



May 13, 2019

Re: Downtown Demonstration Bikeway

Bellevue City Council
Bellevue City Hall
450 110th Ave NE
Bellevue, WA 98004

Mayor Chelminiak and Councilmembers,

The Bellevue Transportation Commission voted on March 28, 2019 to recommend making permanent the 108th Avenue NE Demonstration Bikeway Pilot Program and in favor of recommending “rapid build bicycle facility refinements” to the 108th Avenue NE corridor.

Tonight, Council will also consider a request for further evaluation and implementation of bicycle facilities on Main Street, as the “next logical element of a downtown bicycle network.” The proposal would take the additional step of eliminating a lane of road capacity to convert it into a bicycle-only lane, despite traffic modeling data that shows it may cause an increase in the average congestion for all turning movements at Main and 108th. Before doing so, the Chamber urges the Council to take the following steps.

Retain Your Authority. Council should make the final decision as to whether to retain the 108th Avenue NE bikeway and implement further refinements to the corridor, and whether to convert a road lane on Main Street to a bicycle-only lane. Since adoption of the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, dramatic changes in population, employment and development patterns have occurred in Downtown Bellevue. It is essential for specific infrastructure decisions that have significant impacts on the functionality of the Downtown transportation system be made our elected representatives.

Improve the Transportation Modeling. With recent announcements regarding proposed redevelopment in the downtown core, we believe the PSRC VISION 2050 Draft SEIS and the new activity based BKRCast model will both confirm an acceleration of new person trips in and out of Downtown Bellevue that far exceeds the 531,000 assumed for 2030 in Bellevue’s Downtown Implementation Plan. These factors should be considered in the transportation modeling to provide a clearer picture of the potential impacts of these projects.

Consistent with the data-driven approach already in use for CIP project selection, we recommend a modeling exercise that will estimate the “total person trips” to be captured by bicycle-only lanes on 108th NE and Main street in 2030, the same baseline year already in use for the Downtown Implementation Plan and 2019-30 Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP).

Mitigate or Avoid Impacts to Transit and Vehicular Congestion. Our understanding is the intersection of Main Street and Bellevue Way is already at a failing level of congestion. We are concerned that retention of existing bicycle-only lanes on Main Street, the extension to 108th, and eventually expanding bicycle lanes to the Main Street overpass may cause additional degradation to this important east-west corridor. If updated modeling shows the project will create additional congestion we encourage you to find an alternate that reduces, or ideally avoids, such impacts.

Engage in Appropriate Public Process. We request that Council initiate a robust public process that provides all segments of the community an opportunity to provide feedback on further refinements to both 108th NE and Main Street. The notion of converting existing right-of-way on Main Street to bicycle-only use has had limited public process or specific Council action. Such decisions should be made after thorough public scrutiny.

Further Refine the 108th Bikeway Analysis. The 108th NE demonstration bikeway was conducted as a six-month pilot program, rather than for a calendar year as originally proposed. Data was only reported for four months. It is important that decisions of this magnitude be based upon data which represents use of the facility over a sustained and representative time period. I have attached a letter which the Chamber sent to the Commission last year containing several requests for data collection and refinement of the 108th project. We believe these issues and questions remain valid and should inform a final decision by Council on this matter.

The Chamber supports development of truly multimodal transportation solutions for Bellevue, as well as a new comprehensive Transportation Master Plan which will guide investments for all modes of transportation and all facilities. We believe this will be the best way to mitigate the impacts of increasing trip demand and preserve mobility for all modes over the long term.

We respectfully ask Council to defer action on additional downtown rapid build bicycle facility refinements, retain control over further bicycle-only facility implementation, base decisions on the best available data, and explore alternatives that will have the least impact upon transit operations, general mobility, and congestion relief.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Fain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "F".

Joe Fain
President & CEO



January 11, 2018

Re: Downtown Demonstration Bikeway Project

Vic Bishop, Chair
Transportation Commissioners
City of Bellevue
450 110th Ave NE
Bellevue, WA 98004

Dear Chair Bishop and Transportation Commissioners,

Tonight, the Transportation Commission will discuss and consider providing recommendations, on a potential downtown demonstration bikeway.

The Bellevue Chamber of Commerce was an early supporter of Bellevue Proposition 2, leading the charge to expand the package and include more projects with measurable benefits.

The Chamber advocates all modes of travel, whether vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle or transit and want each of these options to work for our employees, vendors, residents and visitors alike.

We strongly support investments in bicycle pathways for recreational purposes, access and egress within and between neighborhoods, and to foster connectivity with regional trail networks, including the Mountains to Sound Greenway.

We are also convinced our multimodal transportation system must include emerging technologies, including autonomous electric and flexible van pools, shared employee shuttles and transportation network companies, all connected through Bellevue's Smart Cities Initiative.

With this in mind, we are concerned about proposals to "repurpose" existing right of way from one mode to the exclusion of another. For example, bicycles and autonomous vehicles should be able to share the same right-of-way. Ultimately, the goal of all modal investments must be maximizing the movement of people.

That's we why conclude that moving forward with a bikeways demonstration project, in a manner that will minimize negative impacts upon other modes, requires additional vetting. To assist in this process, we've included a list of questions on page two of this letter.

As a matter of context, Bellevue is currently the third-largest city in the Puget Sound and a vibrant employment center. The downtown population is projected to grow from 6,800 residents in 2010 to 19,000 by 2030, while employment is projected to increase from 42,500 to more than 70,000 by 2030.

Concurrent with that growth, downtown trip demand is expected to grow from 385,000 person-trips per day in 2010 to 665,000, a 73% increase. Of this trip growth, more than 70% is expected to be made by personal automobile and freight, and 29% is expected to be transit and pedestrian trips.

The number one business challenge, per the annual Eastside Business Leaders Survey, is traffic congestion. To mitigate the impacts of increasing trip demand and preserve mobility downtown into the future, it is vital that we make investments that capture as many of those future trips as possible.

To determine the current and future impacts of a bike demonstration project, the Chamber urges the City to provide additional “Synchro Analyses” to the Transportation Commission – prior to acting on a recommendation. The analyses should include all proposed routes, including their respective cross streets (e.g. NE 4th St., NE 8th St.), both at today’s traffic levels and in year 2030 to better understand how this may impact future mobility.

In addition, the Chamber is concerned that the new Multimodal Level of Service policy is being implemented without City Council approval. Per Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan, the MMLOS standards are to inform both transportation facility design and investment. Before recommending a preferred downtown demonstration bikeway project, we urge the Commission to obtain answers to the following questions:

- 1) Operationally, if implemented on a “bus priority corridor,” will the recommended demonstration project negatively impact present and future vehicular and transit flows specifically on that corridor and, in general, downtown? If so, by how much? In addition, will an increase in travel times lead to increases in greenhouse gas emissions, and if so, by how much?
- 2) Will more people be moved through the corridor? Will there be a net gain or loss compared to prior uses? How many present and future person-trips will the proposed demonstration project capture?
- 3) Impact fees are used to build infrastructure to maintain levels of service. Is there concern that willfully degrading levels of service may provoke legal challenges?
- 4) The commission is currently considering implementation of a “high comfort” bikeway to accommodate riders that “interested but concerned.” If a “high comfort” bikeway was implemented on 108th Ave NE, what percentage of projected users of the facility would be considered LTS 1 and LTS 2? How many LTS 1 and LTS 2 riders would use the facility?

Thank you very much for carefully considering our input. Please consider the Chamber a resource as you move forward evaluating and recommending crucial and important transportation improvements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betty Capestany". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Betty Capestany
President & CEO