

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

June 21, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Davidson, Deputy Mayor Lee, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Robertson, and Wallace

ABSENT: Councilmember Degginger

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Lee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 35 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation and two items of labor negotiations.

The Study Session reconvened at 6:54 p.m., with Mayor Davidson presiding.

2. Study Session

- (a) Surface Transportation Master Plan and Update on Projects in the City's 1999 Regional Transportation Vision Statement

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Surface Transportation Master Plan and the City's Regional Transportation Vision. Staff is seeking Council input regarding a transportation package to be developed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for consideration by the state legislature in 2011.

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said the purpose of the presentation is to provide an update on the status of highway components identified in the City's 1999 Regional Transportation Vision statement, and to seek Council input on potential priorities and revenue packages/options leading into the 2011 legislative session. In 2004, the Council updated the Regional Transportation Vision through its approval of the Regional Mobility Interest Statement.

Mr. Sparrman highlighted key components of the I-405 Master Plan including additional lanes, arterial improvements, transit and HOV elements (e.g., new transit centers, HOV direct access

ramps), park and ride lots, and managed lanes. I-405 local projects completed to date include NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street HOV direct access interchange, NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street extension and arterial improvements, and the I-405 South Bellevue widening project. The I-405/SR 520 braided ramp project is under construction, which includes the reconstruction of the NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street overpass. Mr. Sparrman noted the additional benefits of sidewalk projects, bike and multi-use facilities, and environmental enhancements.

Mr. Sparrman presented a series of slides depicting ongoing improvements along the I-405 corridor through Bellevue. He provided additional details on the I-405/SR 520 braided ramp project.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said the Master Plan identified the addition of up to two lanes for the entire I-405 corridor. One lane will be added in the area of the braided ramp project, but for sections north and south of Bellevue, the Master Plan calls for two new lanes in each direction.

Mr. Sparrman continued his descriptions of projects along the I-405 corridor. The NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street project extends the road from the Downtown to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue, crossing over but not connecting to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Main Street overpass will be rebuilt to accommodate additional I-405 lanes. This will involve an interim Main Street rebuild for Phase 1 of the project, and then a later reconstruction to complete the full project. Mr. Sparrman said it is not feasible to expect that full funding could be provided to complete this project, and the related NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street project, all at the same time.

Councilmember Balducci said it will be important to be able to adequately explain to the public about why the project is being phased in this manner, which requires the rebuilding of the Main Street overpass two times.

Mr. Sparrman summarized the estimated costs of unfunded projects, including the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street extension and NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street interchange/Main Street bridge reconstruction and ramps. If the estimated cost of \$450 million to \$500 million for the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street project were fully funded, it would be possible to complete the Main Street overpass construction in one phase.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Transportation Capital Projects Manager Rick Logwood said the phasing of the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Main Street bridge project adds approximately \$20 million to \$40 million for the interim Main Street bridge. In further response, Mr. Sparrman said the challenge is not having sufficient funding to do all of the project elements at one time.

Mr. Logwood said the full build-out of the Main Street improvements, when combined with the collector-distributor connections that run underneath the overpass, costs approximately \$250 million. He described the technical phasing of the project elements.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Logwood said staff can conduct further analysis to determine whether there are other options that will reduce costs and/or streamline the project

phasing. Ms. Balducci expressed concern about the prospect of building a structure that will later be destroyed.

Mr. Sparrman noted staff's reluctance to construct the project in this manner. However, the phasing actually comes from the State, which did a similar so called "throw-away" project based on an analysis of the time involved and the benefit derived during the overall life of the project.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said detailed design work has not yet been completed for the project. Councilmember Wallace noted that East Link light rail will be going through that area as well, and it will be important to coordinate the roadway and rail projects.

Councilmember Chelminiak noted that in addition to the light rail project, improvements to NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street are critical in terms of developing the Meydenbauer Bay waterfront park. He expressed concern about the long-term construction impacts from all of the projects, as well as the cumulative challenges associated with building a number of projects within a relatively small geographic area.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Lee, Mr. Sparrman said the I-90/I-405 interchange is essentially built out. Mr. Lee noted the need for continued improvements going south into Renton, east to Issaquah, and north into Downtown Bellevue.

Mayor Davidson said southbound lanes will be added to I-405 for traffic going south of Coal Creek Parkway.

Councilmember Balducci said an additional northbound lane on I-405 from I-90 will help to alleviate the backup on westbound I-90 during the morning peak period. She acknowledged that each project improves the flow of the overall highway system.

Mr. Sparrman summarized the Eastside transit and HOV project, which is currently funded and connects to the SR 520 bridge replacement project. Additional SR 520 projects include a full interchange at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, added lanes between 124<sup>th</sup> and 148<sup>th</sup> Avenues, improvements from westbound SR 520 to southbound I-405, and the 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bypass ramp.

Mr. Sparrman noted the I-90 R-8A project, for which Phase 1 was completed in 2008. Stage 2 is under construction for completion in 2012, and State 3 will be constructed by 2014. Moving east, Mr. Sparrman said WSDOT completed an assessment of I-90 from roughly I-405/Eastgate to North Bend. A key project identified for Bellevue is to add eastbound capacity between the Lakemont Boulevard/West Lake Sammamish Parkway exit and the Eastgate area.

Councilmember Balducci questioned whether there are plans for improvements to the Issaquah interchanges as well. Mr. Sparrman said the State has talked about extending the HOV lane farther east from Issaquah to reduce the bottleneck at the current terminus of the HOV lane. However, no specific project has been defined.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said WSDOT is responsible for the interchange near Sunset Elementary, including the roundabout at the West Lake Sammamish Parkway exit. Mr. Sparrman confirmed Councilmember Degginger's interest in improvements at that interchange. He explained that the process with WSDOT entails the City determining a preferred solution and then working with WSDOT to advocate for and plan the project. This was essentially the approach to the 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue project, which was identified by Bellevue and presented to WSDOT. Bellevue was able to demonstrate that the project would benefit land use and development in Bellevue, while also providing mainline benefits to the I-405 and SR 520 corridors.

Mr. Sparrman reviewed staff's draft list of legislative priorities, which identifies the top two priorities as the SR 520 to NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street braided ramps project and the 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE/SR 520 full interchange. He noted possible express/HOT lane projects along I-405.

Diane Carlson, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, recalled that at the end of the last legislative session, the state legislature directed WSDOT to start developing a package of projects for consideration in 2011. Challenges include the overall economic picture and significant competition for state dollars. Ms. Carlson said the gas tax does not keep pace with inflation. The State has been considering the expansion of express toll lanes to provide funding for projects. Staff will update the Council in the fall on WSDOT's transportation package. Ms. Carlson said WSDOT is interested in further discussion with the Council about I-405 express toll lanes.

Referring back to the slide of draft legislative priorities, City Manager Sarkozy said the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Main Street bridge project is also a top priority, depending on the availability of State funding.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said the priorities are based on a number of factors including knowledge of WSDOT's priorities, project feasibility in terms of funding and timeframe, and the City's past and ongoing discussions about transportation priorities. The I-405 Master Plan went through the full environmental impact statement (EIS) process. However, there has not been extensive cost-benefit analyses of specific projects.

Noting anticipated growth in the Downtown by 2040, Councilmember Wallace suggested there should be a data-based way of prioritizing projects in terms of objectively analyzing costs and benefits.

Mr. Sparrman commented that additional considerations include how a project will affect the overall system. For example, adding an interchange might not make sense if arterial streets are not adequate to handle an increase in capacity. This type of analysis helps to determine a logical order for building projects.

Councilmember Wallace suggested that the City has the opportunity now to work with WSDOT and Sound Transit on the configuration of transportation elements within the vicinity of NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Main Street, and to explore how joint planning and construction efforts might reduce costs and facilitate overall project completion.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Ms. Carlson said many of the transportation projects are on the Council's federal legislative agenda as well. Most of the federal funding comes through the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and is allocated through a competitive process. The City has also sought funding directly through the appropriations process.

Councilmember Chelminiak concurred with suggestions to coordinate with Sound Transit and WSDOT on the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Main Street, and light rail projects. He feels that NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street should be identified as a top priority.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Sparrman commented that he believes WSDOT's I-405 team in Bellevue would be able to begin working with the City relatively quickly, if project funding is provided by the state legislature.

Ms. Carlson recalled that previous transportation packages were in 2003 and 2005, and nearly all of the projects have been completed. She estimated perhaps a 10-year window for a potential package that could be authorized in 2011.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Sparrman highlighted the benefits of the 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE/SR 520 interchange project.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Sparrman said the prioritization of projects involves multiple variables including the completion of regional corridors, local transportation demands, logical project sequencing, and funding feasibility.

Councilmember Robertson questioned whether the potential light rail alignment has influenced the prioritization of transportation projects.

Mr. Sparrman said that a range of potential light rail alignments were considered in the development of the I-405 Master Plan. The alignments reflected in recent decisions by the Sound Transit Board are all on the west side of I-405. If East Link were to cross Main Street within the vicinity of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue, it certainly makes sense to coordinate that design with the replacement of the Main Street bridge. If the Sound Transit Board designates a downtown light rail tunnel portal at NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, this would present significant design considerations related to the City's NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street roadway project.

Councilmember Balducci thanked staff for the update and the reminder that progress has been made. She commended Bellevue's completion of projects, which is due to significant help from the state legislature. Ms. Balducci thanked Senator Horn for his work in securing project funding for Bellevue. She expressed support for thinking strategically in terms of lobbying for priorities that are most likely to achieve funding and support.

At 8:01 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

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