

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Requirements, Policies & Strategies

Transportation Commission – 12.17.25

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City of Spokane

Transportation Element Requirements

HB 1181 Additions

Relationship to Land Use

Implements + consistency with Land Use Element

Multimodal level of service, helping to achieve environmental justice

Demand-management strategies

Multimodal Needs

Address: Air, water, and ground transportation facilities – local and state

Address: Transit, active transportation facilities

Identify: Multimodal transportation demand and equitably meet needs

Implementation

A multiyear capital improvement plan + financing plan

Concurrency

ADA Transition Plan



City of Spokane

Transportation Climate Policy Overview

Key goals

- Reduce VMT
- Ensure climate resilience of transportation systems to climate hazards
- Expand EV/Zero Emission infrastructure

What We Heard

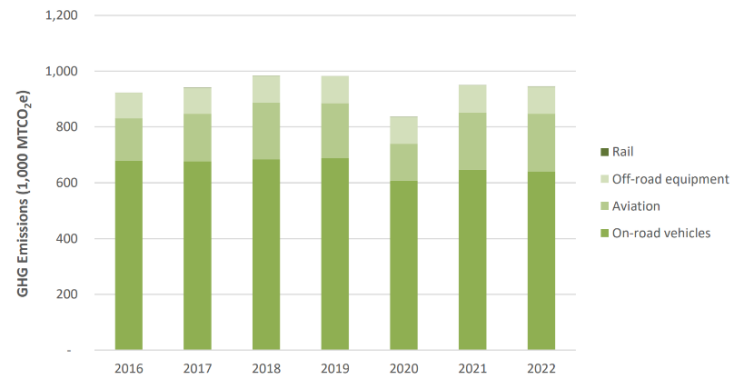
- Across all engagement strategies, participants **strongly supported improving public transit, bike infrastructure, and active transportation options** to reduce emissions and improve access.
- **EVs were ranked as lower priority among Earth Day workshop participants**, although some called for incentives or lower taxes on EVs



Transportation Context

- **The WA Clean Vehicles Program rule increases zero emission vehicle sales** of passenger cars, light-duty trucks, and medium-duty vehicles to 100% starting in 2035.
- **The WA Clean Fuel Standard law requires fuel suppliers to gradually reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels** to 45% below 2017 levels by 2038.
- **Spokane Transit Authority is working to achieve a 100% zero-emission bus fleet by 2045.**
- **Transportation accounts for 41% of community GHG emissions.**
- **CRVA recommendations:** plan for complete access to destinations within neighborhoods, enhance parallel walking, biking, rolling, and transit networks to ensure equitable access, consider necessary changes to transit service during weather events

Figure 24. Annual Transportation Emissions by Vehicle Type



Department of Commerce:

High Priority VMT Policies – Transportation Chapter

- Reduce / eliminate parking requirements
- Improve transit frequency, coverage, speed and reliability
- Implement travel demand management (TDM) programs
- Increase multimodal capacity
- Address multimodal concurrency



Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis Memo

Requirements, Policies, and Strategies that Support VMT Reduction

Fehr & Peers conducted an analysis to estimate the change in VMT per capita under each future land use alternative compared to existing:

- **Alternative 1, Stay the Course:** This Alternative (No Action Alternative) is the continuation of the current Comprehensive Plan and associated zoning and regulations. Alternative 1 growth in mixed use areas like downtown but often in vacant lands on the outskirts of the city.
- **Alternative 2, Distributed and Balanced:** Alternative 2 adds greater housing and job intensity along frequent transit routes in mixed use areas but also has a lower number of added jobs compared to Alternatives 1 and 3.
- **Alternative 3, Center City and Regional Hubs:** Alternative 3 adds greater housing and job intensity in the City of Spokane's downtown vicinity called the "Center City" and in employment centers in the West Plains (Airport) and Northeast (Hillyard) Spokane as well as selected corridors like Division and others. It studies the highest number of jobs.



Table 1. Change in per Capita VMT (Existing to Future Alternatives 1, 2, and 3)

	2024	2046		
	Existing	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Citywide per Capita VMT	17.9	19.9	19.2	19.8
Citywide per Capita VMT % change	-	+11%	+7%	+11%

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025



Potential VMT Reduction Targets

Through the project team working group discussions, Fehr & Peers understands that the City would like to set a realistic VMT per capita reduction target. Based on this analysis, regional growth patterns may present headwinds to long-term per capita VMT reduction in the City of Spokane. In the near term, the City should focus on keeping VMT per capita at existing levels as a reasonable sign of progress for the

Long-term, a realistic target for Spokane's VMT per capita reductions could be within a range of 5% to 10% from existing levels.



VMT Policies

TR 8.3 – Set and Monitor Targets for Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) – In alignment with regional and state goals and policies, establish short- and long-term VMT per capita targets via an ordinance and carry out regular monitoring to ensure progress toward established goals. TE policy; amended.

TR 8.4 – Enact programs and carry out investments to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and associated Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions – Seek out new programs and projects with high potential to make meaningful reductions in Vehicle Miles Traveled to achieve VMT and GHG targets. TE policy; remove: Focus on the specific strategies highlighted in the sections below.

VMT Strategies

- Coordinate with WSDOT and SRTC on obtaining more useful VMT data for existing conditions analysis and ongoing monitoring.



Foster High-Intensity Land Uses in Mixed Use Areas Along Transit

Recommended Policies

LU 1.4 Higher Intensity Residential Areas. Direct new higher intensity residential uses to areas in and around mixed-use areas designated on the Land Use Plan Map and to areas where existing development intensity is already consistent with development of this type. Existing policy; keep.

LU 3.2 Centers and Corridors. Designate mixed-use areas (neighborhood scale, community or district scale, and regional scale) on the Land Use Plan Map that encourage a mix of uses and activities around which growth is focused. Existing policy; keep.

LU 3.5 Achieve a proportion of uses in designated mixed-use that will stimulate pedestrian activity and create mutually reinforcing land uses. Existing policy; keep.

LU 4.2 Land Uses That Support Travel Options and Active Transportation. Provide a compatible mix of housing and commercial uses in neighborhood-level, district-level, and regional-scale mixed-use areas. Existing policy; keep.



Prioritize Infill Development, Missing Middle Housing, and Increase Density Near Transit

Recommended Policies



SSAP: HW 2.1 Continue to invest in affordable housing, low-barrier housing, and safe, accessible, affordable public transportation to increase density near transit. Existing policy; amend: Be more specific about how/where to invest. Could consider/combine in Neighborhoods Element to address this overlapping issue.

H 1.3 Provide incentives for employers to sponsor or develop affordable housing in proximity to their place of employment. Existing policy; amend: Prioritize areas with the highest vulnerability identified in the Spokane Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment.



Land Use GHG Policy 1 - Accommodate diverse, affordable, and attainable housing types within the to meet demand while avoiding sprawl in order to decrease emissions and infrastructure costs and preserve open space. Policy under review, keep.

Land Use GHG Policy 2 - Prioritize infill development, while expanding, protecting, and maintaining the City's tree canopy, through zoning regulations and permitting processes. Policy under review; amend to incorporate information that ties infill development to resilience and efficiency such that VMT is reduced and emissions follow. Policy under review, similar to TR 17. Keep and remove TR 17.

Land Use GHG Policy 3 - Foster transit-oriented development and accessible neighborhoods by increasing density and supporting multimodal transportation in areas that are well-served by transit. Policy under review, similar to H 1.11. Keep and remove H 1.11.



Implement Complimentary, Mixed Use Land Uses

Recommended Policies

SH 2.4 Encourage a land use pattern that allows convenient access to daily goods and services, especially for those persons with limited mobility and/or transportation options. Existing policy; amend: Add updated language from climate work to ensure all neighborhoods have accessible uses.

LU 1.6 Neighborhood Retail Use. Direct new neighborhood retail use to Neighborhood Centers designated on the Land Use Plan Map. Existing policy; amend: Add updated language from climate work strengthening mandate to add retail uses in areas designated for neighborhood-level mixed use development via conditional use permits and remove references to Neighborhood Centers.

LU 4.1 Coordinate land use and transportation planning citywide to result in an efficient pattern of development that supports alternative transportation modes consistent with the Transportation Chapter and makes significant progress toward reducing sprawl, traffic congestion, and air pollution. Existing policy; amend: Strengthen requirements for new development to establish connections to neighborhood retail and update language to replace “alternative transportation modes” with “active transportation modes.”



Potential Strategies

- Develop a plan for siting neighborhood distribution centers and incorporating future delivery modes which may be more VMT efficient than traditional retail delivery modes.
- Update zoning code to prohibit most drive-through businesses on high priority transit routes. These drive-through businesses may include car washes, gas stations, oil change, drive-through banks, fast-food restaurants with multiple drive-through lanes or with small interior seating, etc.
- Review and update design standards for new developments to ensure walkability and bikeability through factors such as gridded streets, short blocks, and connected nonmotorized infrastructure.



Reduce/Eliminate Parking Requirements

Recommended Policies

TR 18: Develop and administer vehicle parking policies that reduce excess parking that deters non-motorized transportation users. TE policy; amended.



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LU 3.8 Encourage shared parking facilities for business and commercial establishments that have dissimilar peak use periods. TE policy: keep.

Expand existing parking maximums to new developments citywide, including commercial developments. Climate Policy Explorer.

Potential Strategies

- Explore additional strategies to reduce the appeal of vehicle trips in Spokane, such as implementing higher parking rates during peak travel periods (e.g., weekday mornings and evenings) to discourage solo driving and encourage shifts to off-peak travel or alternative transportation modes.
- Other strategies could include tolling or restricting vehicle access to certain streets during parts of the day. These strategies would require changes to the state law to authorize cities and other jurisdictions to impose pricing or restrictions on city-owned streets.



Improve Transit Frequency, Coverage, Speed and Reliability

Recommended Policies

TR 3.2: Support efficient transit operations through street and transit stop designs on transit priority streets that comply with standards and include transit-supportive elements, such as shelters, lighting, and schedule information. Assist in implementing the STA Comprehensive Plan. TE policy; keep.

SSAP: EP 3.3 Invest in and support public transit infrastructure, including sidewalks with sufficient width for an ADA pad, climate resilient frontage improvements, and transit-oriented development to increase access to affordable and convenient transportation options. Partner with STA on adding and upgrading transit stop amenities. Existing policy; amended.

Transportation GHG Policy 2 - Support public transit expansion and use through coordinated land use and transportation planning that prioritizes transit service for lower-income and overburdened neighborhoods. Policy under review, keep.



Implement Travel Demand Management (TDM) Programs

Recommended Policies

TR 4: Evaluate transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to optimize transportation options within the context of Complete Streets. Use TDM strategies to gain efficiencies in the transportation system to reduce demand for auto travel, particularly in downtown. TE policy: amended.

Potential Strategies

- Explore the adoption of a local ordinance that would expand trip reduction requirements within Spokane to include more business types and sizes, leveraging Spokane's authority to exceed state minimums under the Washington State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law.
- Continue to implement and enhance the City's participation and investment in the countywide TDM program. Organize and sustain targeted, City-specific community education and outreach initiatives that promote a shift away from drive-alone trips, especially in high growth employment areas.
- Explore ways to partner or help provide additional resources to Commute Smart Northwest to expand their reach and recruit more businesses who are not covered by the CTR law.



Increase Multimodal Capacity

The multimodal capacity policy review includes recommended policies from Goal 2 and Goal 5 of the TE that could have an influence on per capita VMT reductions. The TE includes other policies that address multimodal capacity, however, this section is not an exhaustive list of those policies. Rather, these are the key policies that could reduce VMT per capita. The project team is not recommending changes to any TE policies that are not listed below.

Recommended Policies

TR 2.1 – Design the transportation system to provide a complete transportation network for all users in line with the Complete Streets Ordinance, ensuring equitable distribution of innovation, access, choice, and options throughout the four seasons. Users include pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and persons of all abilities, as well as freight, emergency vehicles, and motor vehicle drivers. TE policy; broken out into multiple policies.



Increase Multimodal Capacity

TR 2.1 – Complete any necessary upgrades to ensure that all streets meet mandated accessibility standards and level of service standards outlined in the Master Bike Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, Spokane Transit's Comprehensive Plan, and the Arterial Street map. TE policy; broken out into multiple policies.

TR 2.2 – Identify high-priority active transportation projects to carry on completion/upgrades to the priority active transportation networks. TE policy; amended.

TR 5.1 – Enhance first-mile and last-mile connectivity from local walking, bicycling and rolling networks to local and regional public transit service. TE policy; keep.

TR 5.2 – Ensure continuous connectivity for multiple transportation options between neighborhoods, activity centers and areas with high concentrations of businesses and services to support long-term system reliability and climate resiliency. TE policy; amended.



Improve Multimodal Concurrency

Recommended Policies

Improve active transportation and other multimodal types of transportation options in concurrency programs – both in assessment and mitigation. *Climate Policy Explorer*.

Potential Strategies

- Update the concurrency program to downgrade the required auto LOS in some areas and improve the system completeness tool for multimodal concurrency, to ensure the City's multimodal infrastructure investment tracks with land use growth. Downgrading auto LOS may include:
 - o Allowing auto LOS F in more locations where street connectivity is high.
 - o Maintaining LOS E in locations where transit uses the corridor or where there are limited alternate routes.
- Maintain level of service standards for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure while detours are in place.



Next steps

TASK	TIMING
Present updates to Plan Commission Subcommittee	January 2026
Provide updated chapter to Plan Commission	January 2026

