



Frequently Asked Questions About the Transportation Master Plan

The City of Sammamish is working on its first Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which will guide multimodal transportation planning and decisions in Sammamish for the next 20 years. Transportation planning is an important component of land use, environmental, and capital improvement planning. The TMP is planned to be adopted in December 2024 and updated in 2025. This Frequently Asked Questions document (FAQ) provides answers to commonly asked questions and will be updated often.

Please note that the FAQ is different than the TMP Comment Matrix – the FAQ addresses common questions about transportation planning and the TMP; whereas the TMP Comment Matrix provides a staff response to every written question received about the TMP since the first draft Transportation Master Plan (TMP) on July 19th.

TMP Structure & Transportation Goals, Policies, Strategies

1. What is the difference between a goal and a policy and a strategy?

Goals, policies, and strategies are intertwined but serve different purposes. For transportation, goals and policies are defined in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element. Chapter 5 of the TMP connects how goals and policies are implemented through strategic actions. Definitions are below:

Goal: A general statement expressing a desired result consistent with the vision and towards which policies and objectives aim.

Policy: A statement giving guidance to decision makers for the purpose of achieving a goal's desired result.

Strategy: A statement that gives actionable guidance on how to implement a goal or policy.

2. Why is there a planned update to the TMP in 2025?

The TMP consists of Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements as well as other strategies that are significant to implementation of a holistic approach to transportation. The City has numerous transportation and capital planning efforts that are in progress or planned for 2025 that will be reflected in an update to the TMP in 2025. The TMP Update will incorporate strategies and projects that may be recommended or refined from the following:

- Strategies and projects from the 2025 Bike and Pedestrian Mobility Plan
- Town Center Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)
- Pavement Management Strategic Plan
- Transit Enhancement Studies
- Update to the Street Classification Map

Staff anticipates that Chapters 2-6 will be updated in 2025 and a few appendices may be added. As chapters that contain GMA requirements and support the City's Comprehensive Plan will be refined, the City plans to update the TMP as part of the City's annual docket process.

3. When will the TMP be reviewed and updated after 2025?

As the TMP is meant to evolve over time and reflect changes both regionally as well as within the Sammamish community, a review and update of the TMP is planned every few years. After the 2025 update, the TMP will be reviewed in 2027 – 2028 in preparation for the 5-year Comprehensive Plan review in 2029. This is also an opportunity to incorporate transportation planning efforts planned for 2026 into the next update of the TMP, which include a Citywide Streetlight Strategic Plan and an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Strategic Plan.

Transportation Planning & Land Use Planning

1. How are land use planning and transportation planning connected?

Land use and transportation are interconnected in so many ways, from comprehensive long-range planning to review of development applications.

It starts with goals and policies that are vital to long-range (20 year) planning:

Transportation goals, policies, and implementation strategies strive to create and foster an efficient multimodal transportation system that is planned, designed, and sized appropriately to support the planned distribution of different land use types and densities within the city. Consistent with the overall Comprehensive Plan's emphasis on sustainability and healthy communities, transportation goals and policies include measures to help reduce air pollution, encourage public transit, and promote multi-modal transportation.

Implementing land use and transportation planning:

This occurs through the coordination of Public Works and Community Development staff who are instrumental in the development review process, capital planning efforts, corridor studies, subarea planning, and concurrency management to name a few.

2. How does the City plan for growth? How do growth targets help the City plan for the right amount and type of transportation infrastructure improvements?

The Department of Community Development facilitates the City's plan for growth through the Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Housing Elements. The City is assigned growth targets through the Growth Management Planning Council of King County. This allocated growth number assigned to the city for the 20-year planning horizon is then used to help the city make informed decisions on land use zoning, housing types, and transportation needs to accommodate the planned growth. While it is a 20-year planning window, the Comprehensive Plan is required to be updated every 10 years, and a new growth target is assigned. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed in 2029 to make any necessary modifications.

The TMP includes many chapters and sections that are rooted in the Comprehensive Planning process, which includes forecasting travel demand over 20 years. The City uses parcel-specific information and traffic counts to update the travel demand model which is used to evaluate and

project where potential concurrency failures may exist on the road network in the 20-year planning horizon (through 2044). Growth targets are used to determine the number of housing units that City will need to accommodate the growth. These housing units and expected job creation over the 20-year planning window are spread across Transportation Analysis Zones in the city and modeled to help inform where improvements to transportation infrastructure may be necessary. Scenario planning was also included during development and implementation of the travel demand model, to consider the potential effects of growth, mode shift, and travel patterns. In addition to the baseline scenario, the following alternatives were evaluated in the TMP (additional detail available in Section 3.2.1 of the Draft TMP document):

- Alternative 1: STC Network Buildout – Assumed the construction of the new Southeast Connector Street in the Town Center subarea, consistent with the Sammamish Town Center Environmental Impact Study (EIS).
- Alternative 2: Back-to-Office – Assumed a broad trend of office workers returning to in-person work, similar to pre-COVID-19 behavior.
- Alternative 3: Transit Shift – Evaluated a shift toward transit usage in areas within a half-mile walkshed of active public transit stops.

3. Why did we not look at other subareas besides Town Center for traffic projects into 2044?

There is currently only one existing subarea in the city and that is Town Center. Other areas have been discussed as potential subareas; however, work efforts have not been established to begin the process of additional subarea creation. Additionally, there are not any formal requests by property owners to create any subareas. Generally, subarea planning often take several years; including extensive public outreach, environmental review, and stakeholder collaboration. Ultimately the subarea process is led by the Department of Community Development at the direction of City Council and the City Manager and is dependent upon their staffing level and capacity to take on this additional work and budget.

Multimodal Level of Service & the Transportation Network

1. What is multimodal level of service and is it required?

A multimodal level of service (MMLOS) provides a performance metric for user experience on a given element of transportation infrastructure. MMLOS includes level of service standards for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. These level of service standards are aspirational and implemented as guidelines.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires multimodal level of services standards for current and future needs of transit, bicycle, pedestrian and vehicle needs. Consistent with GMA, the Puget Sound Regional Council also requires that a concurrency program is developed that addresses multimodal types of transportation and include implementation strategies.

2. The TMP has guidelines for Pedestrian Level of Service (PLOS) and Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS). Are these required? Do PLOS and BLOS guidelines bind the City to a long list of potentially expensive infrastructure projects?

The PLOS and BLOS are performance metrics for the user experience that are implemented as guidelines. Unlike the Intersection Level of Service for vehicles, which has a binding 6-year requirement to mitigate a failed performance metric, the PLOS and BLOS do not have a time requirement for implementation of projects nor do they require expensive infrastructure projects.

More parameters around how to implement and measure the PLOS and BLOS will be evaluated through the 2025 Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan, which will also include a list of capital projects. Similar to all other capital projects, any pedestrian or bicycle projects will be evaluated, scored, and added to either the 6-year Transportation Improvement Plan (which reflects the implementation schedule for the Constrained Project List) or the City's Unconstrained Project List. Project scoring criteria can be found in Appendix C of the TMP.

3. Why does the TMP seem to focus on arterial streets and not as much on neighborhood traffic?

The TMP is focused on compliance with GMA and creating a document that can be used as a guide for managing and further developing the multimodal transportation network. With this iteration there is a focus on arterials because they have the most impact on the transportation network, consistent with GMA requirements. The 2025 TMP update evaluates infrastructure improvements and connectivity to arterials (transit), parks, and Town Center as the City identifies opportunities to improve the pedestrian and bicycle networks in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan that is planned to be completed in 2025. Recommendations in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan may include improvements on streets classified as collectors.

4. Why is a street classification important and have any of the functional classifications been changed in the last 20 years?

Consistent with RCW 35.78.010, cities shall adopt a street classification system consistent with State and Federal guidelines. Sammamish has an adopted street classification system that is reviewed periodically to ensure that the streets are classified appropriately for the amount of usage and to align with land use. Additionally, there are certain grant opportunities through WA Department of Transportation that require the functional classification to be consistent between the State and City maps.

The Street Functional Classification Map is included in the TMP, which reflects the 2023 Functional Classification of Sammamish streets. As part of the TMP and subsequent update, the City reviewed the functional classification and is recommending that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) consider our requested changes so the City's and WSDOT's maps align. Pending approval by both Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and WSDOT, the City's map in the TMP will be updated in 2025. There have been functional classification changes submitted to the WA Department of Transportation in the past 20 years.

5. How does Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) and Level of Service (LOS) work together to determine MMLOS?

The City's current approach to assigning LTS is based on the recommended WSDOT approach for LOS. LTS is the technical ranking that then helps inform the LOS guideline for a facility. Table 11 in the TMP (found in Section 2.5.2) gives the definitions for LTS and Table 13 lists the LTS guidelines by types of arterials. This information is then used to evaluate and assign the overall MMLOS which at its simplest form gives a color designation of either green, yellow, or red. The definitions for Bike and Pedestrian LOS are found in Table 13 and for Transit they are in Table 14.

Traffic Volumes, Modeling, and Intersection Level of Service (LOS)

1. What is a traffic model and how is it updated over time?

A traffic model, also referred to as travel demand model, is a tool used by transportation engineers and planners to forecast future travel patterns and conditions. In general, when a model is updated, it comprises two main elements: 1) road network update and 2) land use update. More details and specifics about Sammamish Travel Demand Model update can be found in Appendix B of the draft TMP.

2. Why does the travel demand model use traffic data from 2023 instead of 2024 (most recent)?

Transportation planning requires the use of a functional travel demand model. The model includes parcel specific information that can be quantified into Transportation Analysis Zones. Traffic data from March 2023 was utilized as it reflects data further away from the disrupted traffic volumes from the height of the COVID Pandemic. Preparation of the TMP and Comprehensive Plan is a multi-year effort, so often the traffic data from the year prior to adoption is the basis for the travel demand model as analysis needs to occur to finalize the planning efforts. The TMP will be updated periodically to reflect updated data.

3. Sammamish, similar to other cities in the region, has experienced a change in traffic volume over the last few years, especially since the pandemic. How does the city consider changes in traffic volumes as well as forecast potential changes in the future?

The trend in the past couple of years shows consistent incremental increase in traffic volumes, although the traffic volumes have not yet returned to pre-pandemic volumes. Traffic volumes over the years is shown in the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) map on the city's website at: https://www.sammamish.us/media/yevp2ffg/adt-map-2015_2024.pdf.

The future conditions analysis looked at baseline and three alternatives, as described in section 3.2 of Chapter 3 of the draft TMP. Only one of those alternatives (Alternative 2) assumed "pre-pandemic" trip rates because this alternative assumed a broad trend of office workers returning to in-person work. Accordingly, the baseline future year analysis assumed trends to continue with a larger portion of City residents working from home. Alternative 1 assumed construction of the new Southeast Connector Street in the Town Center subarea, consistent with the Sammamish Town Center Environmental Impact Study (EIS). Alternative 3 evaluated a shift towards transit usage in areas within a half-mile walkshed of active transit stops in the city.

4. The TMP provides a summary of the Level of Service (LOS) for various intersections in in the city. Why are only certain intersections included? How does the City address intersection LOS deficiencies?

The LOS is monitored and mitigated at critical intersections to provide adequate capacity for growth on classified roads as needed. The critical junctions are identified consistent with the criteria documented in the TMP section 2.5.1.

LOS deficiencies are addressed through analysis and proposed mitigations that are then added on the TIP for implementation. For potential future LOS failures, TMP Table 18 – 2044 Intersection LOS Deficiencies outlines different scenarios that may indicate a failure in the future. The TMP identifies potential failures in the future; as traffic volumes are monitored routinely, once an intersection begins to fail or prior to failure, the City explores mitigation options for the intersection. Mitigation options are further refined during the preliminary design stage of future projects, which are added to the 6-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) as applicable.

5. If the TMP is multimodal, why is it only based on intersection LOS?

The TMP is multimodal however we look at each mode of transportation a little bit differently. The Existing Conditions section of the TMP in Chapter 2 addresses all modes of travel and the Future Conditions section of the TMP in Chapter 5 show only vehicle LOS currently and will be updated for the other modes in the 2025 TMP update after the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is completed. The TMP is not only based on intersection LOS; however, concurrency is only determined by intersection LOS. Whereas Bike and Pedestrian LOS is aspirational and implemented as a guideline the city strives to meet rather than a requirement that must be met.

6. How do you respond to the question of what are we doing spending money on a plan that shows that traffic will be worse in 2044?

We currently do not have any concurrency failures for the next 6-years. Looking 20 years into the future is all forecasting and are based on various scenarios with the failures occurring closer to 2044. This is a plan that is a guide to help the City decide where to put resources to improve concurrency into the future.

Planning for the future: Funding & Project Lists

1. What is the difference between the constrained project list and the unconstrained project list?

The constrained project list is also known as the 6-year Transportation Improvement Plan which prioritizes projects based a standard set of criteria that is included in Appendix C of the Draft TMP and provides for partial or full funding.

The unconstrained project list is a long-term 20-year (2024 – 2044) list of potential transportation projects. It is comprised of projects that have been considered for potential future investment and can be considered for incorporation into the constrained project list as the need and funding warrant it.

2. What strategies exist that encourage lower cost improvements or a reduction in the need for infrastructure projects?

There are many strategies that exist in other cities and in our city. Many of these are included in the Transportation Element policies.

3. Will there (or should there) be a reduction in the transportation impact fee for the percent of affordable units in a development?

The city will be conducting a city-wide impact fee update process in 2025. Part of this process will include review and updating of the traffic impact fees. During this process a reduction in fees for affordable housing units will be one of the many things considered.

Climate Change, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

1. How can we monitor the coordination efforts by the city with other agencies to see the outcome of improvements?

There are various regional meetings that city staff attend on a monthly basis and report out on to city leadership as necessary. This include but are not limited to the Eastside Transportation Partnership, Regional Transportation Committee, and Puget Sound Regional Council Regional Project Evaluation Committee. Staff also meets quarterly with the school districts within in the city.

2. How does the TMP anticipate climate change?

The TMP has been drafted to be in alignment with the Climate Action Plan and the sustainability goals of the city. There are several policies throughout the City's Comprehensive Plan that address our climate and environment; Transportation Goal T4 is to prioritize investments that minimize the negative impact on the environment. The TMP has an emphasis on non-motorized and electric transportation options, as well as public transit which can result in a reduction of vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.