

March 30, 2021

City of Bellevue
Bellevue City Council
450 110th Avenue NE
Bellevue, WA 98004

Re: I-405 South Downtown Access Study – BDA Recommendation

Dear Mayor Robinson and Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), we are writing to share the BDA's position and feedback on the alternatives proposed in the City's I-405 South Downtown Access Study. BDA members have tracked this study closely since last fall when the five alternatives emerged for deeper study. Our BDA Transportation Committee was our forum for evaluation, informed by multiple check-ins with City staff to discuss the findings. The BDA Board reviewed and adopted the committee's recommendation earlier this month.

We landed on two preferences: 1) the Lake Hills Connector with southbound onramp, and 2) the SE 6th Street extension with southbound onramp. These alternatives improve mobility and win the cost/benefit race; however, neither are perfect solutions. Below summarizes the BDA's rationale. Please note that the SE 6th Street extension endorsement includes a condition.

The Lake Hills Connector with southbound onramp improves travel times and capacity with fewer property and environmental impacts. This option is also less expensive and avoids complications with existing Comprehensive Plan and land use policies. However, it lacks the added connectivity over I-405 and brings less benefit to future trips in the network.

The SE 6th Street Extension with southbound onramp adds east-west multimodal connectivity and greater mobility benefits. Yet, the study also shows more negative property, environmental and access impacts with a higher overall project cost. This option also prompts important questions about Comprehensive Plan consistency and delays to East Main and other critical planning efforts.

SE 6th Street Extension Endorsement Caveat

The study shows the SE 6th Street extension with southbound onramp yields better numbers and benefits future urban growth with an additional multimodal connection. It is also the heavier lift with greater risk at a higher cost. Specifically, it has the potential to delay East Main Land Use Code adoption. We believe any alternative selected should **not** delay other planning initiatives and transportation projects critical to supporting growth. The BDA's endorsement of this alternative is contingent on adoption of the East Main Land Use Code by fall this year.

Why not the other three alternatives?

- **NE 2nd Street extension** does not add ramp access to I-405.
- **SE 6th Street extension with inside ramp** is too costly compared to the added benefit.
- **No build option** is a baseline for study purposes; does not support growth.

Since the Downtown Implementation Plan and I-405 Master Plan were adopted nearly 20 years ago, this project has been a line on a map with a half-diamond interchange at NE 2nd Street. It was always complex and expensive. We now have viable options with an even stronger need for improving access to I-405. In reality, the project serves more than "South Downtown" as we know or defined two decades ago.

The timing of City Council's action on April 5 is important to advance other critical City initiatives such as advocacy for transportation funding, East Main, the Grand Connection, Wilburton, Bel-Red, mobility projects and housing strategies. We applaud the City for conducting this study and reaching a decision early this year. Thank you for your leadership and perseverance as we work together on Bellevue's recovery for a strong future.

Sincerely,



Dave Miniken
Chair
BDA Board



Patrick Bannon
President
BDA



Amy Carlson
Co-Chair
BDA Transportation Committee



Susan Stead
Co-Chair
BDA Transportation Committee