

Assessment Report

Application #2008-08: Amendments to Transportation Element and Commute Trip Reduction Regulations

A. Summary of Application

Type of Amendment:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Plan Text Change <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Intensity Change <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Code Text Change <input type="checkbox"/> Area-wide Rezone
Applicant and/or Affiliation:	Community and Economic Development Department and Public Works Department
Contact:	Commute Trip Reduction – Diane Wiatr, 591-5380 Concurrency Assessment and Unfunded Project List – Dana Brown, 591-5718
Location:	Citywide
Current Land Use Intensity:	N/A
Current Zoning:	N/A
Size (parcels and/or acres):	N/A
Description of Amendment Request:	Amend the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to Concurrency Assessment and Unfunded Projects; and amend the Transportation Element, other elements as applicable, and the Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.15 pertaining to Commute Trip Reduction.

A. General Description of the Proposed Amendment:

The proposed amendments address three subjects related to transportation: Concurrency Assessment, Unfunded Projects and Commute Trip Reduction. The first two subjects would update the respective portions of the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The third subject would amend the Transportation Element, amend other elements as may be applicable, and revise the Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.15 Commute Trip Reduction.

Concurrency Assessment

The proposed amendment would update the Periodic Concurrency Assessment section in the Transportation Element with new information from an assessment of the performance of the City’s transportation network.

The assessment, or the concurrency test, is necessary to ensure the City’s compliance with the concurrency requirements of the Growth Management Act (RCW36.70A.070(6)(b)). The test will be conducted using EMME/2, a computerized travel demand forecasting model.

The transportation network under evaluation includes local arterials and state-owned facilities. EMME/2 will estimate the system-wide trip generation based on the land use assumptions for the base and target years, forecast the trip distribution throughout the transportation network, and determine if any given segment of the network would be able to accommodate its “assigned” traffic load and maintain its level of service at or above the established standard.

If any future development is anticipated to cause the level of service of the transportation network to decline below the established standards, the development may not be approved unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development. These strategies may include increased public transportation service, ride sharing programs, demand management, and other transportation systems management strategies. According to GMA, “concurrent with the development” means that 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. For the City of Tacoma, such financial commitment rests in the Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program, which is updated annually.

The last time such a concurrency test was conducted was in 2002. The proposed amendment would update the existing travel demand model by setting the base year as 2007 and the future year at 2014.

Unfunded Projects

The proposed amendment would update the Transportation Element by adding a number of projects to the “Transportation Improvement Projects List – Unfunded” (or “Unfunded Project List”). Specific projects to be added will be identified based on the requests and feedback that the City receives from citizens and other sources. Projects are expected to be related to arterial and nonmotorized improvements.

The purpose of including projects in the Unfunded Project List is to provide an opportunity for those projects to be eligible for future funding and ultimately be built. The Unfunded Project List is updated on a periodic basis to reflect the desires of the community and by listing improvements that increase transportation system capacity to meet the GMA concurrency requirement. When funding becomes available for any given unfunded project, it will be moved to the Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program for detailed budgeting and implementation.

Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)

The 2006 Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act (“Act”) (RCW 70.94.521-551) requires affected local jurisdictions (including the City of Tacoma) to adopt CTR Plans designed to achieve the goals of 10% reduction in drive-alone trips and 13% reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2011. Local CTR Plans shall be consistent with and may be incorporated in applicable state or regional transportation plans and local comprehensive plans.

Pursuant to the Act, the City of Tacoma developed a draft CTR Plan in July 2007. The draft Plan included goals and targets for trip reduction, profile information of employers affected by the Act, requirements for affected employers, and implementation strategies to achieve the established goals. The draft Plan also recommended policy changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan, in order to strengthen the correlation of the CTR Plan to the Comprehensive Plan and to ensure the successful implementation of the CTR program.

The City Council approved the draft CTR Plan on July 10, 2007, by Resolution No. 37220, for the purpose of submitting the document to the Puget Sound Regional Council and the State CTR Board for review. The draft CTR Plan was approved by the State CTR Board on January 25, 2008, and subsequently remanded to the City Council for final adoption and inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan in 2008.

The Act also requires that the City of Tacoma adopt a CTR ordinance to establish requirements for major employers and provide an appeals process by which major employers, who as a result of special characteristics of their business or their locations would be unable to meet the requirements of the ordinance, may obtain a waiver or modification of those requirements. The Washington State Department of Transportation is developing a CTR Model Ordinance, pursuant to the Act, and is expected to make it available for local jurisdictions by summer of 2008.

Currently, the City has a CTR ordinance as codified in the Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.15 Commute Trip Reduction ("TMC 13.15"). The CTR ordinance was originally developed pursuant to the 1991 CTR Act, which was the preceding legislation of the 2006 CTR Efficiency Act.

The proposed amendment would incorporate the approved draft CTR Plan into the Comprehensive Plan by amending the Transportation Element, and other elements as applicable and appropriate, to reflect the changes in policies, policy intents and strategies, as recommended in the CTR Plan. The proposed amendment would also revise the existing CTR Ordinance (TMC 13.15) based on the CTR Model Ordinance once it becomes available and is properly adapted for the City's use.

Additional Information:

The CTR Efficiency Act also puts forward an optional pilot program to designate areas of dense employment and residential development as Growth and Transportation Efficiency Centers (GTEC) where more aggressive strategies can be applied to achieve a greater reduction in drive-alone trips and vehicle miles traveled, thus reducing demand on the state and local transportation systems. State funds for program implementation are available for participating jurisdictions through a competitive selection process. Additional State transportation dollars may be allocated at a higher priority for future projects within GTECs.

Along with the submittal of the draft CTR Plan to the PSRC and the State CTR Board, the City of Tacoma submitted an application for the designation of Downtown Tacoma as a

GTEC. The application has succeeded in the selection process and been awarded \$300,000 for programming and administration for the period from January 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

The proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Tacoma Municipal Code are not only mandated by the Act, but also needed to provide the policy and regulatory context for the implementation of the GTEC program.

B. Assessment Criteria (TMC 13.02.045.F)

1. Determining if the application is complete or what information is needed to make the application complete.

The proposed amendments are initiated by staff in response to the State GMA and CTR law requirements. No application was filed.

2. Determining if the request is site specific (i.e., a land use intensity or a zoning change for a specific parcel(s) likely to be under one ownership).

The concurrency assessment applies to the transportation network city-wide and is not site-specific.

Adding projects to the Unfunded Project List is not a site-specific intensity or zoning change. Whether any of the projects is site-specific is irrelevant.

The CTR plan and ordinance are also applicable to the entire city, and to subareas in certain circumstances, but are not site-specific.

3. Receipt prior to the December 31st deadline (a large volume of requests before the deadline may necessitate that some requests be reviewed in a subsequent year).

Not applicable.

4. Study of the same area or issue within the last year (this may be cause for the Commission to decline further review).

The concurrency assessment was not conducted last year.

The unfunded projects are yet to be determined. Whether they have been reviewed in the past is unknown at this time, but will be taken into account during the review process leading to their inclusion in the Unfunded Project List.

The draft CTR Plan, at various stages during its development, was reviewed by the Planning Commission in November 2006, April 2007, May 2007 and June 2007. The plan was also reviewed by the City Council, and as mentioned above, approved on July 10, 2007, for the submittal purposes.

5. Amount of analysis necessary for the Commission to reach an initial determination (if a large-scale study is required, a request may have to be delayed until the following year due to work loads, staffing levels, etc.).

The amount of analysis is expected to be moderate.

For the concurrency assessment, the major task is to update the EMME/2 model, which will be conducted by a consultant and slated for completion in July 2008.

For the unfunded projects, staff work is anticipated to be focused on establishing the profile information for the projects, at the planning level. Such information may include the general locations, boundaries, right-of-way needs, type of improvement, and project cost. At such time as the projects receive appropriate funding to proceed, more detailed studies in the areas of design engineering, acquisition, construction, and environmental impacts will be required.

For the CTR Ordinance update, the major task will be to tailor the State CTR Model Ordinance for the City's use.

For incorporating CTR related policies into the Comprehensive Plan, the groundwork has been done in the draft CTR Plan. Appendix G of the plan contains a summary of CTR supportive goals and policies commonly implemented across jurisdictions, provides a comparison of those goals and policies against various elements of Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan, and recommends policies that should be considered for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.

6. Available incorporation into planned or active projects (if a request can be incorporated into a planned or active project, it may receive immediate consideration).

For the concurrency assessment, the result will be used as part of the consideration for selecting and including transportation improvement projects in the City's Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program, which is updated annually.

The unfunded projects are yet to be determined. Whether they could be incorporated into any planned or active project is unknown at this time, but will be taken into account during the review process leading to their inclusion in the Unfunded Project List.

For the CTR, as mentioned in the "Additional Information" above, there is an imminent need to incorporate the GTEC program implementation into the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Tacoma Municipal Code.

C. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the proposed amendments pertaining to the Concurrency Assessment, Unfunded Projects, and the Commute Trip Reduction Plan and Ordinance be included as part of the 2008 Annual Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code.

