

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 3, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Davidson, Deputy Mayor Lee, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Degginger, Robertson, and Wallace

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Lee opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 30 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation and two items of potential litigation.

The meeting reconvened at 6:38 p.m., with Mayor Davidson presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Briefing on Traffic Computer Systems Upgrade

City Manager Steve Sarkozy introduced staff's report on the traffic computer systems upgrade. He recalled that the project was discussed at the time that the Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan was adopted.

Goran Sparrman, Transportation Director, explained that the central Traffic Management Center is located on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall. Engineers input signal timing plans into the central computer, which monitors 90 percent of Bellevue's 182 traffic signals. Mr. Sparrman said the system upgrade is needed due to concerns about the system's reliability, the need for modern features, the need to support multi-modal mobility, and the need to better manage existing roads to accommodate maximum capacity.

Mr. Sparrman explained that the system was installed in the late 1970s and has been expanded a number of times. The current supplier was recently sold, service has degraded, and the future of support is unreliable. A new system will provide better timing plans that are more responsive to traffic, better left-turn phasing, and links to adjacent agencies. The current system does not

support bus mobility, lacks pedestrian crossing features, and does not provide a feasible integration with future light rail operations.

Mark Poch, Signal Systems Engineering Manager, explained that the City's Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) master plan identifies a number of projects, three of which are considered high priority [CIP Plan No. PW-R-155]: 1) Signal system replacement, 2) Transit signal priority, and 3) Communication system. Mr. Poch reviewed the progress to date on these projects. The communication system is 80 percent complete and forms the backbone for future ITS-type projects the City might choose to implement. The system has additional uses as well, including Wi-Fi service in the downtown.

Mr. Poch described the process to identify the best signal system for Bellevue, and to define operational goals and system requirements. In June 2009, the Council approved the consultant contract associated with this effort. A request for information (RFI) for potential vendors was issued in November 2009. The finalist systems are SCATS (Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System) and SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimization Technique). Both are traffic adaptive systems, which continuously feed traffic data back into the system and send new coordination plans every cycle. Adaptive systems improve traffic volume handling by three to seven percent, and reduce travel times and delays. It is not currently in use in Washington state, and requires a new level of staff expertise as well as a commitment of funding and staff. However, adaptive systems provide the best ability to quickly adapt to changing traffic conditions, especially in non-saturated (i.e., non-gridlocked) conditions.

Mr. Poch said the technical committee visited three jurisdictions (Santa Rosa, CA; Ann Arbor, MI; and Oakland County, MI) to observe the SCATS and SCOOT systems. Staff recommends implementation of the SCATS system due to its applicability for Bellevue, vendor support, ease of use, cost, and technical committee's recommendation.

Laurie Gromala, Assistant Transportation Director for Traffic Management, reviewed staff's recommendation to first implement SCATS on key corridors in the Downtown and Factoria, and to evaluate the performance. Staff further recommends the implementation of a bridge system to remove intersections from the old system as an interim measure. The initial deployment would involve 22 Downtown intersections and 9 Factoria intersections.

Staff recommends hiring an outside consultant to analyze initial system performance and to determine whether it is meeting the City's objectives. The estimated cost of this work is \$120,000. Additional costs are \$830,000 for SCATS initial deployment, \$275,000 for the bridge system, \$120,000 for performance evaluation, and \$600,000 for labor, for a total project cost of \$1,825,000. PW-R-155 has a remaining budget of \$1,977,000. This provides \$152,000 in contingency funds beyond the project cost estimate. An additional \$758,000 in expenses was previously identified for the 2011 CIP budget.

Ms. Gromala explained that if the Council concurs with staff's recommended course of action, a SCATS initial deployment contract will be presented for Council action in May or June, and the system performance evaluation contract will be implemented in July. Projected milestones are

implementation of the system in Factoria in October, and for the Downtown in November. The system performance evaluation report is targeted for March 2011. Ms. Gromala reviewed that the project provides system-wide benefits and can be expanded to meet future needs.

Councilmember Balducci expressed support for moving forward with the project, noting that it is one of the most cost-effective ways to provide travel relief. She suggested that implementation in East Bellevue would help to improve traffic flow on 148<sup>th</sup> and 156<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

Mr. Poch explained that the project anticipates a phased approach. The highest priority is the Downtown due to significant mobility issues. The third phase includes 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue and part of the Eastgate area. However, the phasing of the project can be designed to respond to Council's direction.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Poch said the Downtown and Factoria were selected for the first phase due to high traffic volumes and pedestrian activity, the proximity of freeways, and the greatest potential for improving traffic conditions.

Councilmember Balducci expressed support for the project. Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Poch said SCATS is essentially a government-developed system from Australia. There is one vendor in the United States for this system.

Mr. Sparrman said staff reviewed and evaluated a dozen or more systems, including domestic systems. SCATS and SCOOT are more advanced than the couple of adaptive systems in the United States.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Ms. Gromala said approximately \$1 million has been spent, primarily on the fiber optic communication network. The project is ahead of schedule due to the favorable bidding environment, with the network 80 percent complete at this time versus the projected 65 percent complete. The consultant contract, equipment, and labor costs were also included in that amount. In further response, Ms. Gromala said the 2010 budget will cover the initial implementation of the system in 31 intersections. Funding requested for next year will be discussed during this year's budget process. Future funding will be used to expand the system.

Mr. Poch noted that while this first phase has a cost of \$1.8 million, a second phase of 31 intersections could be done for approximately \$600,000.

Deputy Mayor Lee said that he is a big advocate for intelligent transportation systems. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Poch said Oakland County, Michigan (Detroit area), began using its system in 1991. Santa Rosa initiated its system in 2005, and Ann Arbor in 2006.

Deputy Mayor Lee expressed an interest in data from other SCATS systems that demonstrates the improvements and impacts. Mr. Sparrman explained that the system is a cost-effective way to enhance the capacity of the transportation system by 5-10 percent. Other cities using the system recommend it, and are interested in expanding their systems.

Deputy Mayor Lee said he strongly supports the use of this transportation technology, although he is concerned about the expenditure at this time. Mr. Sarkozy reiterated that the system is a cost-effective way to improve traffic conditions. He noted the potential for reducing travel times by 5-15 percent and delays by 15-25 percent.

Councilmember Degginger expressed concern about using a sole source contractor, and questioned the financial strength of the vendor.

Mr. Poch said the SCATS technology was developed by the Australian government, and is procured and distributed by Transcore in the United States. While staff's evaluation was focused on overall satisfaction with the vendor, staff has not conducted a thorough investigation regarding the company's financial strength.

Responding to Councilmember Degginger, Mr. Sparrman concurred with the need to verify the company's financial position. Mr. Poch said the selection of the vendor included research into other agencies' experience with the vendor and the technology. However, staff did not conduct a financial analysis of the company. Mr. Sparrman said staff will research this information before returning for Council approval.

Councilmember Wallace questioned the ultimate plan for full implementation of the system for all 182 intersections.

Mr. Poch said staff could map out a full plan to occur over the next seven years of the CIP Plan. He explained that staff is preparing a capital program budget proposal for the ITS Master Plan Implementation Program, which is envisioned to fund future phases of expanding the new traffic computer system. Councilmember Wallace said it would be helpful to see the complete plan. Responding to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Poch said the estimated savings of \$1.5 million as a system benefit is based on the reduction in travel times and on assigning a corresponding dollar value (\$10 per hour) to drivers' time. Mr. Poch said the estimate is intended to demonstrate the value of the system to the public.

Mayor Davidson stated that he is hearing general Council support for the project. However, he reiterated the Council's interest in information on the financial stability of the vendor

Councilmember Degginger observed that supporting the initial project phase implies support for future expansion of the system.

Mr. Sparrman clarified that the project is scalable, and the City urgently needs to transition from the existing Computran System. The current proposal buys the traffic adaptive system for 31 intersections, with the rest of the intersections continuing on the bridged system until future Council decisions are made about the system performance.

Moving on, Mayor Davidson indicated that the East Link discussion will most likely be continued after the Regular Session.

(b) East Link Light Rail Update – 2010 Work Plan

City Manager Sarkozy explained that the intent of tonight's presentation is to address ongoing consultant work to conduct further analysis, peer review, and ongoing monitoring of the Sound Transit East Link process.

Bernard van de Kamp, Regional Projects Manager, provided a review of East Link discussions over the past several months. He noted the Council's alignment preferences of the B7, C9T and D2A alternatives. The Sound Transit Board's revised preliminary preferred alternatives are the B2M (Modified), C9T (or C11A), and the D2A, potentially with modifications to the D2A option.

Mr. van de Kamp recalled that in July 2009, the Council created CIP Project No. PW-R-159 to allocate funds for the analysis of East Link issues. This action allocated \$770,000 and authorized the City Manager to reallocate an additional \$300,000 as needed. Approximately \$575,000 in contracts have been awarded for the C9T cost estimate review, evaluation of possible new revenue sources, traffic analysis, legal counsel, Bellevue Way HOV lane conceptual design, and the evaluation of impacts to the City Hall Plaza.

Mr. van de Kamp said staff proposes transferring \$300,000 from savings in the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street widening project to fully fund PW-R-159. Potential near-term contracts anticipated for additional work relate to environmental analysis of Mercer Slough, noise impact assessment, traffic engineering assistance, engineering and design assistance, cost estimating review and assistance, as well as other areas as directed by the Council and/or City Manager.

Mr. Sarkozy described the three major areas of the Council's concerns. The first is the comparison of the B3 and B7 environmental impacts and design costs, which could be provided by consultants. The second area of concern, and of interest in further analysis, is Sound Transit's B2M preferred alternative. The City will receive more information from Sound Transit within the next day or two, and staff anticipates providing briefings to the Council within the next week. The third major category of concern is the total cost for Bellevue's segments, and identifying an estimated \$150 million in resources to fund the downtown tunnel.

Mr. Sarkozy briefly reviewed the components of the environmental analysis of Mercer Slough and Sturtevant Creek/Wetlands, which includes a comparison of these impacts for the B3/B2M and B7 alternatives. He described the scope of review anticipated for the noise impact assessment, traffic engineering assistance, engineering and design assistance, and cost estimating review.

Mr. Sarkozy said City staff will continue to work with Sound Transit staff as the City's consultants complete their work. The Term Sheet established by the Council will ultimately be revised into a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Sound Transit in early 2011.

Mr. Sparrman summarized that the proposed consultant work responds to questions and information requested by the Council.

At 7:54 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared recess to the Regular Session.

The Study Session reconvened at 10:15 p.m., following the Regular Session.

Councilmember Degginger said he was troubled by staff's statements that the proposed work plan represents the entire discussion of all of the Council's issues over the past several months. He opined that it does not address many of the issues that have been discussed on the various alternative routes. Mr. Degginger said the proposed work analysis does not address environmental concerns related to the B7 alternative, or the ability to expand 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE to accommodate a parking structure.

Mr. Degginger questioned the total cost for the proposed consultant work. When discussed last July, there was significant opposition from some Councilmembers about adding funding for further study. He questioned whether there would be a request for proposal (RFP) process.

Councilmember Chelminiak questioned the purpose of doing the additional body of work. He noted his general concerns about light rail noise and sound mitigation, as well as about general light rail operations.

Mr. Sparrman explained that the City maintains a roster of consultants that can be called upon when there is an urgent need. The contracts cannot exceed \$50,000 without going through a formal RFP process. Mr. Sparrman said consultants from the roster have been identified for the five topical areas.

Councilmember Degginger questioned the scope of work for the additional analyses, noting that noise appears to be a top issue of concern to the community.

Mr. Sparrman acknowledged that the scope of work is fairly general in terms of referring to peer review and analysis of Sound Transit's information. Staff has identified consultants with the expertise and ability to provide a quick turnaround to complete the work desired by the City. Mr. Sparrman said staff was careful to avoid firms that might present a perceived conflict of interest, which narrowed the possible candidates. Mr. Sparrman reviewed the list of consultants recommended by staff, and noted that each contract will be less than \$50,000.

Councilmember Chelminiak questioned what information will be gained regarding noise impacts. He noted the issues of wheel squeal noise, general noise, noise associated with stations, and noise associated with transitions between grade separations. He is interested in more than decibel meter readings in terms of the nature and quality of the noise and its effects on residents.

Mr. Sparrman clarified that the idea is not to repeat the work and technical analysis that has already been done by Sound Transit. The scope of work for the City's noise consultant includes a review of Sound Transit's data, methodology, and conclusions about noise impacts. It will

provide additional information about the applicable standards of the state and federal governments and whether there are opportunities for the enhanced mitigation of noise impacts.

Councilmember Robertson stated that with regard to the noise study, she wants information on the best profile, location, and design to minimize noise, and the most effective method of mitigation for each profile. Regardless of the alignment, she wants to make sure that noise impacts are minimized for neighborhoods and businesses.

Mr. Sparrman responded that specific alignments have different noise impacts based on their design, and these will be identified through additional engineering work. The noise analysis will identify the best ways to mitigate noise impacts.

Councilmember Balducci observed that the discussion feels disjointed, and she wondered whether there is some framing or organization in the proposal that would help. In general, she feels the topics listed are responsive to the Council's questions and concerns. She reiterated Councilmember Degginger's question about the specific goal of the consultant work. She noted the issue of alignment selection, as well as the issue of alignment design and the mitigation of impacts. She would like an independent consultant to investigate the various options for Segment B in terms of environmental, noise, and traffic impacts; cost; and ridership. Given the limited budget available, Ms. Balducci suggested an independent analysis of Sound Transit's work in each of the topic areas, and advice as to whether Sound Transit's studies and plans are reasonable and/or adequate.

Mr. Sparrman responded to questions of clarification from Councilmember Wallace regarding the estimated cost of the consultant work and the funding source.

Councilmember Wallace echoed Councilmember Balducci's comments about articulating the purpose of the consultant's work and questions to be answered before proceeding with the consultant contracts. Mr. Wallace noted his frustration regarding requests to staff for information that he believes exists, but that has not been provided to him. This includes questions about the B2M and C9T alternatives, which would be of benefit to the entire Council.

Mr. Sparrman apologized to Councilmember Wallace for the apparent lapse in staff's response. He said staff is currently pulling together information requested by Mr. Wallace. Mr. Sparrman encouraged Councilmembers to request a meeting with individual staff to go over questions, because the issues are complicated and questions cannot always be answered in a brief email.

Mr. Sparrman clarified that staff is suggesting multiple consultant contracts in order to expedite the work, which would not be possible with the traditional RFP process.

Mr. Wallace questioned when the City received the B2M plan. Mr. Sparrman responded that there is no B2M plan. Mr. Sparrman explained that a work session with Sound Transit staff is scheduled for tomorrow to look at all the different options. He recalled the joint City Council-Sound Transit Board workshop in February, in which Sound Transit indicated an interest in using 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue for Segment B as a cost-savings measure. Mr. Sparrman speculated that it

will be at least a couple of weeks before sufficient information about options within the B2M segment will be available.

With regard to the engineering study, Councilmember Wallace said he would like to see an analysis of how to provide a connection between the B7 alternative and the South Bellevue Park & Ride. He noted that a number of Councilmembers have indicated that they do not feel that Sound Transit has sufficiently studied options for achieving this goal. He is also interested in the costs and impacts associated with running light rail on 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue, next to the Surrey Downs Park and neighborhood, and the proposed elevated structure that turns at Main Street to enter the downtown.

Councilmember Wallace commented on the need for the City to know the total cost of the project and Bellevue's financial obligation. Without reliable cost information, he does not see how the City and Sound Transit can work together to cooperatively reduce project costs and to meet mutual objectives. He noted the need for cost estimating assistance to determine how costs are being refined according to Sound Transit's model, which includes 107 percent in contingency funding.

Mr. Wallace commented on the need for a right-of-way analysis, noting that he suspects that Sound Transit's estimates are overstated and that opportunities for value engineering can be identified. He would like to encourage Sound Transit to provide a direct bid and more reliable estimates of architectural and engineering costs for each alternative.

With regard to noise, Mr. Wallace said he would like an acoustical engineer to conduct a field analysis to simulate the noise impacts of an elevated structure at 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and Main Street, along 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, and along the BNSF alignment for Segment D. Mr. Wallace said the City needs to be looking at valid mitigation for the entire light rail alignment throughout Bellevue.

Councilmember Wallace would like a better understanding of the legal issues associated with compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, concurrency requirements, Light Rail Best Practices policies, and protecting historic structures (i.e., Winters House). He would like to see visual simulations that have been developed to date, if any, as well as a high-quality visual simulation of the Sound Transit proposed B2M route and its link to the C9T alternative.

Mayor Davidson noted his ongoing concerns regarding the ecosystem impacts and effects on wetlands. He wants verification about whether the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) is correct.

Councilmember Robertson requested the results from the CEO advisory group and its final recommendations. Her goal for additional study is to analyze the alternatives and elements preferred by the City Council, which are not necessarily reflected in Sound Transit's preferred alternative. She would like sufficient work on the B7 alternative, which she expects to be favorable and could therefore be used to influence the Sound Transit Board to adopt Bellevue's preferences. She acknowledged the risk that the studies might not prove that the B7 is the best

option. However, it will give the Council and citizens a higher level of assurance about the risks and impacts associated with this alternative. She encouraged an analysis of how light rail along existing roadways affects vehicle capacity.

Deputy Mayor Lee commented on the need to articulate the goals for additional study. He expressed concern about comments he has heard indicating that the City is trying to support Sound Transit's preferred alternative. He believes that the B7 alternative has not received adequate analysis and study, and that this is where the City should spend its money. He opined that a majority of the Council and Bellevue citizens feel that B7 has not received sufficient study and consideration.

Councilmember Chelminiak commented on the need to look at two topic areas that have not been discussed: 1) Light, particularly at stations, and 2) Federal mass transit regulations regarding all aspects of light rail. He questioned the efficacy of peer review, and speculated that a peer review in Phase 1 would have determined that Sound Transit's study of wheel squeal noise was adequate. Mr. Chelminiak said he wants to know how to stop wheel squeal and whether an effective mitigation measure exists. He wants to spend money looking at mitigation measures, and he does not want to spend capital funding on legal services.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Sarkozy said staff will provide information to the Council before next week's meeting that will help to focus the next discussion.

Councilmember Degginger noted the need to address station planning. He recalled that the Council requested assistance on federal regulations and issues approximately one year ago, and that has not been obtained.

At 11:03 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared the meeting adjourned.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

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