

Chapter 2 - REGULATORY COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL PLANNING

The Transportation Master Plan is consistent with the transportation policies and plans adopted at the State of Washington (state), regional, Snohomish County (county), and various other adjacent local and regional entities' (cities, public transit provider and sub---local sub-area) plans. State laws and guidelines and principles contained in regional planning documents govern the formation of local transportation plans and their respective components in these agency's comprehensive plans. They include the following:

- 1] Conformity with state planning and environmental law, including GMA requirements for transportation planning (RCW 36.70A.070[6] and SEPA guidelines;
- 2] Addressing regional planning policies – which in the central Puget Sound region are the 174 multicounty planning policies in PSRC's *VISION 2050* and consistency with the regional transportation plan, *PSRC'S THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN*; and,
- 3] Coordination with other nearby county and city planning efforts, local and regional public transit agency planning guidelines and local sub-area plans.

Each of these components are discussed below

CONFORMITY WITH STATE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

Transportation planning at the State, County and local levels is mandated by the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 36.70A, 1990) and subsequent amendments. The GMA contains many requirements for the preparation of the Transportation Element of a Comprehensive Plan. In addition to requiring consistency with the Land Use Element and the Environment Element, the GMA requires that the following components be included in the Transportation Master Plan:

- An inventory of facilities by mode of transport;
- Level of service (LOS) calculations to aid in determining the existing and future operating conditions of the facilities;
- Proposed actions to bring these deficient facilities into compliance;
- Traffic forecasts, based on land use;
- Identification of infrastructure needs to meet current and future demands;
- Funding analysis for needed improvements and possible additional funding sources;
- Identification of intergovernmental coordination efforts; and
- Identification of demand-management strategies as available. (RCW 36.70A.070(6))

In addition to these elements, GMA mandates that development cannot occur unless adequate supporting infrastructure either already exists or is built concurrent with development. Concurrent is defined as either adequate capital facilities exist or will be available within 6 years from the time of development. In addition to capital facilities, infrastructure may include transit service,

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, or Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES ACT (SEPA)

The Washington Legislature enacted the State Environmental Policy Act in 1971. Commonly called SEPA, the law helps state and local agencies identify environmental impacts likely result from projects and decisions such as:

- Issuing permits for private projects such as an office building, grocery store, or apartment complex.
- Constructing public facilities like a new school, highway, or water pipeline.
- Adopting regulations, policies, or plans such as a county or city comprehensive plan, critical area ordinance, or state water quality regulation.

Every day, state and local agencies use SEPA to evaluate proposed decisions. Information learned through the review process can be used to:

- Change a proposal to reduce likely impacts.
- Apply conditions to or deny a proposal when adverse environmental impacts are identified.

SEPA: LEGAL OVERVIEW

The State Environmental Policy Act may be Washington's most powerful legal tool for protecting the environment. Among other things, the law requires all state and local governments to:

- "Utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decision making which may have an impact on man's environment."
- Ensure that "environmental amenities and values will be given appropriate consideration in decision making along with economic and technical considerations..." (RCW 43.21C.030)

SEPA policies and goals supplement existing authorizations for Washington's executive, legislative and judicial branches including state agencies, counties, cities, districts, and public corporations. Any governmental action may be conditioned or denied pursuant to SEPA.

PURPOSE AND INTENT

SEPA is intended to ensure that environmental values are considered during decision-making by state and local agencies. When SEPA was adopted, the state lawmakers identified four primary purposes:

- 1] To declare a state policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between people and their environment.
- 2] To promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere.
- 3] Stimulate public health and welfare.
- 4] Enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to Washington and the nation.

To meet these purposes, state SEPA rules direct state and local agencies to:

- Consider environmental information (impacts, alternatives, and mitigation) before committing to a particular course of action.
- Identify and evaluate probable impacts, alternatives and mitigation measures, emphasizing important environmental impacts and alternatives (including cumulative, short-term, long-term, direct and indirect impacts).
- Encourage public involvement in decisions.
- Prepare environmental documents that are concise, clear, and to the point.
- Integrate SEPA with existing agency planning and licensing procedures so procedures run concurrently rather than consecutively.
- Integrate SEPA with agency activities at the earliest possible time to ensure planning and decisions reflect environmental values, avoid delays later in the process, and seek to resolve potential problems.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The environmental review process in SEPA is designed to work with other regulations to provide a comprehensive review of a proposal. While most regulations focus on particular aspects of a proposal, SEPA requires the identification and evaluation of probable impacts on all elements of the environment.

Combining the review processes of SEPA and other laws reduces duplication and delay by combining study needs, combining comment periods and public notices, and allowing agencies, applicants, and the public to consider all aspects of a proposal at the same time.

SEPA can address project proposals such as:

- New construction
- Demolition
- Landfills
- Exchanges of natural resources

Or non-project proposals such as:

- Comprehensive plans
- Zoning
- Development regulations

SEPA also gives agencies the authority to condition or deny a proposal based on the agency's adopted SEPA policies and the environmental impacts identified in a SEPA document.

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

State planning law requires countywide planning policies and the transportation-related provisions in local comprehensive plans to be consistent with the adopted regional transportation plan. Together, VISION 2050 and its functional transportation plan, THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN, adopted in May 2010, provide the policy and planning framework for transportation planning in the central Puget Sound region.

VISION 2050

VISION 2050 serves as the long-range growth management, environmental, economic, and transportation strategy for the central Puget Sound region. VISION 2050 combines a public commitment to environmental sustainability and growth management with the economic strength and efficient transportation facilities and infrastructure necessary to support that vision. It looks ahead at what we want the region to be in the year 2040 and identifies key issues that we need to tackle to get there. It is a vision of how to accommodate the growth that is coming, as well as a strategy for creating the resources and infrastructure needed to help the region's communities manage that growth. It is a vision for a region that will preserve its natural environment for both the present and future generations. It is a vision for a region that will grow more compactly and be designed to be more walkable and transit-oriented.

The general policies outlined in *VISION 2050* include the following:

- Coordinate planning efforts among jurisdictions, agencies, and federally recognized Indian tribes where there are common borders or related regional issues, to facilitate a common vision.
- Update countywide planning policies, where necessary, prior to December 31, 2010, to address the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2050.
- Monitor implementation of VISION 2050 to evaluate progress in achieving the regional growth strategy, as well as the environment, development patterns, housing, economy, transportation, and public services provisions.
- Explore new and existing sources of funding for services and infrastructure, recognizing that such funding is vital if local governments are to achieve the regional vision.
- Identify and develop changes to regulatory, pricing, taxing, and expenditure practices, and other fiscal tools within the region to implement the vision.

VISION 2050's transportation-specific goals are to ensure that Mountlake Terrace will have a safe, cleaner, integrated, sustainable, and highly efficient multimodal transportation system that supports the regional growth strategy and promotes economic and environmental vitality, and better public health. These goals, supported with their own unique policies, include the following:

- Goal: As a high priority, the region will maintain, preserve, and operate its existing transportation system in a safe and usable state.
- Goal: The future transportation system will support the regional growth strategy by focusing on connecting centers with a highly efficient multimodal transportation network.
- Goal: The region will invest in transportation systems that offer greater options, mobility, and access in support of the regional growth strategy.

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN is organized into seven chapters and are briefly summarized below:

1] Toward a Sustainable Transportation System

This chapter establishes three integrated strategies for addressing (1) congestion and mobility, (2) the environment, and (3) transportation funding. Investments are prioritized for centers and compact urban communities. THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

PLAN calls for a transportation system that is safe, secure, and efficient. This includes moving people and goods in ways that support a healthy environment and a strong economy. Sustainable transportation means relying on cleaner and renewable sources of energy, as well as more environmentally friendly design and construction to reduce impacts. Transportation sets the region on a course to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also takes steps toward sustainable financing.

2] A Strategic Approach to Regional Mobility

This chapter addresses mobility and congestion relief through (1) land use planning, (2) managing system demand, (3) transportation system management and operations, and (4) strategically adding capacity to the transportation system.

3] A Sustainable Environment

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN addresses the relationship between transportation and the environment. The plan was developed with a focus on reducing the potential environmental impacts of transportation infrastructure and operations. THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN speaks to (1) maintaining and improving air quality, (2) reducing greenhouse gas emissions, (3) improving water quality, and (4) improving and promoting health.

4] A Sustainable Financial Framework

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN advances a financing strategy designed to address the challenges associated with funding transportation investments. The strategy envisions local actions to adjust levy rates, impact and development fees, and parking pricing. State efforts are needed to identify additional local option taxes, secure transit funding, and distribute state transportation revenues in a manner that supports best practices. Tolls and other user fees would also become a more prominent part of funding transportation.

5] Regional Programs and Projects

This chapter describes programs and projects that have been identified to implement the region's transportation strategy. Two broad categories of investments are presented: (1) constrained and (2) un-programmed. Constrained investments in the plan's financial strategy are funded through currently available and/or reasonably expected new revenue sources. The un-programmed portion needs additional funding or financial analysis.

6] Monitoring Implementation and System Performance

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN includes a commitment to regularly report on how the region is doing to take the steps necessary to implement VISION 2050 and THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN. While VISION 2040 includes an integrated approach to measuring both implementation of regional goals and performance in achieving a broad range of desired policy outcomes, THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN discuss the monitoring of mobility and accessibility, mode split for various travel options, addressing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, preserving water quality, the application of tolling and user fees, and expenditures for transportation.

7] Future Planning, Programming, and Implementation

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN is designed to be a planning document that continues to evolve. It includes implementation actions, information on amending the plan, a discussion of corridor planning, and descriptions of the region's transportation improvement program (TIP) and plan review process.

COUNTY AND LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS

SNOHOMISH COUNTY TE ELEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Transportation Element (TE) of the Snohomish County Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan (GMACP) is prepared in accordance with the GMA and the County's General Policy Plan. The TE presents a plan for transportation facilities and services needed to support the county's GMACP 2015-2035 future land use map (FLUM). The TE recommends specific arterial roadway projects for the unincorporated County in order to meet roadway capacity needs. The TE provides an estimate of needed expenditures, forecasted revenues, and a financial strategy that helps to ensure needed transportation improvements are funded. It also recommends various implementation strategies to guide the County in its participation in regional and multi-modal transportation.

PUBLIC TRANSIT PLANS – COMMUNITY TRANSIT, KING COUNTY METRO AND SOUND TRANSIT

Each transit agency in the central Puget Sound region has a plan that guides its service program. However, they currently vary in terms of their planning horizons and level of detail. Under PSRC's Inter-local Agreement, the Regional Council reviews and comments on transit agency plans. In addition, state law requires the Puget Sound Regional Council to certify long-range plans developed by Sound Transit (RCW 81.104). The provisions in the regional transportation plan and the multicounty planning policies, which provide the policy framework for the region's transportation plan, serve as a basis for developing a certification recommendation for Sound Transit's plan.

ADJACENT CITY PLANNING PLANS

The City of Mountlake Terrace borders several incorporated cities that include Edmonds, Brier, Shoreline and Lynnwood. Since transportation corridors frequently cross jurisdiction lines, the City will make every effort to coordinate and plan transportation corridors that will improve the movement of traffic across these boundaries.

SUB-AREA PLANS – MELODY HILL AND TOWN CENTER

Sub-Area Plans are developed to provide a long term vision and plan for the area at a more detailed level than can be done in a Comprehensive Plan. At the same time, the Sub-area Plan would be generally consistent with the directions of the Comprehensive Plan. By anticipating change, the community will be poised to act and enabled to proactively steer change toward realizing the community vision. The Sub-area Plan identifies major planning issues and provides recommendations, goals, and policies specific to the sub-area.

MELODY HILL

Mountlake Terrace adopted its first sub-area plan, covering the Melody Hill Neighborhood, in early 2006. It is located in the northwest portion of the city and is generally bounded by the city limits on the north and west, Interstate 5 on the east, and approximately 224th Street SW to the south. To the west is the city of Edmonds and the city of Lynnwood is to the north.

The City's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in August 2003, describes how the Melody Hill neighborhood could develop in the future as:

An accessible core commercial area, with a mix of retail, offices, and entertainment facilities along both sides of 220th Street. Light industry, public services, and offices occupy much of the land to the north and west. Thousands of people work in the vicinity. Townhomes and multifamily residential comprise a significant portion of housing, though some neighborhood areas have only detached houses. The neighborhood connects easily with the rest of the region via I-5 and local arterials. Many people use the transit system to travel from one destination to another. In addition, people walk, jog, and bike along a community favorite, the Interurban Trail. Another special place is Hall Creek, which has been protected for fish habitat. People enjoy seeing the creek from various viewing sites.

The Melody Hill Sub-area Plan promotes community livability, economic vitality, pedestrian and non-motorized improvements, transportation mobility, improved access to the Interurban Trail, and a healthy natural environment. Development of this Sub-area Plan also implements goals and policies in the Economic Vitality Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The following objectives were used to guide the development of this plan and to identify priorities, recommendations, and draft goals and policies.

- Develop a walkable neighborhood
- Manage parking and traffic flow
- Provide improved transit access
- Retain and strengthen the employment base and business climate
- Provide attractive housing
- Develop a clear neighborhood identity
- Provide a safe and healthy environment
- Include access to recreational opportunities

TOWN CENTER

Mountlake Terrace is reinventing its downtown to create a vibrant attractive Town Center. An adopted Town Center Plan calls for development of new stores, restaurants, offices, and housing in the 68-acre downtown zone. Wider sidewalks, street trees, and a public plaza for community use are part of the mix.

The Plan and City code allow owners in the core of the Town Center—the area called the Town Square or superblock—to build up to seven stories with a step-back requirement for the upper stories. At the intersection of 56th and 236th, new development can be built up to five stories and in one other block up to six stories. In the rest of the downtown, development is limited to three or four stories, depending on the district. The City has a form-based code for downtown. Special design standards apply to all new development.

A Planned Action Ordinance has been adopted that incorporates environmental information and

streamlines development review.

Recently, an update to the Town Center Sub-Area was conducted. On September 26, 2019, the City Council adopted a series of ordinances resulting in changes/updates of multiple areas in the City of Mountlake Terrace. The Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, official zoning map, Economic Vitality Element, Planned Action Area and the re-designation of 1.3 acres of property for Park and Open Space for adoption were all portions of the city affected by these adoptions.

The updated/new Town Center Subarea Plan and related development regulations encourage the revitalization of the City's Town Center. The development of additional housing, offices, retail and commercial stores and community amenities are all future opportunities. Highlights of the updated plan include:

- Three new Town Center Districts within a reconfigured Town Center Core boundary
- Creation of a Town Center reserve district
- Amended zoning code and design standards
- Implementation of a Planned Action Area Ordinance that will create a more efficient environmental review process

The four Town Center Districts are as follows:

- TC-1 District - Intended to emphasize transit-oriented employment development to those Town Center areas closest to the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center and future light rail station. Building heights up to 12-stories will be allowed.
- TC-2 District - Intended to function as the center for retail, cultural, dining and entertainment activity in Mountlake Terrace. Building heights up to 8 stories will be allowed.
- TC-3 District - Intended to emphasize multifamily residential uses, serving as buffer areas adjacent to the transitional zone that is situated outside the Town Center core. Building heights up to 6 stories will be allowed.
- TC-Reserve District - Intended to allow for a smaller scale mixture of multifamily, retail commercial and professional office uses, allowing building heights up to 4 stories

The updated plan is the result of work that began with the appointment of an Economic Vitality and Town Center Task Force in February of 2018. The Task Force recommended updates to the Planning Commission in December of 2018. Following an extensive public process, the Planning Commission submitted a recommendation to the City Council in July of 2019.

The City Council and Administration hereby expresses our sincere appreciation to the Task Force, Planning Commission, residents and businesses for participating in this process.

MLT 6- YEAR TIP

Each year the City Council adopts an update to the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for planned projects. The TIP is based on priority needs and requirements of funding, concurrency, safety, preservation, land use, and other community needs. It includes improvements to sidewalks and other non-motorized transportation facilities such as bike lanes as well as improvements for motorized vehicular travel. MLT's 6 – Year TIP is examined more thoroughly in Chapter 11 – Implementation and Funding.