

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

Bellevue Transit Master Plan – Capital-Oriented Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness

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FISCAL IMPACT:

None

POLICY ISSUES:

Comprehensive Plan:

Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan acknowledges that responding to anticipated growth in travel necessitates a multi-modal transportation solution that offers the public real choices about how they travel within, to, and through Bellevue. Comprehensive Plan Policy TR-50 recognizes the need to “Work with transit providers to implement the Bellevue Transit Plan as an attractive travel option for local residents, employees, students, visitors, businesses and other users of regional facilities.”

Bellevue Transit Plan:

On June 2, 2003, Council adopted the Bellevue Transit Plan (Resolution No. 6859). The 2003 Plan was a major step forward in articulating what improvements are needed in transit service and capital investments throughout Bellevue and served as an important reference document for collaborations with the City’s transit service providers. The service and capital partnerships resulting from this vision have enhanced transit’s role in Bellevue.

Bellevue Transit Master Plan:

On July 9, 2012, Council initiated the Bellevue Transit Master Plan (TMP), an update of the City's 2003 Transit Plan. The TMP is being overseen by the City’s Transportation Commission whose work is guided by Council-approved project principles (see Attachment 1) and input from members of the Planning, Arts, and Human Services Commissions and the Parks and Community Services Board.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

- Action
- Discussion
- Information

On November 12, 2013 staff and Chair Ernie Simas of the Bellevue Transportation Commission, will present Council with a status report on the Transit Master Plan (TMP). The discussion will focus on capital-oriented strategies and measures of effectiveness supporting the Transit Master Plan vision statement of “Abundant Access” approved by the Council on May 20, 2013. Staff

seeks Council feedback and general consensus at this time on the draft capital-oriented strategies and measures of effectiveness.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The Transit Master Plan (TMP) scope of work comprises three major elements (Service, Capital, and Policy). **Service Element** recommendations are founded on the service-oriented strategies outlined in the Market Driven Strategies Report (see Attachment 2) that focus on the “supply-side” of transit operations (i.e., service availability and quality). The **Capital Element** builds on this policy framework by proposing “demand-side” capital-oriented strategies that can influence the public’s decision to use transit (i.e., supportive land use environment, walkway/bikeway facilities, stop amenities, and transit priority measures). Although identified as a separate work product, the **Policy Element** is developed concurrently with and used to inform the direction of the other two plan elements.

Service Element:

Since September 2012 the Transportation Commission has:

- considered the current state of transit service in Bellevue and the anticipated needs of the community in the years ahead;
- actively participated in multiple forums and workshops in an examination of the fundamental trade-offs concerning transit service allocation;
- arrived at a set of service-oriented strategies that will lead to "Abundant Access" for people who live, work, shop, and play in the City of Bellevue; and,
- formally transmitted these strategies informing the Service Element of the Transit Master Plan to the Bellevue City Council.

The Transit Service Vision Report (available in Council Office) details route-level recommendations that advance the “Abundant Access” vision and are responsive to three financial scenarios (reduced, stable, and growing resources) and attuned to three time horizons (2015, 2022, and 2030). The Frequent Transit Network (see Attachment 3), derived from the 2030 Growing Resources scenario, increases service by approximately 47 percent from Spring 2012 levels to accommodate the projected near tripling of citywide transit demand by 2030. The Frequent Transit Network (FTN) supports Downtown growth, Bel-Red corridor redevelopment, and Bellevue's other activity centers with well-connected bus routes that seamlessly interface with East Link light rail. People traveling along FTN corridors can expect convenient, reliable, easy-to-use services that are frequent enough that they never need to refer to a schedule. The Transit Service Vision Report concludes the Service Element of the TMP.

Capital Element:

Having completed the Service Element, staff is working with members of the Transportation, Planning, Arts, and Human Services Commissions and the Parks and Community Services Board on the TMP Capital Element. The Capital Element has three primary objectives:

1. Stimulate discussion on congestion in Bellevue that compromises transit's efficiency.
2. Evaluate the trade-offs associated with different street design decisions.
3. Assess roadway, signal system, and other right-of-way improvements that could be made to support the Frequent Transit Network outlined in the Service Vision Report.

As part of the ongoing outreach supporting the TMP, the Transportation Department held a joint Board/Commission Capital and Policy Element Workshop on September 6, 2013 (see summary report in Council Office). Workshop participants engaged in a discussion about the appropriate

degree to which transit should be given priority over other modes - if at all - and in which situations. This was considered both in terms of the language used in City policies and in relation to transit priority treatments along Frequent Transit Network corridors.

On October 17 the Transportation Commission formulated the following four capital-oriented strategies for Council consideration:

1. Use urban design and development regulations in Bellevue's major activity centers to support transit use.
2. Design transit facilities to enhance accessibility, connectivity, and user experience.
3. Invest in transit priority measures along Frequent Transit Network corridors.
4. Employ innovation and community collaboration when implementing transit priority measures along Frequent Transit Network corridors.

These capital-oriented strategies recognize that "encouraging long-term ridership growth" (Council Project Principles) in Bellevue necessitates transit service enhancements (noted in the Service Element) paired with the City's commitment to a supportive land use environment, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and transit speed and reliability infrastructure (that will be outlined in the Capital Element). The result of this partnership will be a more productive transit network for the benefit of transit agencies and City of Bellevue customers.

At its October 17 meeting, the Transportation Commission also responded to one of Council's project principles for the Transit Master Plan (TMP) directing staff to: "Develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress." Commissioners discussed the following four metrics to monitor progress in achieving Bellevue's TMP vision:

1. Measure service availability on Bellevue's Frequent Transit Network corridors.
2. Measure transit usage in Bellevue's Mobility Management Areas.
3. Measure person throughput by mode on Bellevue's Frequent Transit Network corridors.
4. Measure travel time savings resulting from speed and reliability improvements on Bellevue's Frequent Transit Network corridors.

On November 12 Bellevue staff seeks Council feedback and general consensus on the draft capital-oriented strategies and measures of effectiveness outlined above. Council's input on these strategies will inform the Transportation Commission's upcoming discussions to identify locations and corridors that warrant speed and reliability, route facility, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to support efficient and effective transit operations.

Policy Element

The Policy Element is approached incrementally throughout the plan development process. Council direction on the evolving policy framework for the Transit Master Plan began with the project principles (approved by Council on July 9, 2012) that provided guidance on the project scope of work, timeline, and engagement strategy. The service-oriented strategies (approved by Council on March 20, 2013) provided direction on the route-level recommendations reflected in the Service Vision Report. Council input on the capital-oriented strategies will inform the Transportation Commission's approach to identifying locations and corridors that warrant speed and reliability, route facility, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to support efficient and effective transit operations. Taken together, these service and capital-oriented strategies represent the Policy Element.

NEXT STEPS:

In the first quarter of 2014, Council will be presented with the final Transit Master Plan report that will incorporate service and capital-oriented strategies with short- and long-term projects that foster a transit system that is easier and more enjoyable to use by residents, employees, and visitors in Bellevue. Upon Council acceptance, this document will inform the region's transit service providers of Bellevue's priorities and updates to the Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Code, and potential City-led transit initiatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Council Project Principles

Attachment 2 – Market Driven Strategies Report

Attachment 3 – Frequent Transit Network

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE FOR REVIEW:

- Transit Service Vision Report (October 2013)
- Capital and Policy Workshop Report (October 2013)
- Coach Operator Outreach Report (September 2013)
- Existing and Future Conditions Report (August 2013)
- Transit/Auto Travel Time Analysis (July 2013)
- Market Driven Strategies Report (May 2013)
- Funding Scenarios Report (May 2013)
- Transit Network Design Workshop Report (April 2013)
- Network Profile Report 2011-12 Update (February 2012)
- Briefing Report (October 2012)
- Transit Improvement Survey Report (October 2012)
- Forum Report (October 2012)
- Phase 1 Outreach Report – Technical Appendix (June 2012)
- Network Profile Report (April 2012)
- Project Principles (July 2012)