

CITY OF BELLEVUE
EAST MAIN STATION AREA PLANNING
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2015
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Christie Hammond, John King, Scott Lampe, Jim Long, Danny Rogers, Alexander Strunkin, Bill Thurston, Pamela Unger

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Breiland, John D'Agnone, Erin Powell

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Kattermann, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kate March, Phil Harris, John Murphy, Department of Transportation; Adam Parast, Transpo Group

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Lampe called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Hammond. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. King. The motion was seconded by Ms. Unger and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. PROJECT UPDATE, CAC INFO REQUEST

Senior planner Philip Harris reminded the Committee that the station area planning work addresses the future of the station area. For the East Main station that refers to how the station will be integrated with its residential surroundings, what will be happening on the east side of 112th Avenue SE, and the southern portion of the downtown. The Committee is not charged with addressing construction issues.

Mr. Harris shared with the Committee a map showing the existing pedestrian network, including sidewalks and trails. He also shared a map of bicycle facilities in the area. Yet another map was shown to the Committee indicating the walkshed around the station, or the area that can be reached within a ten-minute walk of the station. SE 1st Place will be closed off and a new pedestrian access will be created to connect with the park. At the south end of the station there will be a signalized crosswalk. SE 4th Street will be closed to all but emergency vehicles.

Chair Lampe commented that early on the Committee discussed whether or not there should be access to the park from 112th Avenue SE. Because the tracks will need to be crossed, any access would have to be via a bridge going up and over the catenary, or via tunnel under the tracks. Either way would not be simple or inexpensive.

Mr. Harris showed the Committee a map showing the future walkshed based on the roadway closures. He pointed out that an area along the west side of 112th Avenue SE to the north of Surrey Downs Park will not be accessible for pedestrians.

A number of pedestrian network improvements are planned for the downtown area, including along Main Street. An off-street path will be created on the west side of 112th Avenue SE from SE 8th Street to Main Street that will connect to a path on the south side of Main Street that will be located between 110th Avenue NE and 116th Avenue NE. The trail will be a continuation of the trail that will start in south Bellevue on the east side of Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE to SE 8th Street. The crosswalks at the intersection of 112th Avenue SE and Main Street are identified for enhanced treatment; these treatments vary by location, but could include flashing lights and special pavement markings, possibly a raised crosswalk. A bicycle lane will be constructed along 114th Avenue SE adjacent to the freeway that will connect with Main Street. Both Bellevue Way and 106th Avenue SE will include shared roadway facilities to accommodate bicycles.

Mr. Harris said some have raised the issue of improving pedestrian access between the southern part of Surrey Downs and the Bellfield residential area. He noted that while there are not a lot of sidewalks within the Surrey Downs neighborhood, the streets currently have little traffic and are very walkable.

Chair Lampe said one of the issues talked about in the past is the fact that the high school is outside the ten-minute walkshed. He asked if the school district has called for providing better access to the station. Ms. Hammond pointed out that there is a trail from 108th Avenue SE through the neighborhood. Chair Lampe said even with that shortcut the high school remains outside the ten-minute walkshed.

Ms. Hammond clarified that there will be a crosswalk to the south of the South Bellevue station allowing pedestrian access to the east side of 112th Avenue SE, and asked how far south the next crosswalk is. Mr. Harris said the next crosswalk is more than one thousand feet away at SE 6th Street. Northbound pedestrians from that point will need to use the off-street path to Main Street in order to get around the train.

Responding to a comment made by Mr. Long, Mr. Harris said there is a drop-off on the east side of 112th Avenue SE, making it difficult to locate a trail there.

Ms. Hammond pointed out that currently the residents of Bellfield, Bellecrest and Surrey Downs are able to access the Slough and the blueberry farm on foot. Once the project is complete, that pedestrian access will disappear. She said she would like to see pedestrian

access added to the south of SE 4th Street to let people cross 112th Avenue SE.

Ms. Unger asked if the existing small park and ride across from the Residence Inn on SE 8th Street will go away once the light rail line is completed. Mr. Harris said that may depend on what the bus service plan is. The park and ride also lies within the right-of-way for I-405 and in the future should the freeway need to be widened the site will be lost.

Ms. Unger pointed out that with pedestrian access to Surrey Downs Park limited, people may choose to drive to it instead. That will increase traffic on what are now safe roads and may be an argument in favor of sidewalks in the neighborhoods. Chair Lampe reminded her that the park is set to be downgraded from a regional park to a neighborhood park and that the ball fields will be going away. The parking lot will have only 15 to 20 stalls. Once access from 112th Avenue SE is closed off, the lion's share of traffic in the neighborhood will be residents.

Mr. King commented that there likely will be people dropping people off on 111th Avenue SE given that there will only be three spots at the kiss and ride on 112th Avenue SE. People will have to come through the Surrey Downs neighborhood to drop people off and pick them up on 111th Avenue SE.

Ms. Hammond suggested it would be unrealistic to assume there will be less vehicular traffic just because automobile access to the neighborhood from 112th Avenue SE will be closed off. There is a real need to continue focusing on pedestrian safety within the neighborhood.

4. NON-MOTORIZED ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Associate planner John Murphy reminded the Committee that he had previously shared a number of maps showing traffic calming and parking strategies, primarily within the Surrey Downs and Bellecrest neighborhoods. He allowed that 108th Avenue SE is quite long but much of it is within the study area. The five major vehicular access points into the neighborhood currently are SE 1st, SE 4th, SE 11th, SE 2nd and 110th Avenue SE. At most of the entrances along 112th Avenue SE there are entry treatments in the form of raised pavement that signify to motorists that they are entering a different kind of street. Once East Link is up and running each of the access points will be removed along with the entry medians.

Mr. Murphy said the city has not engaged in a lot of traffic calming activities in the Surrey Downs neighborhood based on the current guidelines that stipulate vehicular speeds must be at certain levels as determined by speed studies. The studies done in the Surrey Downs neighborhood have never risen to the point of warranting speed humps or other types of traffic calming measures. Passive measures have been implemented, however, including 25 mile per hour lane markings on the pavement. There are a series of speed humps situated along 108th Avenue SE in addition to passive lane markings.

Residential Parking Zones (RPZ) exist in the neighborhood. It is difficult for the city to effectively address all 16 of the existing RPZs and residents have called for increased enforcement. The Surrey Downs RPZ was the first created in the city and it was done in response to growth in the downtown.

The right-in/right-out restriction at Main Street and 110th Avenue SE prevents those traveling west on Main Street from accessing the neighborhood. Those exiting the neighborhood must go east on Main Street. There is also a no-through movement on southbound 108th Avenue SE across Main Street. Southbound through is allowed only for bicycles and buses.

Answering a question asked by Chair Lampe, Mr. Murphy said the city uses the standard 85th percentile as the threshold for speed humps within a neighborhood. That translates into 85 percent of all vehicles traveling at or below 35 miles per hour. The speed studies done on 109th Avenue SE have indicated the 85th percentile speed is around 31 miles per hour; while that exceeds the posted 25 miles per hour, it is not to an extreme degree.

Mr. Murphy said the city is currently involved in collecting fresh data on traffic volumes at all of the entrances into the neighborhood and at key locations within the neighborhood on 109th Avenue SE, 111th Avenue SE and SE 4th Street. The traffic study extends into the Bellecrest neighborhood and into the downtown on the east side of 112th Avenue NE as well.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Hammond, Mr. Murphy said the 85th percentile is not a perfect metric but serves as a threshold. The vast majority of drivers on 109th Avenue SE are traveling at 31 miles per hour or less; only 15 percent are exceeding that speed. Around parks and elementary schools where there are more pedestrians the threshold is lowered to 30 miles per hour. The opportunity may exist in the study area to take another look at the guidelines given the recognition that the light rail will be a big pedestrian generator. Besides the speed studies, there are other factors that go into determining where sidewalks should be constructed, including safety, Transportation Commission review and City Council selection. The Neighborhood Sidewalk Program is another option.

Ms. Hammond said safety must be taken into consideration. The Surrey Downs neighborhood is seeing strong growth in the number of residents with small children.

Chair Lampe commented that as a Transportation Commission member he understands there is a screaming need for sidewalks all around the city. The city only scratches the surface of the need with what is built every couple of years.

Mr. Parast asked where the neighborhood believes the greatest need for sidewalks is. Mr. King said the place to start is with the East Main station. There is also a need to accommodate high school students. Sidewalks are also needed on 111th Avenue SE and on SE 2nd Street. Ms. Hammond added that 109th Avenue SE between Main Street and SE 11th Street is a straight speedway and a sidewalk is needed on at least one side of the

road. If the park does see increased use by people driving to it, SE 11th Street will also need sidewalks.

Ms. Unger proposed addressing the issue of access into the neighborhood from 110th Avenue SE before prioritizing where sidewalks are most needed in the community. Chair Lampe commented that regardless of whether or not the configuration of the intersection of Main Street and 110th Avenue SE changes, the potential for additional traffic in the neighborhood exists and that brings with it safety issues.

Mr. Murphy allowed that while the city wants to see thresholds met before initiating traffic calming measures such as speed humps, their placement is largely community driven. The city leaves to the residents decisions about if and where speed humps should be located.

Mr. Parast said whenever traffic restrictions or calming actions are taken there is always an inherent tradeoff. There is no technical solution that will solve everyone's issues, and in fact some issues do not have technical solutions. He asked for comment on how the current RPZ system within the study area is working.

Chair Lampe said the current situation is clearly different from what it will be when the station is operational. He said he could see no point in comparing how things stand presently with what the future might bring. Mr. Parast said part of the complexity lies in the fact that no one knows exactly how people will behave in the future. Certainly hide and ride activities will be more of an issue in the future than it is currently, but maybe the city will engage in more comprehensive enforcement in the future.

Ms. Hammond commented that regardless of how lenient or strict the rules about parking will be in the future, if the rules are not enforced they will not matter.

Mr. King said one option might be to develop a different RPZ for the area around the station. Ms. Unger agreed and said the distance persons are likely to walk after parking should be taken into account. Mr. Murphy said that breakpoint is usually around a quarter of a mile, though parking costs could get people to walk a little further. He said it might make sense to recommend a parking study before the station opens and another afterward to see if there is a large increase in parking violations.

Ms. Unger noted that sidewalks are not currently needed in the neighborhood, but said the Committee should recommend revisiting the topic a year after the station opens if there is not going to be any action to construct sidewalks before East Link begins operations.

Mr. Thurston said the problem is either real or imagined. Should a before and after study highlight the need to make changes, the actions would be based on real needs and real facts. There is no doubt there are concerns about having the station, the kiss and ride, and the potential traffic that might be generated.

Ms. Unger said residential access is not currently a big problem. It will be more inconvenient once the access points are closed off, but not that much more inconvenient, except for the impact the change will have on the Bellecrest neighborhood due to the increased number of people using 110th Avenue SE to get into Surrey Downs.

Mr. Thurston pointed out that the commercial side of 112th Avenue SE could be impacted as well. Drivers might elect to park their cars in those parking lots and then hop on the train. Surrey Downs has limited access via a circuitous system of roads, but some of the commercial interests are facing huge exposure. Given that there will only be three spots at the proposed kiss and ride, it will easily be filled up. Waiting cars will trigger backups. It is not difficult to imagine people dropping riders off in all kinds of places around the city rather than go to the main station. The East Main station has been billed as a convenience, but the question remains whether the area is set up to handle the impacts associated with the convenience without adverse consequences.

Mr. Parast agreed the kiss and ride is something the Committee should look at relative to how to best provide vehicle access to the station. Mr. Harris said there are always tradeoffs to weigh. It is good that the Committee is talking about the commercial area as well as the residential area. There remain uncertainties about what will occur long term in the commercial area as it redevelops over time, but there is the potential for more streets there.

Ms. Hammond said one of the things the Committee talked about early on relative to commercial traffic was the fact that currently traffic in the right-hand lane heading east on Main Street backs up from 112th Avenue SE past 110th Avenue SE as people try to turn right. The kiss and ride has always been a big question as to whether it will trigger even bigger backups.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Unger, Mr. Harris said it was his understanding that there will be kiss and ride locations to serve both southbound and northbound drop-offs on 112th Avenue SE.

Mr. King said the closure of two of the five entrances and exits to the neighborhood will put more pressure on 108th Avenue SE and on SE 2nd Street. With the additional traffic that will come from the large projects being built on Bellevue Way and Main Street, residents of the neighborhood may at times be sealed off.

Ms. Hammond commented that access to areas south of Main Street for traffic coming off of I-405 is difficult. Drivers that get off at NE 4th Street cannot turn onto 112th Avenue SE and must go into the downtown first. Southbound traffic on I-405 wanting to get to Surrey Downs can take the SE 8th Street exit but if they do so they will have to come back north on 112th Avenue SE. She asked what is going to happen to the ingress and egress on SE 8th Street from 112th Avenue SE once the train is operational. Mr. Murphy said he was unwilling to speculate. He said the area will be included in the traffic study to be done by the city's modeling group.

Mr. Thurston pointed out that once construction begins and heavy trucks start taking over the streets, there are going to be all sorts of traffic problems. Chair Lampe noted that construction impacts fall outside the purview of the Committee.

Mr. King asked if there are any plans to change either the speed or lane configurations for 112th Avenue SE. Mr. Harris said no bike lanes will be added given that an off-street path will be constructed. He also said there are no specific plans for changing the number of lanes though there have been discussions about reducing the four lanes to three to accommodate a turn lane.

Ms. Unger suggested consideration should be given to installing a signal on Main Street to control the intersections of 110th Avenue SE and 110th Avenue NE to allow for access into and out of the neighborhood. Mr. Murphy reminded the Committee that that would represent another trade-off between potentially increasing access to and thus traffic in the neighborhood and maintaining the status quo which limits traffic in the neighborhood.

Ms. Unger said another option that would improve access for the neighborhood would be to connect 110th Place SE with SE 2nd Street.

A motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes was made by Ms. Unger. The motion was seconded by Mr. King and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Thurston commented that if there were no kiss and ride option associated with the East Main station, people would still drop people off in various places but not necessarily right by the station.

Mr. Strunkin said that could trigger some safety concerns.

Ms. Hammond commented that westbound traffic on Main Street wanting to turn left onto 108th Avenue SE are benefited from having the flashing yellow arrow. She said a lot more traffic can be anticipated on Main Street, however, and suggested that a left-turn arrow facilitating the turn could improve things.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

Mr. Harris briefly outlined the next steps in the process and noted that the next meeting would be on March 24.

7. ADJOURN

Chair Lampe adjourned the meeting at 6:06 p.m.