge into the SOV lanes.

Mr. Wallace suggested that the City conduct its own traffic modeling analysis to determine the impacts of the Mercer Island proposal on Bellevue commuters.

Councilmember Robinson reiterated her concern about the potential increase in accidents, which stop traffic and increase congestion. However, she questioned the margin of error in the estimated increase of 1-3 percent.

Councilmember Wallace recalled there were SEPA and NEPA reviews of the R-8A project, and the assumption was that Mercer Island residents would continue to access the HOV lanes. He questioned the implications of the proposal related to those permitting processes.

Mr. Leth said he was not the best person to answer that question. However, a SEPA Addendum was recently issued that incorporated the updated federal prohibition against SOV drivers using HOV lanes. He acknowledged that the current Mercer Island proposal was not addressed in the SEPA Addendum, however.

Mr. Wallace reiterated his suggestion that Bellevue conduct its own traffic analysis before making formal comments on the proposal.

Responding to Mayor Stokes, Mr. Leth said the use of HOV lanes by SOV vehicles is increasing, in general. Mr. Leth said WSDOT will be monitoring traffic whether the R-8A or a different option is implemented.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak noted information indicating that there are currently 15 access points (entrance and exit ramps) on Mercer Island, and there will continue to be 15 access points when the HOV lanes are moved to the outer roadway. Mr. Berg said Island Crest Way is the primary access point for north-south travel on Mercer Island, and it will provide HOV access only.

Councilmember Robinson expressed support for allowing Mercer Island residents to continue to use the HOV on-ramps and to stay in the HOV lane across the bridge. Mayor Stokes noted that updated federal law appears to prohibit that option.

Mr. Chelminiak reiterated his concern about the travel time impacts on drivers from Bellevue and the Eastside.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, Ms. Nichols highlighted the list of current signatories to the Mercer Island letter: Governor Jay Inslee, WSDOT Secretary Millar, Senator Lisa Wellman, Representatives Judy Clibborn and Tana Senn, King County Executive Dow Constantine, and Mercer Island Mayor Bruce Bassett.

Councilmember Wallace said he would like the City's legal staff to review the past agreements and to advise the Council in an Executive Session. He would like input from Transportation staff regarding the potential benefit of a separate Bellevue analysis.

Mayor Stokes concurred with Mr. Wallace's suggestion and thanked staff for the presentation.

At 8:40 p.m., Mayor Stokes declared the meeting adjourned.

Kyle Stannert, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw