



MINUTES (Approved as Amended on 2-4-15)

TIME: Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Donald Erickson, Benjamin Fields,
Meredith Neal, Anna Peterson, Erle Thompson, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Sean Gaffney

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

B. QUORUM CALL

A quorum was declared.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on January 7, 2015 were approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Transportation Master Plan Update

Dan Grayuski, Consultant Project Manager for Fehr & Peers, provided an update on the Transportation Master Plan (TMP). He provided the Commission with a review and summary of the public outreach efforts that have been undertaken in support of the Plan development, including participation in community events such as farmers markets and festivals. . Over the summer, they prioritized work on transit to inform Sound Transit's long range plan update, which was finalized in November. They were ultimately successful in adding three corridors to the Sound Transit planning process that could become part of a ST3 package that would potentially go to voters in November of 2016.

Mr. Grayuski displayed the draft vision statement for the Plan and noted some of the key words that were used: sustainable, multimodal, strategic, and healthy living environment. For their goals and policies they would also be incorporating information that came out of the City's strategic visioning process. He commented that expectations for the plan had incorporated feedback from the Planning Commission that it should be nimble, simple, realistic, proactive, and leverage previous plans. They were also utilizing the Green Street hierarchy in their transportation planning process.

Mr. Grayuski then summarized the process for developing the layered modal network. The Transportation Commission identified priority networks for each mode. These priority networks were then overlaid to identify any potential conflicts. Mr. Grayuski noted that in some corridors there were multiple competing modes. The Transportation Commission then evaluated each corridor to develop priorities for the layered network. The bike priority network was highlighted as an example of one mode that the Transportation Commission has worked on. A map was shown where biking was being strongly accommodated with cycle tracks, separate bike lanes, and bike lanes as part of the street network. Justin Resnick, Transportation Planner with Fehr & Peers, commented that they had started with the Mobility Master Plan's (MoMaP) final bike priority map and assumed that for the individual bike mode, the long term map

was their starting point. They put all of the modes together, weighing the priorities of the different corridors and were able to preserve the majority of what the MoMaP had come up with. The resulting map didn't specify the level of treatment for bicyclists, but did identify where they should be a priority.

Mr. Grayuski then discussed the level-of-service component and how that is currently calculated and proposed modifications. Currently, there is a level of service for automobiles only, which is not consistent with the Green Street hierarchy. The intent is to have a similar level of service for all of the modes. He noted that they would be taking a system completeness approach that matches multimodal level of service investments.

Mr. Grayuski reported that they were also examining the urban growth centers and conducting travel demand forecasting by looking at the receiving areas for employment growth and population growth. He noted that downtown was very prominent in both the maps for employment and population.

Upcoming public outreach efforts were discussed. In February they would be targeting major stakeholders like the University of Puget Sound, Multicare Health, and JBLM. In March they would be reaching out to neighborhood councils and coordinating with organizations like local public schools, Sound Transit, and Metro Parks. They would be returning to the Planning Commission on April 1st with a goal of finishing up work in June. Efforts to coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan update were ongoing.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Please clarify in the vision statement what “encourage healthy living and environment” is, because you can't “encourage an environment” or “encourage a healthy environment.” (Mr. Grayuski: It was a statement on the importance of environmental sustainability, specifically the air environment)
- It is disappointing that the vision does not talk about supporting the City's urban planning goals.
- Commissioner Thompson suggested that the vision statement open with the clause “...In 2040...” to ensure all readers understand the context.
- The TMP should complement the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- At the margins of the map for the bike priority network, are there linkages to other jurisdictions with similar facilities? (Mr. Resnick: We looked at the plans for surrounding communities and focused on potential connections as we had the information available.)
- You had discussed integration with the Comprehensive Plan. How will the MoMaP and the Transportation Element coalesce into one package? (Mr. Grayuski: We are using just the important information for the body of the document and retaining the whole as an appendix.)
- Is the TMP intended to supplant the current transportation element? (Mr. Diekmann: The transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan will be carved out of the TMP during the Comprehensive Plan update process.)
- Will we end up having three separate documents: the TMP, the Transportation Element, and MoMaP? (Mr. Grayuski: The current MoMaP is incorporated into the Transportation Element. We're trying to take all of the older documents like the Transportation Element, the MoMaP, and the subarea plans and incorporating all of them into one document that hopefully simplifies the Planning Commission's task.)
- Is it the intent of staff to ask the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the Council on whether this document should be adopted? (Mr. Diekmann: We're not requesting anything at this time, but the document should be coordinated with the Commission for the sake of consistency with the ultimate Transportation Element. We will provide the documents for review before they are finalized.)
- I am concerned that the process is not as defined as I would like and that the ultimate Transportation Element that this body recommends may end up substantially different than what the Transportation Commission is recommending in TMP. There was agreement from other Commissioners that it was an appropriate concern.

- On page 8 of the document you sent out, in section 6. Land Use and Transportation, I was a little confused with how that policy intent section began with a discussion of transit oriented development (TOD) that used a definition of TOD that was different from the typical definition and more of a Mixed-Use Center (MUC) definition.
- Are streetcars appropriate for the list of things we have to do to achieve our development goals? I'm not sure if it rises to the level of the six other policy areas that are brought up here. Is it the intent that the streetcars would have so much power in this document as compared to other modes?
- I'm concerned that having streetcars elevated as a separate element will detract from the City's future ability to prioritize between things like streetcars and Sound Transit. Seattle and Portland both have a regional system and a streetcar system where funding issues are emerging with streetcars competing against MAX and the bus system. We can ill afford to create a policy approach where in the future the City has to choose between competing and contradictory policies that may exist in the planning document.
- In section 2.3 Improving Safety, is striving to reduce traffic deaths to zero an attainable goal? (Mr. Diekmann: It is aspirational, but also in line with a statewide effort to achieve zero deaths.)
- Unless we live, shop, and go to the doctor downtown we are going to require private vehicles and my concern is that there seems to be an inherent bias against vehicles. People in their 70s aren't going to be able to ride a bicycle as well as people in their 50s. Additionally, you have to look at the efficiency of different modes as using the bus can take significantly more time than a similar trip by car. You want to encourage people to use smaller vehicles as they require less space. We should be asking how you can be more efficient with these various modes.
- There are multiple places where electric vehicles are discussed. Instead consider changing it to include other high efficiency or alternative fuel source vehicles.
- We need to think harder about traffic impact [fees](#), particularly for larger generators and maybe think about that from a policy perspective.
- In section 2.5 the terminology "Protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic" should be rethought as the term could be used for various objectives like not wanting a complete street grid. Instead of "cut-through traffic" consider "protect neighborhoods from the potential impacts of a well-connected street grid".
- In section 4.2, Noise and Air Pollution, the Dome District is trying to encourage TOD at Freighthouse Square and have been pushing for quiet zones. There may be other areas where this might be relevant as well.

2. Billboard Regulations

John Harrington, Development Services Division, provided an update to the Commission on the progress of the Billboards Community Working Group. The group, formed of 18 members representing multiple interests in the community, had met 9 times with two more meetings scheduled. Two primary alternatives had emerged through examination of zones, buffers from residential and special uses, dispersion, and physical characteristics. The group has received background informational briefs from City staff and WSDOT. Additionally, pro and anti billboard proponents have given presentations. The working group has broken into two separate work groups to focus on many of the elements of billboard regulations. The working group elected two members as Co-chairs, including Commissioner Wambach. There have also been homework assignments between the meetings to determine priorities for alternative billboard regulations. There has been discussion of reduction of billboards through exchange ratios where billboards could be moved from areas where they are not desired to areas where they are acceptable. The details of the possible exchange ratios, like the receiving areas and priority of billboards for removal, are among the remaining items to be worked on for the remaining meetings. At the conclusion of the meetings, facilitator Karen Reed will prepare the Community Working Group report that will be reviewed by the City Council. The report will likely be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review in April.

Mr. Harrington commented on Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, an act from the US Department Transportation. MAP21 placed the principal arterials of major cities under the federal highway

system, allowing federal money to be used for projects on those arterials. The State of Washington is currently set to create regulations for billboard signage along those MAP21 routes, the exact details of which remain unknown. The Billboard Community Working Group will not have enough information on the MAP21 regulations to take them into consideration, but information will likely be available by the time the Working Group's report is reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Wamback provided a background on the history surrounding the Billboard Community Work Group. The City adopted regulations in 1997 that gave billboard owners ten years to amortize their expenses, after which they would have to take them down or relocate them. Ownership of most of the billboards eventually transferred to Clear Channel, which had ongoing negotiations with the City Council that eventually lead to lawsuits, a standstill agreement, and eventually the Community Working Group. Commissioner Wamback read the mission of the Billboard Community Working Group for the record:

“The mission of the Community Working Group is to develop at least two viable alternative regulatory approaches for billboards in this community that can be forwarded for consideration to the City Planning Commission and the City Council. Specifically, the Community Working Group is being asked to develop regulatory alternatives different from current city code which is not currently being enforced per an agreement with Clear Channel in favor of an approach that better balances the interests of all the various stakeholders. The Community Working Group's mission is not to render an opinion on the current code or deliberate on whether it should or should not be enforced but rather to develop alternatives that could, by balancing interests, potentially be a preferable alternative to current code.”

Commissioner Wamback commented that the Working Group had largely adhered to the mission. Digital billboards had not been part of the discussion until a recent meeting when proposed by a member outside of Clear Channel, which abstained from the related discussion. He added that there did not appear to be any consensus for including digital billboards in the discussion. The working group would not be recommending code changes, but instead recommending higher level policy approaches and then leaving it up to planning staff to write the code. The working group will probably recommend priority zones for removal and possibly weigh in on an exchange mechanism. Commissioner Wamback commented that they didn't know which body will handle the possible exchange mechanisms, but he would advocate for it being the Planning Commission. He also commented that there needed to be a public process to identify which billboards the public would most want to remove.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Is there a definition for billboards? (Mr. Harrington: It is an off premise advertisement of a business. There are around 169 actual structures that comprise the total number of billboards.)
- Do the MAP21 requirements say that you don't get funding unless you remove billboards? (Mr. Harrington: According to the current regulations on state highways, if a local jurisdiction requires a billboard to be removed they would have to pay fair market just compensation for each sign.)
- Is MAP21 retroactive? (Mr. Harrington: We are still waiting to see. Currently there are rules for billboards that are visible from the interstate and highways.)
- What is the valuation of the signs? (Mr. Harrington: One that was removed was over \$300,000 for just a single structure.)
- Many of the old billboards are no longer cost effective any many have been left blank.
- The largest size of billboards is meant to be visible from a car traveling at 60 mph. Having billboards that large in places like 6th and Sprague is an insult to the community.
- The threat of litigation remains an issue. Are they going to litigate if the recommendation isn't something they want? (Mr. Harrington: There is no binding to not pursue a lawsuit by either party.)

Chair Beale thanked Mr. Harrington and Commissioner Wamback for the report and anticipated that there would be more information once the Working Group had submitted its report. He expected that the Planning Commission would have some opportunity to formulate the recommendations. Chair Beale also

acknowledged that on site signage may have to be discussed at some point in the future as it is a significant percentage of the total signage.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, provided information regarding the agenda for the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee's meeting on January 28, 2015 and the agenda for the Planning Commission's meeting and retreat on February 4, 2015. Chair Beale indicated that he would attend the IPS's meeting on January 28 and present the Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan with staff.

Commissioner Thompson commented on the proposed West Slope Conservation District and having had discussion with residents opposed to the idea. Mr. Thompson requested sending out a postcard to the residents to obtain their feedback on the proposal, noting the possibility that the majority of residents might not support the idea. Brian Boudet, Planning Services Manager, clarified that the proposal is currently under review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and noted that there had been an open house with another scheduled for February 5th. The LPC would notify residents of a public hearing concerning the Conservation District, with additional public hearings and outreach to follow in the subsequent phases of the process.

Commissioner Wamback commented in the indirect media coverage of MUCs in the discussion of whether the County should relocate its offices from Tacoma Ave. to 35th and Pacific.

Vice-Chair Winship commented on two lawsuits concerning the West Slope. He detailed the individual cases where a division of a plat was challenged.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

At 5:49 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.