Why include transit-supportive elements in comprehensive plans?

The comprehensive plan articulates the ideal outcomes that would result if the plan were fully realized and sets the preferred courses of action to achieve a community’s vision. Having strong policies that support transit and transit-oriented development will help a community create and maintain quality neighborhoods and meet 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 transportation 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.

Policy Strength Continuum

Policy language should convey the appropriate strength to achieve the desired outcome. Even strong policies are only effective if they are clearly linked to development regulations and funding.

**Statements of Inclination**
Convey intent to improve but make no target or definition of success.
Example: Portland, OR: “Operate the street system in a manner that benefits transit.”

**Statements of Principle**
Describe clear targets or conditions of success.
Example: Santa Monica, CA: “The primary purpose of arterial streets that are also frequent transit streets is to move people rather than vehicles.”

**Statements of Impact**
Go further, describing particular situations where transit should have priority.
Example: Seattle, WA: “Implement Transit Signal Priority (TSP) along transit corridors to provide transit vehicles with precedence at signalized intersections, while considering cross-street pedestrian and traffic demand.”

Adapted from City of Bellevue Transit Master Plan
Strengthen multimodal solutions to help meet transportation needs

The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to establish level-of-service (LOS) standards for transportation-related facilities. LOS standards articulate the speed and reliability of transportation facilities and services. Historically, LOS standards have focused primarily on road capacity for motor vehicles. However, VISION 2040’s Multicounty Planning Policies require communities to establish multimodal LOS systems that evaluate the performance of transportation facilities for a variety of users and modes, including transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Strategies

- Adopt multimodal LOS standards.
- Partner with service providers when developing methodologies and standards that measure mobility or level of service across modes.
- Include transit corridor infrastructure within the local transportation improvement plan.
- Establish LOS minimums for transit where practicable.
- Allow transit projects as mitigation for development impacts through SEPA or concurrency programs.

How it’s been done

In Policy

City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan

Establish LOS standards for a range of multimodal transportation modes to identify deficiencies and need for improvements. Bellingham’s adopted LOS standard is “Person Trips Available by Concurrency Service Area” based on arterial and transit capacity for motorized modes and on the degree of network completeness for pedestrian and bicycle modes. The individual thresholds for each transportation mode available in each Concurrency Management Ordinance.

In Practice

City of Bellingham Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program

In 2008, Bellingham developed and adopted a new Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program that includes LOS measurements for pedestrian, bicycle, multi-use trails, and public transit in addition to the traditional auto-centric volume to capacity (v/c) ratio LOS standards used by most jurisdictions. The program integrates transportation with land use. It classifies each of its Concurrency Service Areas (CSAs) according to land use typology, availability of multimodal transportation facilities and transit service.

Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers, tinyurl.com/BellinghamConcurrency