

South Bellevue Station Area Planning—Focus Group #1 Summary

Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 12-1 pm, 1E-109, Bellevue City Hall

Attendees: Laura Fox, Renay Bennett, Tom Stowe, McKayla Dunfey, Robert Rosell, Pat Rosell, Bill Pace

Staff: Mike Kattermann, Kate March, Phil Harris, John Murphy

Meeting Background:

City of Bellevue staff working on the city's Station Area Planning (SAP) program met with select individuals to provide an update on strategies that have been developed to address key concerns raised by stakeholders in the South Bellevue East Link station area. The area comprises a roughly ½ mile radius emanating into the Enatai neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park from the future station. Staff have taken concerns raised by residents during the October 2013 Workshop and from comments received during other engagement activities to fold them into a draft station area plan for South Bellevue. Strategies to address the identified issues are grouped into four topic areas:

- Character and crime
- Traffic, safety, and noise
- Station access and parking
- Mercer Slough Park

There are five to ten strategies within each of these topics. Strategies are then grouped into one of two categories:

- Plans and programs
- Capital projects

The intent of the focus group was to provide initial feedback on these strategies. If there were omissions or clarification needed, staff would take those comments to further refine the plan. The draft plan will incorporate comments from both focus groups and will be shared with the wider public in 2015.

Meeting Structure

Kate opened the meeting explaining the purpose of the focus group and showed the October 2013 workshop summary video to remind participants the context for developing the South Bellevue station area plan. Kate emphasized that station area planning is focused on strategies for the area once East Link opens, not during the construction phase. She also noted that the intent of the focus group wasn't to rehash concerns but to go over strategies to fine-tune the overall plan.

Each participant received a packet of materials that highlights the strategies, a map summary of key concerns, and maps of potential pedestrian and bicycle projects that could enhance station connectivity. These materials will help participants to complete an online survey that asks them to identify the ten



most important strategies for the South Bellevue station area and also to prioritize the pedestrian and bicycle projects; a hard-copy of the survey was also included in the packet.

Kate proceeded to go over the map showing primary concerns in the station area. This led to the bulk of the meeting: discussing the strategies.

There were a few housekeeping questions.

Q: Can we add additional comments to the strategies?

A: Yes, during the discussion or via email.

Q: What will staff do with the strategies after the survey feedback is received?

A: The survey feedback is designed to get a pulse on how stakeholders are perceiving the strategies and what bubbles to the surface. This is just an initial check-in to see how the neighborhood is feeling and is not the final plan.

Phil went over the pedestrian and bicycle projects. He explained how pink areas on the map show access improvements. There was some discussion about the stairs that connect SE 28th Pl to 112th Ave SE and how it would be ideal if the width of the stairs widened, adding curving ramps to make it ADA accessible, and/or installing a runnel to allow for bicycles to push their bikes up and down the stairs (instead of carrying). There was additional discussion that creating new pedestrian connections could also create new opportunities for crime as it makes the neighborhood more accessible to a wider group of people. Regarding the bike projects, there was a question about whether the city has observed bicycle traffic on 108th Ave SE. A comment was made that a lot of cyclists get off 108th Ave SE and head east on SE 28th St and then south on 109th Ave SE.

Q: What are the sources of the pedestrian/bicycle projects?

A: Many of the projects stem from comments made at the October 2013 workshop. The source for each potential project is listed on the project maps found in the participant packets.

Discussion then turned to the area around Enatai Elementary. Some of the comments made include the following:

- SE 23rd St should have a blinking signal like at SE 25th St
- A raised crosswalk should be built at SE 25th St
- A raised crosswalk should be considered at SE 28th St; Beaux Arts brought this up to Bellevue a few years ago.
- Desire for push-button pedestrian-activated crossing at SE 23rd St, SE 25th St, and SE 28th St. This would help to better accommodate bicycles on 108th Ave SE.

Q: Is the gateway green buffer treatment on both sides of Bellevue Way?

A: The gateway treatment is very conceptual at this point and isn't very defined.



This led to a discussion about the desire to specifically note that trees and tree canopy should be retained as much as possible.

Q: Why is studying the HOV lane on Bellevue Way included as part of SAP?

A: This is in the SAP to ONLY study the HOV lane from the Y to the Park and Ride, not actually build. There was a desire from the workshop to study the HOV lane.

From here, conversation turned to noise.

ACTION ITEM: Staff are to send out the consultant noise report to participants. The noise report doesn't offer any specific recommendations; it simply notes existing conditions.

Q: Why isn't train noise part of SAP?

A: Train noise is handled through the Light Rail Permitting CAC. Sound Transit will have noise walls on the guideway to limit train noise. Traffic noise concerns on Bellevue Way are the purview for the South Bellevue SAP.

Participants then began a lively conversation about noise issues. There was concern about the lack of coordination between the various projects and processes being carried out by the city with regards to the East Link project. There was also concern that Sound Transit will not address noise unless it's part of the permit process due to conflicting federal and city requirements for maximum noise allowances. The idea to understand train noise on Central Link was raised to better understand implications for East Link noise. It was noted that averaging noise levels is not sufficient and various points throughout the day should be considered to understand how noise changes as traffic changes. There were some concerns about potential noise walls on Bellevue Way deflecting noise back into the Slough. Finally, there was concern about noise originating from the parking garage and fear that Sound Transit wouldn't address this.

There was concern that pesticide/herbicide use by Sound Transit would interrupt the blueberry farm's organic certification. Pesticide/herbicide use was news to staff and others around the table.

Q: Will the path from Sweylocken to the Park and Ride remain open?

A: Unsure at this point but the future multipurpose path should connect the Park and Ride to the I-90 trail.

Conversation then turned to bicycle access. There was a desire to explore the possibility of a protected bicycle facility along Bellevue Way. Staff noted that there will be a wide, multi-purpose path on the east side of Bellevue Way connecting the Park and Ride, up the west side of 112th Ave SE, to downtown. Also, there was a question about what bicycle facilities will be built/considered along 108th Ave SE.

Finally, there was a comment about increased lighting on 108th Ave SE and a desire to have lower pedestrian-scale light posts.



Next Steps

Kate informed the group to take all of this conversation into account and complete the online survey. Staff will take the information received during the session and the responses from the survey and incorporate into the final plan before bringing it back out to the public next year.

