

Relationship of Transportation and Land Use

Transportation and land use are interrelated. This means, in part, that land use affects the level of transportation service that is needed. For example, where land is used in a low-density pattern, frequent transit service is usually not cost-effective. Similarly, it means that the level of transportation service affects the kind of land use that will be suitable for an area. For example, an established truck route will make it easier for adjacent land to be used for industry. A multi-modal, high quality transportation system can help attract or retain intended land uses.

Given the relationship between transportation and land use, decisions about needed transportation facilities and programs should take into account the demands of the local population and our growing economy. Transportation planning should provide for a circulation system that reflects existing and proposed land use patterns – for example, to provide efficient access within a commercial core for pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, trucks, and buses, while also encouraging quiet access in a residential neighborhood. Investments in the transportation system are expected to support growth and/or redevelopment targeted by the City’s land use goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

Land use plans at both the regional and local level are used to forecast future transportation demands. Projected employment and population growth translate to growth in traffic volumes in specific geographic areas. High intensity land uses, such as office space and retail sales generate significant demands on the transportation system. They need to be adequately planned together.

Importance of Walkability

Walkability has a number of benefits and functions in a community. Increased walking improves the health of the individual and families. It can reduce the number of vehicular trips, thus decreasing pollution and traffic congestion. Walking can also improve the sense of being “connected” to various parts of the city, increasing our sense of community. Sometimes walkability is described in terms such as “pedestrian mobility” and “pedestrian orientation.”

To encourage walking, a community can provide a streetscape sensitive to pedestrians. This includes protection from vehicular traffic, street crossings at a pedestrian scale, amenities such as landscaping, street furniture in high traffic areas, and lighting. Walking should be convenient, safe, and pleasant. It should also provide easy access to major destinations, including transit facilities, so that cars are not needed for every trip.

Diversity of Needs and People to Serve

Provision of transportation facilities should be equitable. The people in Mountlake Terrace are diverse and have varying transportation needs. Some people require facilities for high occupancy vehicles and transit, while others require facilities for single occupancy vehicles. Accessibility for disabled individuals, youth, and seniors must be considered in provision of transportation services.

Growth, Congestion, and Concurrency

The GMA mandates transportation “concurrency” for development and growth. For a local jurisdiction, this means that the transportation facilities must be adequate, based on adopted service standards, to serve proposed development. If existing facilities are not adequate for the proposed development, either: (a) the development must be denied; or (b) adequate transportation facilities or demand-management strategies must be provided concurrently with the development. (See the section on “Roadway Level of Service” for more discussion.)