

FIRE AND TRANSPORTATION BALLOT MEASURES

Capital projects in Bellevue

One key role of the Bellevue City Council is determining what capital projects – such as roads, sidewalks, fire stations and parks – to build and how to fund them. Every two years, the council adopts a capital budget covering a seven-year timeframe. Projects are funded from a variety of resources, including sales tax, real estate excise tax, business and occupations tax, impact fees charged for new development and other sources of revenue.

Capital projects are identified in several ways. They may be needed to accommodate expected growth; to maintain existing facilities and extend their useful life; to meet changing expectations; or to enhance the quality of life residents enjoy. Currently, the city's list of capital projects exceeds projected revenue by more than \$800 million over the next 20 years.

In recent years the council has worked to shrink the gap between needs and revenue. They have done so by increasing impact fees charged for new development to help pay for road capacity projects, and by aggressively pursuing grants and low-interest federal loans. Recognizing, however, that key needs remain, particularly for projects related to safety and neighborhood congestion and connectivity, the council on July 25, 2016, approved two measures for the Nov. 8, 2016, ballot.

Public feedback

To gauge community support and help guide the council in shaping the possible ballot measures, the city asked for public feedback. Three open houses were held in late June and an online survey was conducted for four weeks. [Results of the online survey](#) showed that 67 percent of the 800 people who responded supported a Fire Facilities ballot measure; 64 percent supported a Transportation Safety and Connectivity ballot measure. [Open house attendees](#) indicated similar levels of support.

Bellevue's current property tax picture

The two ballot measures – one related to fire facilities upgrades, one focused on neighborhood transportation improvements – would be funded through property tax levies over a 20-year period. The City of Bellevue's property tax rate has decreased for the past five years; the 2016 rate is 94 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value (\$601/year for a Bellevue home with a median assessed value of \$640,000). Bellevue currently has the lowest rate of Washington cities with a population greater than 20,000. A typical property tax payer in Bellevue sends 11 cents of every dollar to the city to fund municipal services and capital projects; the remaining 89 cents goes to King County, schools, and other jurisdictions.

Financial considerations for property owners

If approved by voters, the approximate combined cost of the two measures for a typical Bellevue homeowner (whose home has the median assessed value of \$640,000), would be approximately \$176 per year: \$80 for Fire Facilities and \$96 for Transportation Safety, Connectivity and Congestion.

- **Fire Facilities:** If approved by voters, this measure would increase the city's property tax levy by 12.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, or about \$80 per year. Over 20 years it would raise approximately \$120 million to upgrade Fire Facilities.
- **Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion:** If approved, the measure for transportation neighborhood safety, connectivity and congestion improvements would increase the city's property tax levy by 15 cents per \$1,000



of assessed value, or about \$96 per year. Over 20 years it would raise about \$140 million for transportation system improvements.

Fire Facilities measure

City policies prioritize the ability to provide critical services to the community through continuous fire and emergency operations during earthquakes, power outages, and other emergency events. The Fire Department has 10 facilities to maintain, and each one must be able to operate 24 hours per day. In 2014, the Fire Department developed a master plan to identify deficiencies in its fire facilities. It identified several challenges in the current system: The average fire station is nearly 38 years old; none of the fire stations meet current seismic code for an essential facility; fire station mechanical systems are past their projected life; station bays are too small for today's larger fire trucks; and the city's fast-growing downtown area needs its own fire station. To address the needs identified in the master plan, revenue from the proposed [fire facilities ballot measure](#) would be used in several ways:

- **Seismic retrofits:** Upgrade facilities to ensure that every fire station in Bellevue meets seismic standards to withstand a major earthquake and allow a first response in any emergency;
- **Build a new downtown fire station:** Construct a fire station to serve Bellevue's fastest-growing neighborhood, taking response pressure off other neighborhood fire stations;
- **Upgrade existing fire stations:** Remodeling, expanding or replacing fire stations in Bellevue and aligning facilities to better serve the community; and
- **Logistics center space:** Obtain warehouse space to consolidate reserve equipment and to provide a central location for the repair of special equipment.

Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion measure

The Transportation Department has a backlog of neighborhood safety, connectivity, congestion improvement, sidewalk, bicycle, technology, and maintenance needs. Examples include: a backlog of neighborhood sidewalk projects that would take more than 30 years to complete at current



funding levels; backlogs of 55 pedestrian crossing projects, 35 neighborhood traffic calming projects and 12 school traffic improvement projects; and a funding shortfall for 52 identified projects that would provide 57 miles of new or upgraded bike facilities citywide. New, sustained funding is needed to help reduce these backlogs. The description of projects that would be eligible for funding from the [Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion ballot measure](#) include:

- **Projects that reduce neighborhood congestion:** Projects to address and ease congestion for motor vehicles within, near and/or connecting neighborhoods to services to improve access and mobility;
- **Neighborhood safety projects:** Provide traffic calming, reduce speed and non-local traffic, reduce potential for collisions in neighborhoods and around schools, add mid-block crossings and other crosswalks with enhanced safety features such as flashing lights, and other projects;
- **New sidewalks/trails/paths:** Add sidewalks to provide walking access to neighborhoods, schools, parks, shopping and other destinations;
- **Technology for safety and traffic management:** Improve city's capability to implement technology that improves safety, traffic flow, traveler information and other emerging technology such as autonomous vehicles;
- **Projects to enhance system maintenance:** Repairs and improvements to existing transportation facilities with outstanding maintenance needs such as sidewalks, trails, slopes, walls, poles, lighting, wiring and street cleaning; and
- **New bike facilities:** Add facilities to create a safe and connected bike network for commuting, recreation and family activities.