Puget Sound Regional Council

VISION 2050 PLANNING RESOURCES

Transportation Element Guidance

June 2023

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

Individuals requiring reasonable accommodations may request written materials in alternate formats, sign language interpreters, physical accessibility accommodations, or other reasonable accommodations by contacting the ADA Coordinator, **Thu Le**, at **206-464-6175**, with two weeks' advance notice. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the ADA Coordinator, Thu Le, through TTY Relay 711.

Title VI Notice

PSRC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, visit https://www.psrc.org/title-vi.

Language Assistance

العربية (Arabic) | 中文 (Chinese) | Deutsch (German) | Français (French) | 한국어 (Korean) | Русский (Russian) | Español (Spanish) | Tagalog | Tiếng việt (Vietnamese)

For language assistance, visit https://www.psrc.org/contact-center/language-assistance

Additional copies of this document may be obtained by contacting:

Puget Sound Regional Council
Information Center
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, Washington 98104-1035
info@psrc.org | www.psrc.org

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

VISION 2050, the adopted growth management, environmental, economic and transportation strategy for the central Puget Sound region, sets the foundation for long-range transportation planning at both the regional and local levels. VISION 2050 identifies a goal for the region to have a "sustainable, equitable, affordable, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation system, with emphasis on an integrated regional transit network that supports the Regional Growth Strategy and promotes vitality of the economy, environment, and health."

Local and state agencies are responsible for developing, operating, maintaining and improving distinct aspects of the overall transportation system, but a coordinated regional approach is critical. The policies in VISION 2050 establish the framework essential to achieve the long-range goal, recognizing the critical link between transportation, land use planning, economic development and the environment. Specific policies address the long-range Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy. They support people, mobility and accessibility. They protect the environment and promote a sustainable transportation system. And they support the economy, innovation and transformation.

The purpose of this document is to support local governments as they update their comprehensive plans and take steps to implement their policies and actions. It provides guidance, best practices and technical assistance. This document also provides information on the required components of transportation elements, both to meet state requirements and to ensure consistency with VISION 2050. To the extent feasible, each section and policy topic will provide:

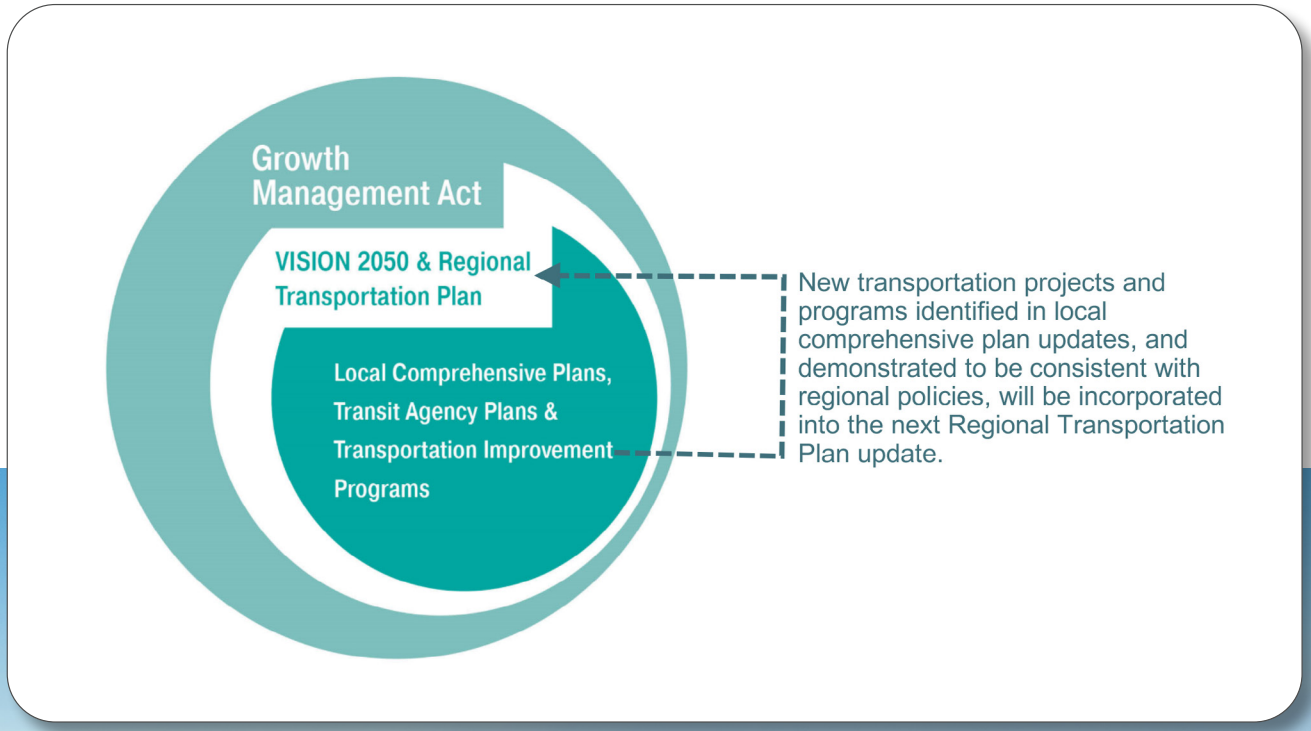
- Clarifying information and definitions
- Best practices and examples
- Additional resources

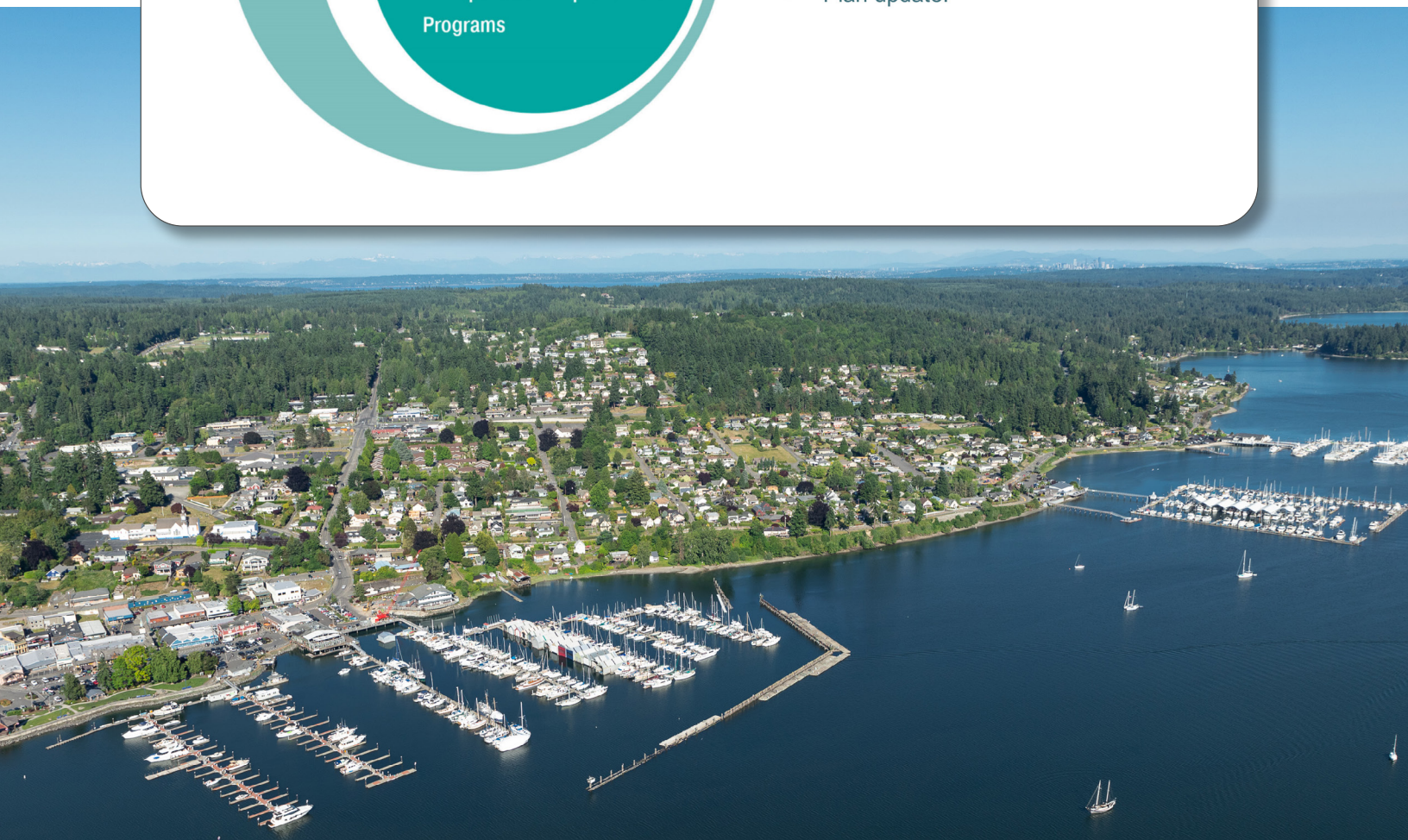
PSRC's Plan Review Manual includes a transportation section that provides a crosswalk between VISION 2050's multicounty planning policies and policy objectives for local plans and policies. In addition, countywide planning policies may provide additional guidance related to transportation.

This document focuses on key topics that are important for consistency with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. Links to overall guidance on developing transportation elements and additional regional resources are provided in the last section.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Within the overall guidelines and requirements established in the Growth Management Act, VISION 2050 lays out a foundation for completing regional transportation investments and future work to strengthen connections to and between the region's centers. The Regional Transportation Plan implements the polices and goals in VISION 2050. It also outlines investments the region is making in transit, rail, ferry, streets and highways, freight, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and other systems to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Together, these documents provide a foundation for cities and counties in development of the transportation element of their local comprehensive plans.





Growth Management Act

Transportation planning at the state, county and local levels is governed by the Washington state Growth Management Act, which requires that jurisdictions create land use plans that show how they will accommodate future population and employment growth, and also plan for the infrastructure and services necessary to support that growth.

Mandatory Components

A comprehensive plan's transportation element implements, and therefore must be consistent with, the land use element. For 2024 comprehensive plans, the Growth Management Act requires that the transportation element includes the following components:

- An **inventory of transportation facilities and services**, including roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit alignments and service, and general aviation airport facilities.
- **Level of service standards** for all locally owned arterials and transit routes.
- **Traffic forecasts** for at least 10 years based on the adopted land use plan.
- **Analysis of existing and future forecasted transportation demand** to provide information about the location, timing and capacity needs of future growth.
- **Identification of state and local transportation system needs** to meet current and future demand.
- A **pedestrian and bicycle component** that includes collaborative efforts to identify planned improvements for walking, rolling and biking.
- **Specific actions and measures** for bringing locally owned transportation facilities or services that are below the established level of service standard into compliance.
- A **multiyear financing plan** based on the needs identified in the comprehensive plan.
- **Intergovernmental coordination**, including an assessment of the impacts of the transportation plan and land use assumptions on state and adjacent local transportation facilities.

Level of Service

Level of service (LOS) is a measure of a transportation facility's ability to accommodate the travelers that use it.

GMA requires that all jurisdictions adopt level of service standards, which represent the minimum level of operation that the jurisdiction considers acceptable.

The Washington Department of Transportation sets LOS standards for Highways of Statewide Significance. PSRC sets LOS standards for Highways of Regional Significance. State highway standards are provided on PSRC's website.

Cities and counties are responsible for adopting level of service standards for all locally- owned arterials and transit routes within their jurisdiction. For consistency with VISION 2050, standards should be identified for pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicle modes. HB 1181, passed in 2023, also requires multimodal standards; see the next page for more detail.

This list summarizes the required components for 2024 comprehensive plan updates. In 2023, the Legislature passed HB 1181, which seeks to better incorporate climate change in the Growth Management Act. In addition to a new climate element requirement, the bill identified several new expectations for transportation elements. For central Puget Sound jurisdictions with more than 6,000 residents, these changes would be due by the 2029 comprehensive plan implementation progress report. The bill also included more specific requirements for multimodal level of service, nonmotorized planning, and impacts and costs for state facilities.

Additional guidance may be needed to fully address the new requirements, but jurisdictions may consider getting ahead of these changes. Please consult the bill to understand the scope of changes and identify opportunities to make changes as part of the 2024 comprehensive plan. For example, the bill will require incorporating any adopted Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan as part of the comprehensive plan. Components of this work could be completed as part of the 2024 update. The bill also made changes that take effect immediately, including to the GMA transportation goal and added a climate goal that emphasizes reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. These changes are consistent with the direction in VISION 2050 and should be considered in the 2024 comprehensive plan updates.

Transportation Concurrency

The Growth Management Act also requires transportation concurrency. This is a planning process to ensure that transportation facilities and services needed to support the demand generated by new development occurs concurrent with development. Within this context, "concurrent" means that necessary improvements or strategies are in place at the time of development or that a financial commitment is in place to complete the improvements or strategies within six years of when a transportation deficiency is triggered. Deficiencies can be addressed either through capital improvement projects or management strategies to reduce demand. Changes to state law through HB 1181 address transportation concurrency, stating that development may not be denied for falling below level of service standards if impacts could be mitigated through active transportation, transit, demand or system management programs. Changes to concurrency ordinances would be required for jurisdictions in the central Puget Sound with more than 6,000 residents by 2029.

Multimodal Considerations

The Growth Management Act states that a transportation element may include multimodal transportation improvements or strategies that are made concurrent with the development. This may include multiple modes of transportation with peak and nonpeak hour capacity performance standards for locally owned transportation facilities. It may also include modal performance standards meeting the peak and nonpeak hour capacity performance standards. To further support multimodal system investments, SB 5452 (2023) clarifies that transportation impact fee revenue may be used to fund improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities. VISION 2050 has additional policies about multimodal transportation improvements and transportation concurrency.

VISION 2050

VISION 2050's multicounty planning policies provide the primary policy direction for the Regional Transportation Plan, which lays out a regional strategy for the wide variety of investments and services that make up the region's transportation system.

Key policy themes from VISION 2050 include:

- Increase housing choices and affordability.
- Provide opportunities for all.
- Sustain a strong economy.
- Significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Restore the health of Puget Sound.
- Keep the region moving.
- Protect a network of open space.
- Encourage growth in centers and near transit.
- Act collaboratively and support local efforts.

The transportation chapter emphasizes investments in multimodal transportation, supporting the movement of people and goods, and funding investments to maintain and add mobility options. The multicounty planning policies address an environmentally sustainable transportation system that helps to meet emission reduction goals, addresses barriers to fish passage and water quality, centers equity in transportation planning and supports innovation. VISION 2050 policy areas that should be supported in transportation elements include:

- Transportation investments in centers (see Centers resources).
- Race and social equity, including special needs (see Equity resources).
- Greenhouse gas emission reduction (see Climate guidance).
- Stormwater and sustainable transportation system (see Stormwater resources).

In addition to specific policy goals for transportation, VISION 2050 emphasizes the importance of equitable engagement to support local planning. Public participation is an integral step in comprehensive planning for several important reasons. Engaging stakeholders, especially from historically marginalized communities, can empower participating communities in public policy and decision-making processes and work to address past harms and inequities. Public engagement for updating a local transportation element will most likely be part of the larger comprehensive plan update engagement program. PSRC's Equitable Engagement Guide provides more information on engaging stakeholders in the update process. The guide can be used as a starting point for engagement and includes resources to carry out these strategies.

Regional Transportation Plan

VISION 2050's transportation policies are implemented at the regional level through the Regional Transportation Plan, which recognizes that an efficient and equitable transportation system must serve diverse demands. This includes a balanced focus on safe and efficient movement of people on streets, highways, walkways, bikeways and transit lines, as well as transport of goods across the region and to people's doors. All these components should work together providing diverse mobility options in an integrated system. The Regional Transportation Plan also recognizes that investment in maintenance and preservation is a critical component of sustaining an efficient transportation system.

Equity is a foundational premise for the policies and outcomes of VISION 2050. Equity-related transportation policies support implementation of programs and projects that provide access to opportunities while preventing or mitigating negative impacts to people of color, people with low incomes and people with specialized transportation needs. Additionally, the Regional Transportation Plan defines a four-part Greenhouse Gas Strategy that supports the VISION 2050 goal to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

The Regional Transportation Plan provides the integrating framework to ensure that thousands of transportation projects from hundreds of implementers are coordinated and working together to help the region realize these goals. Within this framework, transportation projects are developed and implemented by local and state agencies.

Just as the current Regional Transportation Plan incorporates transportation projects and programs developed by cities and counties through their previous comprehensive plan development processes, any new projects developed through local comprehensive plan updates will need to be subsequently considered for the next review of the Regional Transportation Plan., The plan undergoes a major update every four years. The current Regional Transportation Plan was adopted in 2022, and the next major update is planned for 2026. Typically, there is opportunity at around the midpoint of the four-year update cycle to submit new projects for consideration to be included on the Regional Capacity Projects list.

Key policy focus areas of the Regional Transportation Plan include access to transit, equity, safety, climate, local agency needs and future visioning. The plan incorporates these policy areas throughout the document, including stand-alone discussions and incorporation into individual plan elements. Components of the Regional Transportation Plan that support comprehensive plan development include, among other things:

- Transportation system visualization tool that identifies the multimodal transportation facilities inventory, land use data, existing and future operational conditions, and planned transportation investments at a regional level.
- Guidance on advancing equity through transportation.
- Regional climate change strategy.
- Resiliency map that identifies natural hazards.

Regional Connection to Local Transportation Elements

VISION and the Regional Transportation Plan provide the overarching framework within which local transportation elements are developed within the region. A transportation element should emphasize all modes by which people travel and goods are moved, throughout all its components. This includes the development of transportation policies, inventories, standards by which the adequacy of the transportation network is measured and analyses of existing and future conditions. It also includes the development of projects and programs to ensure adequacy of the transportation system and the financial plan that shows how your agency expects to pay for improvements and maintenance of the complete transportation network.

The interrelationship between a comprehensive plan's land use element and transportation element is very strong. In planning under VISION 2050, future development growth should be focused in designated centers and near transit stations. Land use densities, combined with land use policies and development regulations that help manage parking and support walking, biking and transit, help direct growth patterns that can be more efficiently accommodated with these travel modes. And prioritizing transportation investments in growth centers that support walking, biking and transit helps facilitate growth patterns that are consistent with VISION 2050. As the transportation element is strongly linked to the land use element, its development requires strong collaboration between the planning and public works groups within an agency.

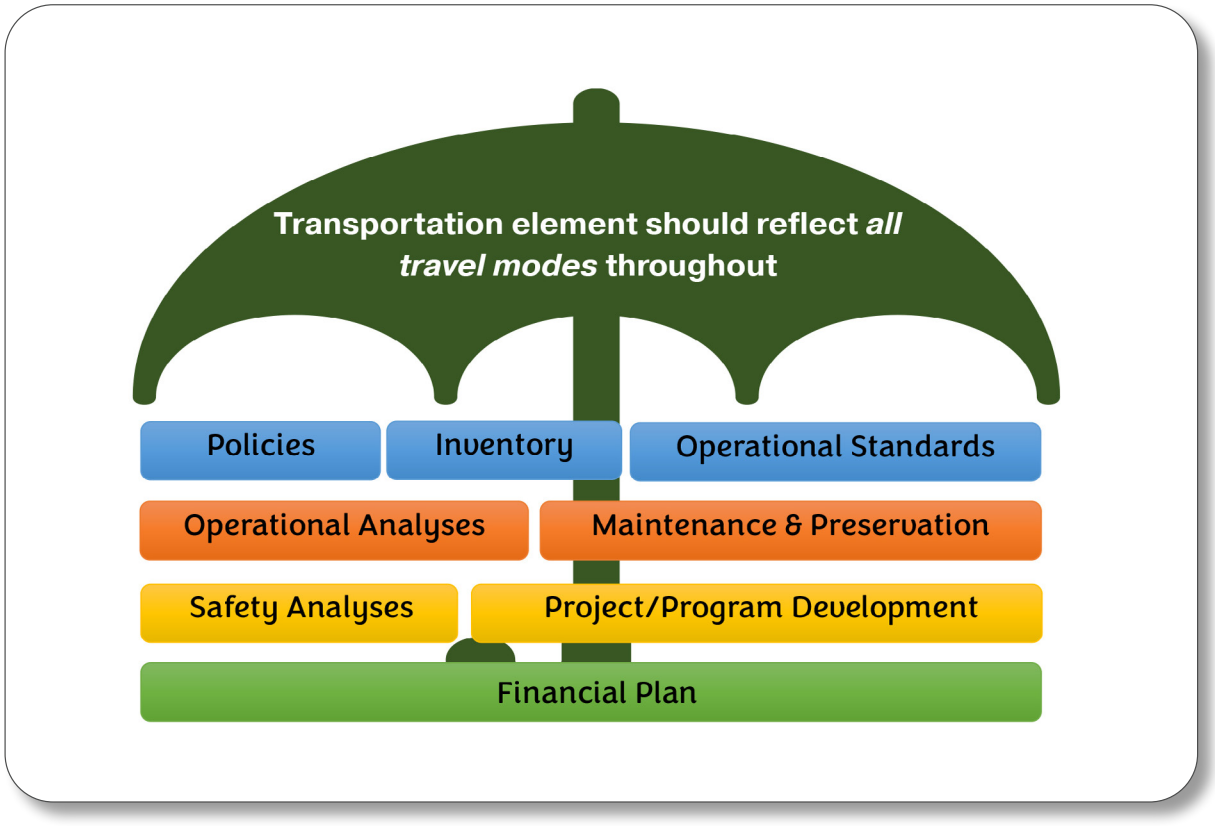
PLANNING FOR PROJECTS

VISION 2050 emphasizes development of a multimodal transportation system that encourages walking, biking and transit, accommodates the movement of goods throughout the region and to people's doors, and reduces dependence on driving alone. To support the regional vision and policies, transportation elements should incorporate multimodal considerations throughout all components. In addition to establishing multimodal aspects of transportation elements, the Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive plans include a financial plan that shows how planned investments needed to support future growth will be paid for. The following sections focus on some key areas needed to support these goals and requirements.

Multimodal Considerations

An efficient and equitable transportation system must serve diverse demands. Well-maintained roads, highways and bridges should provide safe and efficient routes for cars, buses, freight haulers and delivery trucks, as well as for people walking, rolling and biking. Sidewalks and paths should provide safe and welcoming walking routes to local destinations. High-quality infrastructure should provide safe and convenient routes for those who want to bicycle. Reliable and frequent high-capacity and local transit should connect to these other modes of transportation and link important concentrations of jobs, housing, services, recreation and other regional amenities. All these components should work together providing diverse mobility options in an integrated system.

Within the framework provided under VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan, a transportation element should emphasize all modes by which people travel and goods are moved, throughout all its components.



To be more explicit in this multimodal planning, jurisdictions within the region should develop standards for assessing the adequacy of non-automobile modes. This can be in addition to, or integrated with, the standards for evaluating automobile travel.

Development of multimodal level-of-service or operational standards recognizes all users of the comprehensive transportation network, including people walking and biking, transit users, and people driving. Multimodal level-of-service standards may be specific to each mode (e.g., one standard for the pedestrian network, one for transit) or one unified level-of-service standard that considers all modes together (e.g., person-trip capacity across all modes compared to demand).

It is important to connect level-of service policies to project and policy recommendations:

- Take a broad look at multimodal level of service in the context of transportation policy objectives. The main purpose of this work is (1) to encourage explicit planning for pedestrian, bicycle and transit modes, and (2) to provide transparency in how improvements to all modes are identified and prioritized.
- Demonstrate a clear line between your agency's multimodal level-of-service (LOS) policies and the six-year and long-range project priorities. For example, if a deficiency/priority is identified according to the standard, has a corresponding improvement been identified to address that deficiency/priority?

If transportation impact fees are connected to the LOS standard, it is important to review them to avoid unintended consequences. For example, concurrency standards based on person trips recognize the movement of people rather than vehicles. However, an impact fee directly based on person trips may disincentivize high-occupancy or non-motorized modes. Consider supplemental steps or policies to encourage new development to support alternative modes. Bellevue's use of mobility units demonstrates one way a concurrency system can focus on person trips, while still accounting for the relative space in the transportation network used by travelers in different modes. For example, a walking, biking or transit trip that uses less transportation system capacity is a lower mobility unit than a vehicle trip.

A variety of approaches could potentially be applied in the development of multimodal standards, reflecting the unique characteristics of each city or county. The key is that the approach should be clear and transparent, and multimodal standards should be defined through policy, then applied in transportation analysis. For any gaps or deficiencies identified by applying the standard, a project, program or strategy should be identified to address the deficiency. Its cost should then be covered in the financial plan developed for the transportation element.

Examples of Multimodal Considerations in Transportation Elements

The City of Buckley has developed pedestrian comfort standards that are used to identify and prioritize sidewalk projects, in addition to roadway operational standards.

The City of Normandy Park has adopted mode-specific level-of-service standards that establish sufficiency thresholds for sidewalks, bike facilities and transit routes, in addition to roadway operational standards.

As an implementation step from their comprehensive plan, the City of Bellevue has adopted a multimodal concurrency system that measures "mobility units," based on person trips for vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle and transit modes of travel.

Minimum Expectations – 2024 Plan Updates

Multimodal concurrency and LOS programs that meet Growth Management Act requirements and VISION 2050's multicounty planning policies will include elements such as:

1. ***A methodology to evaluate levels of service for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians and vehicles.***
    a. Single LOS standard: The LOS evaluation methodology can be unified across all modes (e.g., person-trip volume-to-capacity with capacity contributions from transit, sidewalks and bike lanes in addition to vehicles) or separate methodologies for each mode.
    b. Mode-specific LOS standard: Vehicle LOS standards typically focus on volume-to-capacity ratios, while bicycle and pedestrian levels of service may more appropriately focus on presence and connections of facilities. In more urbanized parts of the region, capacity of transit and reducing overcrowding may be the primary concern. In less urbanized parts of the region, presence, frequency or span of service of transit may be the most important measures.

2. ***A level-of-service standard based on the methodology.***

   These standards should reflect the community's expectations for transportation performance during the comprehensive plan period. LOS standards should balance community goals, available and anticipated funding, and the impacts of planned growth (including availability of developer mitigation). Standards should be tailored to different subareas to align concurrency with growth goals. Standards can apply to areas, corridors, screenlines or a combination.

3. ***Identification of existing and future deficiencies.***

   Developing a program that clearly identifies multimodal deficiencies (e.g., facilities that do not meet the adopted LOS standard), as well as those that are projected to operate below the standard in the future, is key to ensuring mitigation is multimodal.

4. ***Measures for addressing existing and future deficiencies.***

   a. Identify projects, programs or strategies that will address existing and future deficiencies. Doing this at the planning stage, rather than the individual development stage, provides more certainty that the mitigations will align with jurisdictional goals; funding required from developers can be used to fund these pre-identified projects.

   b. Identify a reasonable funding program. This may include traditional funding sources as well as developer mitigations for multimodal improvements. It can also be a concurrency-based mitigation program, ad-hoc SEPA mitigation or impact fees. Developer mitigation is usually appropriate only for addressing deficiencies resulting from the development.

HB 1181 also requires multimodal level of service standards in future GMA plan updates. Additional state guidance on these requirements may be available in the future to inform plan updates.

Transportation Project List and Financial Constraint

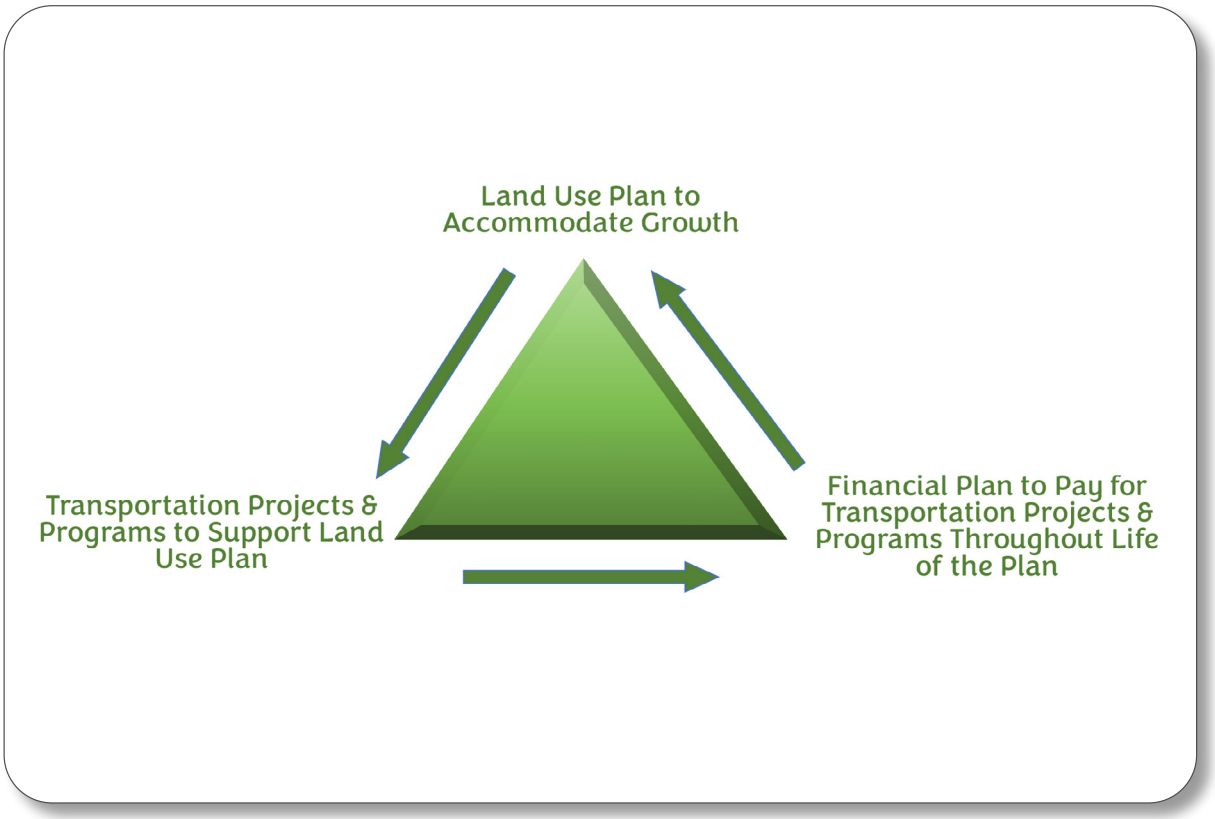
Development of a comprehensive, financially constrained transportation project list that fully supports the future land use plan is not only a requirement under the Growth Management Act, but it is also what makes the transportation element implementable. Inclusion of clear, financially sound and regionally consistent project lists and financial assumptions in comprehensive plans also helps support the Regional Transportation Plan, which incorporates information compiled at the local level into its regional financial strategy.

Land Use, Transportation and Financial Balance

In addition to the strong interrelationship in comprehensive plans between the land use and transportation elements, development of the financial plan to show how the transportation improvements will be paid for is the essential third part of the balance that needs to be struck in a comprehensive plan:

- The land use plan is developed to accommodate future growth.
- The transportation element identifies strategies, projects and programs to ensure that the transportation system can support that growth.
- The financial plan shows how those projects and programs will be paid for.

If the financial plan cannot identify sufficient revenues to cover the costs of all future planned transportation improvements, then the land use plan and transportation policies, standards, programs, and projects should be revisited and refined until these elements are in balance.



Transportation Project List

The transportation project list developed as part of the transportation element should include all investments identified to support land use throughout the period covered in the comprehensive plan. It should include not only capital improvement projects that have been identified, but also maintenance and preservation, such as pavement overlay programs, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and signal upgrades. It should also include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plans and implementation, demand management programs, and transportation studies identified to develop further information or recommendations on a particular topic. In short, anything that would need to be included in an agency's Transportation Improvement Program to be implemented, either in the near future or down the line, should be included on a transportation element's project list.

When developing project/program lists, the following considerations are important:

- Projects should implement comprehensive plan policies and support the jurisdiction's land use vision and growth forecasts. It should be clear how identified projects and programs support the adopted policies and standards.
- Sufficient information about each project's scope, location, timing, and purpose should be provided. It is typical to develop a six-year project list that includes the highest priority projects and effectively serves as an agency's initial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) after adoption of the comprehensive plan. However, the Growth Management Act requires that agencies must plan at least 10 years into the future, and in the Puget Sound region they are encouraged to plan for at least 20 years. Projects and programs beyond the six-year horizon needed to support growth through the long-range planning horizon of the comprehensive plan should also be identified. These may be added to future TIPs as growth occurs and additional transportation needs to support that growth arise.
- Planning-level cost estimates should be developed for all transportation projects and programs included on the list, which is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Financial Plan

The development of the financial plan is a critical component of the transportation element. It demonstrates that the projects and recommendations detailed in the plan are feasible. The Regional Transportation Plan includes a financial strategy that accomplishes this at the regional level. To be consistent with the regional financial strategy at the local level, the transportation element's financial plan should include the following components:

- The first six years of the financial plan should be consistent with your agency's local Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and/or TIP. Revenues to cover costs of the six-year project list should be accounted for within tight budgetary constraints.
- The remaining years' revenues (through the life of the plan) should be forecast at the planning level based on reasonable assumptions. This is typically based on historic trends for current law revenue sources and applying defensible assumptions about future availability of funds (e.g., although unsecured, it may be reasonable to assume future grant funding will occur at levels consistent with historic levels). The sources of all anticipated future funding should be documented.

- If, after forecasts of revenue from current law sources are completed, a funding gap remains (e.g., total project/program costs are greater than total projected revenues over the life of the plan), additional potential funding sources should be identified. These can be aspirational and do not need to be secured; however, the steps needed to implement or secure the additional funds should be described.

The Growth Management Act also requires that a transportation element include discussion of a reassessment strategy if future revenues are not generated at the levels forecasted and a funding shortfall occurs.

An example of a comprehensive transportation project/program list, with an accompanying financial plan that illustrates all of these components, can be found in the City of Edmonds Transportation Master Plan.

Coordination With Partners

Interjurisdictional coordination is a key component of a transportation element development, as it helps ensure that analyses and recommendations are regionally consistent and reflect input from all key stakeholders needed for implementation. Key partnerships in the development of transportation elements include the following:

- Coordinate with PSRC to ensure that forecasts within your jurisdiction reflect and are consistent with regional growth forecasts.
- Coordinate with transportation agencies (e.g., Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT], transit agencies) to account for their planned projects within and near your boundaries.
- Where applicable, coordinate with Tribes to understand their transportation priorities and opportunities for early and ongoing engagement on projects, such as removing barriers to fish passage.
- Coordinate with partners who are identifying and funding transportation stormwater retrofit opportunities, such as WSDOT, Ecology, National Marine Fisheries Service and other jurisdictions in the watershed. In some cases, coordination with other departments within your jurisdiction is needed.
- Coordinate with partners in development of projects that require interjurisdictional partnerships.
- Do not include projects on your financially constrained project list over which your agency has no jurisdiction. For example, local jurisdiction-sponsored projects on state facilities must be reviewed and approved by WSDOT prior to inclusion on that jurisdiction's project list.

In planning to support transit within a city's or county's boundaries, it is essential to coordinate with the agencies that provide that service. Strategies and measures for developing transit-supportive transportation elements are discussed in the following section.

PLANNING FOR TRANSIT

The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to consider and plan for transit as part of the transportation element of their comprehensive plans. VISION 2050 embodies a transit-focused growth strategy that plans for 65% of the region's population and 75% of the region's job growth to locate in regional growth centers and near high-capacity transit. And yet, in Washington state, transit is often provided by other local entities, commonly a local or regional transit district. Therefore, it is essential for local jurisdictions to collaborate with transit agencies that plan for and provide service in their area as they prepare their comprehensive plans. In instances where a local jurisdiction is outside of a transit agency boundary, coordination should occur with other entities that provide mobility services.

PSRC's Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit highlights how local jurisdictions can include transit-supportive language and policies throughout their comprehensive plans. The toolkit makes the case for having strong comprehensive plan policies that support transit and transit-oriented development (TOD), helping communities create and maintain quality neighborhoods and meeting the community's goals in the areas of mobility, environmental protection, economic development, and access to jobs and services.

Transit-supportive comprehensive plans should include goals, policies and objectives that:

- Are consistent with regional policies and reflect the community's vision for its transportation system.
- Promote a sustainable public transit system as an opportunity to enhance livability and economic opportunity to maintain quality of life.
- Emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy travel and increase travel options.

Regional guidance to incorporate transit into comprehensive plans covers three broad topic areas: coordinating land use and transportation, supporting multimodal mobility and connecting people to transit.

Coordinating Land Use and Transportation

Local jurisdictions should coordinate land use and transportation in the development of their comprehensive plans. The VISION 2050 transit-focused growth strategy noted above effectively requires close collaboration between local jurisdictions and transit agencies.

Promote compact, mixed-use development near transit

Development that contains a mix of uses (retail services, office jobs, housing, etc.) can attract a critical mass of people and activity. Compact, higher-density development patterns shorten the distance people must travel to reach their destinations and supply the ridership that can support more frequent transit service and a greater variety of connecting routes. In turn, higher transit service levels in these areas attract more riders and support the local land use vision. There are several strategies that local jurisdictions should consider to promote compact, mixed-use development near transit, including:

- Plan for and encourage transit-oriented development that achieves transit-supportive densities and a mix of uses within transit station areas and corridors.
- Conduct station area planning around planned and existing transit hubs and stations.
- Collaborate with transit providers to target operating and capital investments to areas with higher-intensity/density land use designations.
- Provide diverse housing types affordable to a full range of incomes within transit communities.

Strategically manage parking in pedestrian- and transit-oriented places

Availability and cost of parking can have a significant impact on whether people decide to drive or use transit. The less land devoted to parking, the more space that is available for other uses. This puts more destinations within walking distance, creates a more comfortable pedestrian experience and can help an area reach a development intensity that supports public transit and spurs additional development. Reduced parking requirements can also help lower the cost of new development, which can make housing and commercial rent more affordable.

Key transit-oriented strategies to consider in comprehensive plan updates include:

- Develop area-wide parking strategies.
- Reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements in areas well-served by transit.
- Support reduced parking requirements with incentives such as transit pass subsidies for building tenants, bicycle parking, car share parking or other amenities.
- Use pricing strategies for public and on-street parking to manage area-wide parking supply.
- “Unbundle” the cost of parking from the rent or purchase price of housing.
- Allow and encourage shared parking among neighboring land uses or community parking facilities in commercial districts.

Supporting Multimodal Mobility

Local jurisdictions can make a substantial impact in creating transit-supportive places and improving multimodal mobility. This requires close coordination and cooperation with public transit providers and other public, private and nonprofit entities providing mobility in the community.

Work closely with transit agencies, neighboring jurisdictions and the community

The Growth Management Act requires consistency between the local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan transportation element and other plans, including the six-year plans (transit development plans) required of public transit agencies and neighboring jurisdictions' plans (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(c)). Local jurisdictions achieve this consistency by coordinating with one another and transit agencies in their planning efforts. Where communities exist outside of transit agency boundaries, coordination should occur with other mobility providers, including but not limited to county mobility coalitions, human service transportation providers and non-emergency medical transportation providers. Community members must also be involved in these efforts.

Key strategies to employ in comprehensive plan updates include:

- Engage a full range of community members, including people of color, people with low incomes and transit-dependent residents. This requires employing a variety of methods for gathering input to reduce potential barriers to public participation such as technology disparities, limited transportation access, limited English proficiency and schedule conflicts.
- Work with transit agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate local land use and capital improvement strategies with transit agency plans and criteria to identify transit corridors and markets.
- Collaborate with transit agencies to ensure that their transit-oriented development policies, plans and programs are consistent and complementary to local jurisdiction policies and actions.

Promote and implement programs that encourage alternatives to driving alone

Local jurisdictions should also incorporate demand management strategies in their comprehensive plan transportation element. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) complements transit and active transportation modes by promoting them over single-occupancy vehicle travel. The PSRC Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit highlights potential TDM strategies for local jurisdictions to consider as they update their comprehensive plans. These include:

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

TDM refers to a coordinated set of programs to help people use the transportation system more efficiently through education, incentives and products like subsidized transit fare cards. It also includes programs that make it easier and more convenient to use non-drive alone modes such as transit, carpool, vanpool, walking, biking and teleworking.

- Require a TDM plan (sometimes called a transportation management plan) as part of the site plan review for larger developments.
- Work with local transportation management associations (TMAs), mobility coalitions and similar organizations to identify opportunities to collaborate with businesses, employers and other trip generators to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and shift travel behavior to use of transit, bicycling and walking.
- Work with employers to avoid or limit subsidized parking and provide incentives to discourage driving alone.
- Create marketing programs that encourage the use of transit and other alternatives for commuting, shopping, recreational and other trip purposes.

The Regional Transportation Plan provides guidance for the region's local jurisdictions to advance principles of TDM in their comprehensive plans under "Improving TDM Integration in Planning." This includes:

- Coordination of state-required Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) plans with demand management and other components of the transportation element of the comprehensive plan.
- TDM should be considered and addressed at the planning, programming and implementation stages of local comprehensive plans.
- Improve coordination of TDM programs with comprehensive plans, as well as implementing programs and regulations.

Enhance transit speed and reliability with capital improvements and operational strategies

Local jurisdictions and transit agencies are partners in supporting transit operations. Local jurisdictions and transit agencies share responsibility for the operating environment. Transit-supportive design standards, capital investments and operational strategies can speed up transit, increase efficiency and improve reliability.

Some key strategies to consider for transit speed and reliability include:

- Develop a category in the jurisdiction's street classification system for transit streets to help guide investments in transit-supportive infrastructure.
- Coordinate local actions regarding the funding, design and operation of transportation facilities with the needs of transit agencies.
- Adopt street design standards that support transit.
- Provide infrastructure that is designed to support transit speed and reliability, such as signal prioritization, bus stop curb extensions and dedicated transit lanes.
- Provide space for transit infrastructure, such as bus stops and transit vehicle layover facilities in the public rights-of-way.

Connecting People to Transit (Access to Transit)

Improving access to transit as the high-capacity transit system expands is a key element of the Regional Transportation Plan. PSRC has a long history of working with implementers to improve access to transit in the region. Included in this work is a series of transit access guidance documents, which are available for local jurisdictions to review in updating their comprehensive plans as well as in ongoing coordination and implementation efforts.

The Regional Transportation Plan highlights opportunities to maintain and increase the high percentages of walking and bicycling access to transit in the region as the high-capacity transit system expands in all four counties over the next 20+ years.

The plan recognizes the following types of access:

- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Nonmotorized Transportation (walking, rolling, and bicycling)
- Automobile (both parking and drop-off)

In addition, convenient connections between transit modes at transit stations and stops will enable people using the growing transit system to travel farther in less time than they do today. There is an opportunity for transit agencies and jurisdictions to collaborate in designing and implementing transit facilities that make connecting between modes and services easy and seamless.

The Regional Transportation Plan recognizes that transit access improvement needs will vary by regional geography, location within the existing and planned transit system, etc. The Regional Transportation Plan also provides important resources that local jurisdictions can use to identify needs and opportunities relating to transit and access to transit services. One key tool is the Transportation System Visualization Tool, which identifies existing and planned facilities and services. The tool could be used, for example, to identify gaps in the pedestrian environment in proximity to a planned high-capacity transit station.

The PSRC Transit Access Toolkit, the result of a multiyear collaboration between transit agencies and local jurisdictions in the region, identifies 60 different transit access opportunities under eight strategic areas and provides guidance that local jurisdictions can use as they think about their transit access needs in development of their comprehensive plans. The eight strategic areas identified are as follows:

- Align land use and transit policies and plans.
- AEnhance street network connectivity.
- AImprove the nonmotorized environment.
- AIncrease transit service frequency, reliability, and coverage.
- AElevate the transit user experience.
- AImprove access via local transit and drop-off modes.
- AManage transit parking demand.
- AIncrease parking supply at transit stations when called for by local context.

These strategic areas encompass a spectrum of approaches to increasing access to transit, with some relevant in most cases and others considered only in limited circumstances. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to review this important resource for more information.

The Regional Transportation Plan provides updated direction on consideration for access to transit in the region. It calls for the region's transit agencies, local jurisdictions and other regional and state partners to continue working together, building upon principles that facilitate easy multimodal access to transit as the transit system expands. Key highlights of the work ahead include:

- Centering equity and safety as primary lenses through which transit access improvements should be considered.
- Reinforcing the notion that location and context matter when considering improving access to transit. Access improvements should be customized based on location and context.
- Importance of land use decisions and affordable housing in improving access to transit. It is essential that convenient, safe and multimodal access to transit be a primary focus in redevelopment to TOD in these key locations to maximize nonmotorized access to transit and to facilitate easy transfers.

Improving access to transit is a shared responsibility that includes ongoing communication and coordination among transit agencies, local jurisdictions and other relevant stakeholders.

This document focuses on key topics that are important for consistency with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. Links to overall guidance on transportation element development and additional regional resources are provided in the last section.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This document provides a general overview of the requirements for transportation element development and focuses on key topics important for consistency with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. Links to overall guidance on transportation element development and additional regional resources are provided below.

Additional Resources for Transportation Element Development

The provisions of the Growth Management Act that stipulate the mandatory elements of transportation elements are provided under RCW 36.70A.70(6). Additional information about multimodal transportation improvements and strategies is provided at RCW 36.70A.108.

Washington State Department of Commerce has developed a Transportation Guide that provides detailed information about the development of transportation elements in compliance with the Growth Management Act.

HB 1181 (2023) included several important changes to the transportation element for central Puget Sound counties and their cities with more than 6,000 residents.

The Washington State Department of Transportation's Community Planning Portal provides data about the state transportation system that can help local governments complete their transportation element inventory.

The Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC) provides examples of local transportation elements.

PSRC has developed a Community Profiles portal that includes demographic profiles on a variety of topics for all cities and towns in the PSRC region.