Land Use & Climate Change Advisory Committee

Potential Recommendation: Transportation Concurrency

Encouraging more focused compact development in urban growth areas will result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, a reduction in per capita vehicle miles traveled, help to reduce our state's dependence on foreign oil, and help to conserve resource lands.

Idea:
How can transportation concurrency be used in urban areas or centers to better address the range of mode choices available? Compact development, when located in areas with robust transportation networks and a variety of transportation choices, can result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

In some instances, transportation concurrency has been seen as a barrier to infill development, potentially pushing development further out or inducing sprawl. Concurrency should not be a barrier to compact development in urban areas or centers.

Intent of the Idea:
If compact development is to be targeted into certain areas, the tools used to measure concurrency should be able to capture all modes of transportation available in the area, not merely be a tool to measure vehicle volume to road or intersection capacity for automobiles.

Currently there are limited tools available to help measure level of service (LOS) standards based on a multimodal transportation system. If a proposed project would generate enough traffic to result in the LOS standard falling below the adopted level, the project must be denied or mitigated to ensure the adopted LOS is met. However, for most jurisdictions, the measurement tools focus heavily on automobile trips.

Some jurisdictions, such as the City of Bellevue, have mode split targets. A jurisdiction could, theoretically, calculate that new development's traffic generation within a center (or other predetermined boundary) at those targets based on the transportation network being provided and a variety of choices being available. As a result, any transportation mitigation required could also be based on the mode split. Transportation funds collected could help pay for additional improvements for that mode, such as filling in sidewalk gaps to complete the network, helping to fund additional transit, additional bike lanes or bike route signage, etc.

Intended Outcome/Purpose:
A multimodal concurrency tool would enable local governments to assess walking, bicycling, transit, and vehicular traffic generation from a proposed project.

Draft Language:
The current law does call for a multimodal transportation system. In addition, the law requires that development be prohibited if it would cause the level of service on a locally owned transportation facility to decline below the adopted standard, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of the development are in made concurrent with development. (This would mean the improvements, or a financial commitment to complete the improvements within six years, are in place at the time of development).

The LUCC may wish to recommend that the link in the GMA between planning for a multimodal transportation system and requiring transportation concurrency be more direct and that multimodal transportation concurrency be considered or required. Most of the concurrency systems in place today were written before multimodal transportation planning was a specific requirement under the GMA, and therefore, do not necessarily consider multiple modes of transportation.

The Multimodal Concurrency Study (located at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/concurrency/MultimodalStudy.htm) concluded that "Multi-modal *measures* are essential. Jurisdictions need more complete ways to measure transportation concurrency. At present almost all cities and counties measure only motor vehicle movement. More sophisticated (but not necessarily more complicated) measurement systems…should be adopted to begin to measure and monitor how people are riding public transit, carpooling, walking and biking as well as the amount of time they spend getting around in all these modes."

The project team recommended the use of multimodal concurrency measures that detail the existence (or lack thereof) of the key facilities and services required to serve the geographic subarea for which the concurrency system has been developed, regardless of the mode involved. This means two things: 1) each jurisdiction must have a plan in place that defines the kind of development it wants, and 2) the concurrency measures will change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and may even change from subarea to subarea within a jurisdiction.[1]

As with the existing transportation concurrency systems, failure of the "local" portion of the recommended multimodal concurrency system will result in denial of the development permit. That is, if the locally identified transportation system cannot accommodate the proposed development, it may not be built.[2]

[1] Options for Making Concurrency More Multimodal, December 2006, by Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington Dept. of Urban Design and Planning, Department of Urban and Regional Planning University of Florida and Washington State Transportation Research Center (TRAC-UW)

[2] Ibid, page 58.

Excerpt from RCW 36.70A.070 Comprehensive Plans – Mandatory Elements
http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.70A.070
(6) A transportation element that implements, and is consistent with, the land use element.

(a) The transportation element shall include the following subelements:

(i) Land use assumptions used in estimating travel;

(ii) Estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities resulting from land use assumptions to assist the department of transportation in monitoring the performance of state facilities, to plan improvements for the facilities, and to assess the impact of land-use decisions on state-owned transportation facilities;

(iii) Facilities and services needs, including:

(A) An inventory of air, water, and ground transportation facilities and services, including transit alignments and general aviation airport facilities, to define existing capital facilities and travel levels as a basis for future planning. This inventory must include state-owned transportation facilities within the city or county's jurisdictional boundaries;

(B) Level of service standards for all locally owned arterials and transit routes to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system. These standards should be regionally coordinated;

(C) For state-owned transportation facilities, level of service standards for highways, as prescribed in chapters 47.06 and 47.80 RCW, to gauge the performance of the system. The purposes of reflecting level of service standards for state highways in the local comprehensive plan are to monitor the performance of the system, to evaluate improvement strategies, and to facilitate coordination between the county's or city's six-year street, road, or transit program and the department of transportation's six-year investment program. The concurrency requirements of (b) of this subsection do not apply to transportation facilities and services of statewide significance except for counties consisting of islands whose only connection to the mainland are state highways or ferry routes. In these island counties, state highways and ferry route capacity must be a factor in meeting the concurrency requirements in (b) of this subsection;

(D) Specific actions and requirements for bringing into compliance locally owned transportation facilities or services that are below an established level of service standard;

(E) Forecasts of traffic for at least ten years based on the adopted land use plan to provide information on the location, timing, and capacity needs of future growth;

(F) Identification of state and local system needs to meet current and future demands. Identified needs on state-owned transportation facilities must be consistent with the statewide multimodal transportation plan required under chapter 47.06 RCW;

(iv) Finance, including:

(A) An analysis of funding capability to judge needs against probable funding resources;

(B) A multiyear financing plan based on the needs identified in the comprehensive plan, the appropriate parts of which shall serve as the basis for the six-year street, road, or transit program required by RCW 35.77.010 for cities, RCW 36.81.121 for counties, and RCW 35.58.2795 for public transportation systems. The multiyear financing plan should be coordinated with the six-year improvement program developed by the department of transportation as required by **RCW 47.05.030;

(C) If probable funding falls short of meeting identified needs, a discussion of how additional funding will be raised, or how land use assumptions will be reassessed to ensure that level of service standards will be met;

(v) Intergovernmental coordination efforts, including an assessment of the impacts of the transportation plan and land use assumptions on the transportation systems of adjacent jurisdictions;

(vi) Demand-management strategies;

(vii) Pedestrian and bicycle component to include collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles.

(b) After adoption of the comprehensive plan by jurisdictions required to plan or who choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040, local jurisdictions must adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a locally owned transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, 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. For the purposes of this subsection (6) "concurrent with the development" shall mean 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.

(c) The transportation element described in this subsection (6), and the six-year plans required by RCW 35.77.010 for cities, RCW 36.81.121 for counties, RCW 35.58.2795 for public transportation systems, and **RCW 47.05.030 for the state, must be consistent.

CTED and the Technical Team will continue to look for options to make a stronger connection between multimodal transportation planning and concurrency requirements. The tech team may provide suggested statutory amendments to the LUCC members at the October 17th meeting.

Recommendation:
The Committee might want to consider changing the RCWs implementing the GMA. RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(iii)(B) addresses using level of service standards for all locally owned arterials

and transit routes to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system. It already requires regional coordination of standards, and could be amended to also require using a multimodal approach. Similarly, RCW 36.70A.070(6)(b) could be amended to require consideration of multi-modal improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development—currently this is optional.

In addition, it may be desirable to amend the GMA planning goals to clarify that planning for a multimodal system, supported by using multimodal concurrency tests, is now a priority.

Perhaps more so than a statutory change, or in addition to RCW revisions, revised rules and better and more current technical assistance should be provided. Washington State Departments of Transportation; Community, Trade and Economic Development; and Ecology's Air Quality Division should partner with Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and local governments to provide updated guidance that specifically addresses how multimodal considerations can be assessed in concurrency analyses. The state could encourage other cities to follow their lead by providing additional technical assistance, model plan policies and ordinances, and/or additional money to local governments.

Multimodal measurement methodologies or system(s) could be identified. If none exist that adequately meet the needs of comprehensive land use and transportation planning professionals, development of the tool could be pursued.