

STAFF REPORT



Date: February 25, 2025
To: City Council and Planning Commission
From: Dana Bowers, Associate Planner

2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Transportation Tour

Staff are updating the Transportation Plan as part of the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan. The updated Transportation Plan will incorporate both State required changes as well as Tumwater amendments identified through the public engagement process.

To support discussion and decision making as part of the update of the Transportation Plan, Community Development Department staff have prepared a tour of transportation facilities in Tumwater to discuss pertinent transportation planning topics such as levels of traffic stress, multimodal transportation, concurrency with upcoming development, and transitions from rural to urban neighborhoods.

The Joint City Council and Planning Commission Transportation Tour will be on February 25, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

This staff report is intended to provide background information on the updates Transportation Plan and is organized by what participants will see at each stop of the tour. Specific questions are identified for each portion of the tour in red for discussion for each stage of the tour.

Additional background information is provided in the appendices.

Contents

- 1. Overview 2
- 2. Capitol Boulevard Corridor 3
- 3. Craft District 5
- 4. Brewery District – Walk 6
- 5. Custer Way 7
- 6. Rural Road – Walk 8
- 7. Kirsop Road 9
- 8. Black Hills High School – Walk 9
- 9. Old Highway 99 10
- 10. Update Schedule 10
 - A. Transportation Plan Development 11

B. Comprehensive Plan Ordinance Adoption Process	11
Appendix A – Requirements for the Transportation Plan Update	12
1. How All the Parts Are Related.....	12
2. Growth Management Act	12
3. County Wide Planning Policies	13
4. Regional Transportation Plan	13
5. Regional Trails Plan	13
Appendix B – Current Transportation Plan.....	15
1. Background	15
2. Structure	15
3. Link to Current Transportation Plans.....	15
Appendix C – Fehr & Peers Existing Conditions Memo	17
Appendix D – Other Resources and Guidance.....	18
1. City of Tumwater	18
2. State Department of Commerce.....	18
3. Thurston Regional Planning Council	18
4. Municipal Research Services Center.....	19
5. Puget Sound Regional Council	19
6. Association of Washington Cities	19
Figure 1. Level of Traffic Stress Tool (Existing Conditions Memo).....	3
Figure 2. Recommended Street and Bicycle Connections (Capitol Boulevard Corridor Plan)	4
Figure 3. Collision density around Brewery the District (Existing Conditions Memo).....	5
Figure 4. Level of Traffic Stress for cyclists (left) and pedestrians (right) (Existing Conditions Memo).....	6
Figure 5. Rendering of a Cleveland Avenue streetscape after a road diet (Brewery District Plan)	7

1. Overview

Everyone in Tumwater relies on various modes of transportation to access goods and services. Modern society relies on specialization and moving raw materials and packaged goods. Whole business models based on shipping with guaranteed delivery times have changed the way needs are met. Tumwater must plan for a transportation system that incorporates the needs of all people.

While cars and trucks are the primary means of accessing goods and services, more than 25% of Washingtonians do not have a driver’s license. There are many barriers to driving including age,

disability, documentation of citizenship, or financial burden. In a driver-centric society, living close to transit is often more costly than living in affordable communities that lack services and infrastructure. This puts people who need to use other modes of transit besides a car in the position of choosing to spend more on housing near transportation infrastructure or living further away and accepting risks where infrastructure is lacking.

The tour will start at Tumwater City Hall. Two City vans will take Councilmembers and Commissioners on a loop as staff point out different features and challenges. The participants will also disembark and walk small sections of the route. The complete tour is just under ten miles long.

While the tour will use vans, staff would like to provide some context for those that cannot drive. To walk the length of the tour would take four hours and would be very dangerous in the dark as some sections of the tour have no streetlights or sidewalks. Cycling would take just over an hour to travel ten miles but face similar issues.

Tumwater has a mix of sidewalks, trails, and shared use paths for people who travel on foot. There are seventy total miles of road which have sidewalks and 47 percent of them are complete with pedestrian facilities on both sides of the street. Having sidewalks on both sides of the street makes walking from place to place much easier and more comfortable for users.

During the tour, please think about how comfortable you would be using the sidewalk or riding your bike using the Level of Traffic Stress tool below.



Figure 1. Level of Traffic Stress Tool (Existing Conditions Memo)

2. Capitol Boulevard Corridor

Starting in the 1920s into the 1980s, Capitol Boulevard was a center for commerce and carried heavy traffic in and through Tumwater. As commerce has shifted to other parts of the Tumwater, this section of historic has declined relative to other areas over the past few decades.

A plan to revitalize Capitol Boulevard acknowledged this thoroughfare was Tumwater's best chance at a mixed-use corridor since it has established residential uses and commercial areas within walking distance. Connections to other important parts of Tumwater and region such as the Brewery District, Town Center, and retail hub on Tye Drive also make this area a favorable place for investments.

The Capitol Boulevard Corridor Plan, adopted in 2014, was intended to improve economic conditions, transportation options and aesthetics. Some of the projects have been completed including the roundabouts at the Trospen Road and Capitol Boulevard. A map showing the Plan's new street connections and bicycle improvements is below.

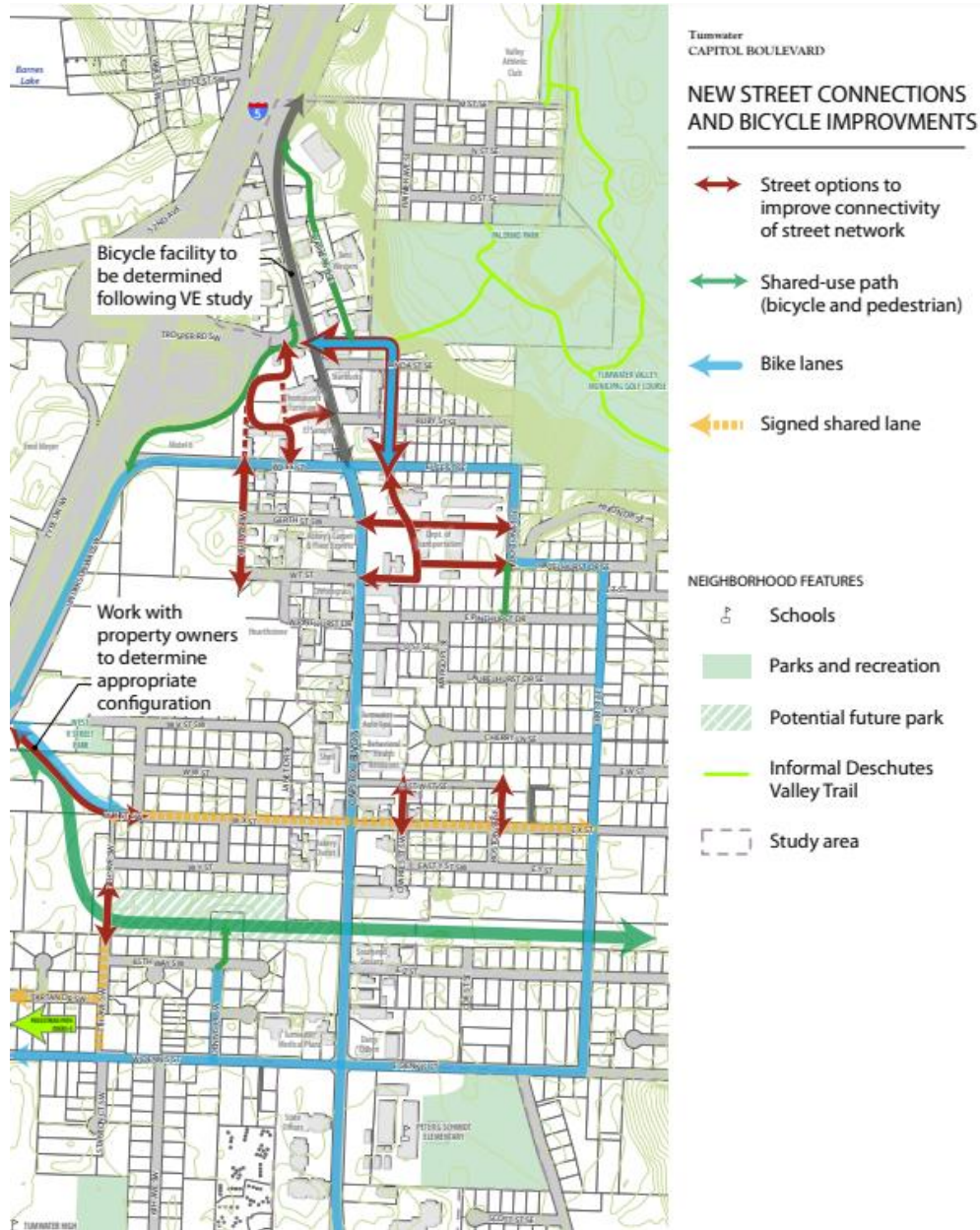


Figure 2. Recommended Street and Bicycle Connections (Capitol Boulevard Corridor Plan)

As the van passes through this area think about:

- How have conditions improved?
- How have completed projects increased transportation options?
- What other transportation projects would improve economic conditions?

3. Craft District

Located on the southern edge of the Brewery District, this new market hub restores a piece of Tumwater history by promoting microbreweries near the old Olympia Brewery site. The mixed commercial space includes dining, art, and common space for gathering. The South Puget Sound Community College, in partnership with Heritage Distillery has invested in this area by locating their Brewing, Distilling and Cider Making program. This connection between Capitol Boulevard Corridor and Brewery District models a mixed use node that is ideal for encouraging businesses and providing economic conditions that are favorable to create walkable, vibrant neighborhoods.

As this area develops, connections that promote access and improved traffic flow will be important to keep the area economically vibrant. One of the alternatives provided in the Brewery District Plan to increase traffic flow and access in this area is to connect E Street to Cleveland Avenue. This option is the preferred alternative as of the Brewery District Plan and is currently listed as number 21 on the capital projects list.

The collision data in Fehr & Peer's Existing Conditions Memo shows that connecting intersections in this area have higher density of collisions than other connectors in Tumwater. Completing the E Street connection will provide some congestion relief and potentially reduce collisions. See the full collision report in the Existing Conditions Memo – Appendix C.

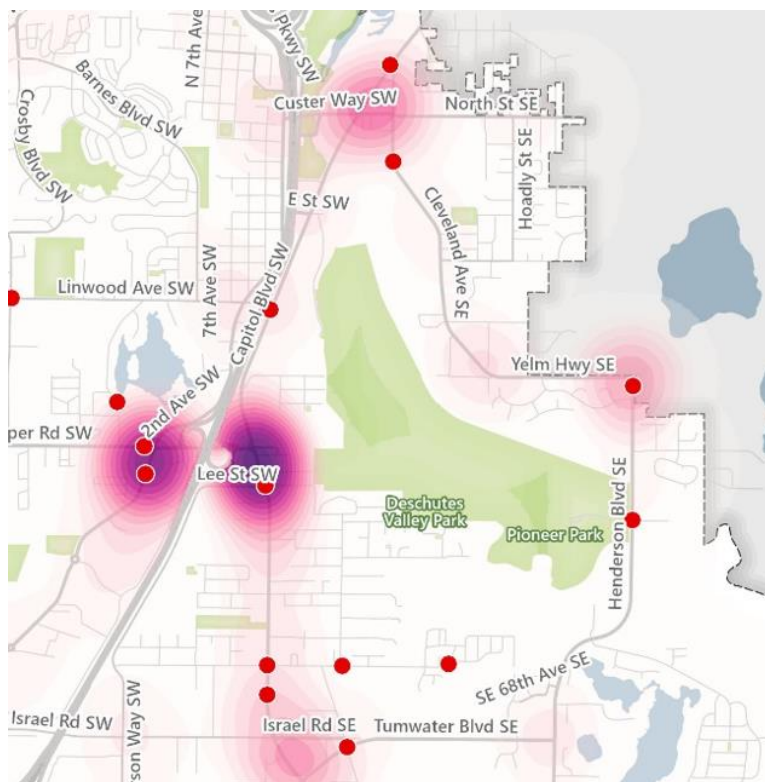


Figure 3. Collision density around Brewery the District (Existing Conditions Memo)

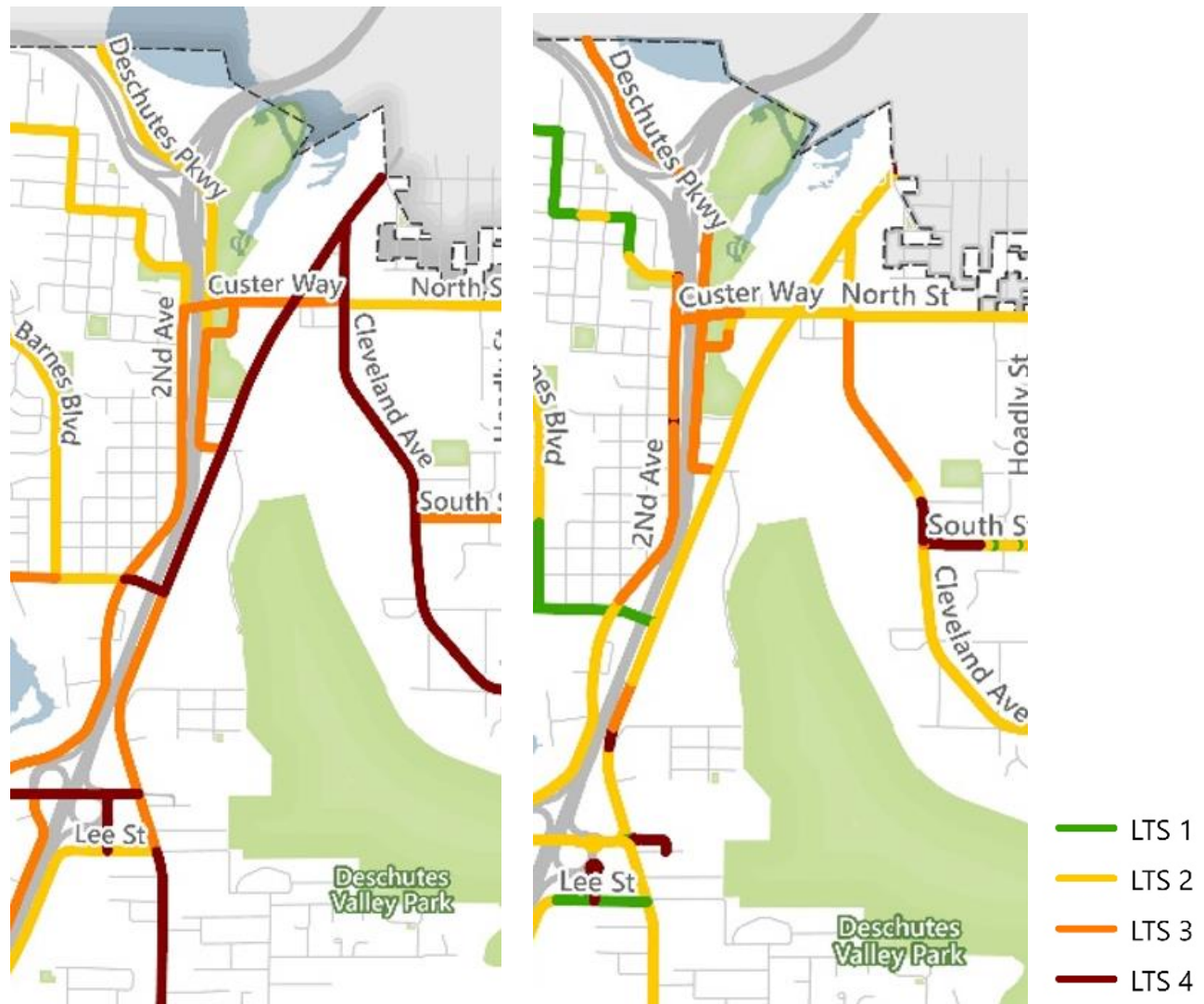


Figure 4. Level of Traffic Stress for cyclists (left) and pedestrians (right) (Existing Conditions Memo)

Within the Craft District, active transportation facilities are sporadic with gaps and narrow sidewalks that make it difficult for all users to feel comfortable. With two major recreation properties in this area, Deschutes Parkway and Deschutes Valley Park, it would benefit users to connect these assets with active transportation facilities.

- How does this area fit into the transportation vision for Tumwater as a whole?
- What opportunities does the growth here bring to the other nearby economic nodes and how can Tumwater's transportation network support that?

4. **Brewery District – Walk**

North of the Craft District, the Brewery District has several opportunities and constraints to development. The Brewery District Plan outlines multiple multimodal opportunities including providing pedestrian access to the Old Brewhouse Tower, utilizing stairs at Old Town Center, enhancing streetscapes, and creating new formalized pedestrian access on mid-block pedestrian

routes. One of the largest constraints in this area is the lack of regional access to the Interstate 5 corridor and the funneling effect at Custer Way which leads to queuing. Constraints at Custer Way will be discussed while driving to the next stop.

Currently the five lanes of Cleveland Avenue operate around 33-55 percent capacity. Reducing the lanes on this road for vehicles and improving access for cyclists as the center turning lane transitions to bike lanes. This “road diet” is part of a strategy to transition the triangle into a commercial node which will support a walkable and bikeable community for nearby residences.



Figure 5. Rendering of a Cleveland Avenue streetscape after a road diet (Brewery District Plan)

Sidewalks alone are not enough to keep pedestrians safe. A look at the collision data shows that one fatality on Tumwater roads in the past five years has involved pedestrians. In this area, narrow sidewalks, difficult street crossings, wide streets, and few alternative routes increase the Level of Traffic Stress for users.

- What could make these roads more attractive and interesting to pedestrians?
- What could make the mid-block pedestrian routes feel safe for those with disabilities who need to access transit?
- What policies will foster a balance the needs of drivers and walkers and bikers?

5. Custer Way

Constrained by Interstate 5 and the Deschutes River, there are limited spaces to expand facilities already exceeding capacity, such as Custer Way, see Figure 3 and Table 4 of the Existing Conditions Memo in Appendix C. This area is particularly congested due to lack of other opportunities for traffic to enter and exit Interstate 5 and U.S. Highway 101 and local connections

to those ramps. These conditions lead to queuing and excessive delays that are below the acceptable levels of service.

Traffic operations, or level of service, are measured in delays and range from less than ten seconds per vehicle to more than 80 seconds per vehicle and depend on the signals at the intersection. The delay corresponds to score to demonstrate driver experience. The Tumwater policy sets the following levels of service standards:

- Level of Service Standard E for intersections and segments within the designated urban core area.
- Level of Service Standard D for all other intersections and segments in the Tumwater.

In the Existing Conditions Memo, Figure 2 shows the study results from forty intersections monitored in the afternoon peak hours. Out of the forty intersections analyzed, four were failing based on Tumwater's adopted Level of Service standards in 2024. Three intersections near Custer Way that support access to Interstate 5 operate below the Level of Service standard.

Roadway segments were also studied to compare their volume to their capacity. Numbers over one indicate that there are more cars on the road than their planned capacity. The only section of road in Tumwater's transportation network that was studied and found to be over capacity was Custer Way between North 2nd Avenue and Capitol Boulevard.

Winding through Tumwater Hill Neighborhood, traffic calming devices such as speed bumps and dead-end roads are in place to control excessive speeds and through traffic. Pedestrian access is provided through alleys on most of these cul-de-sacs which makes walking to side streets favorable. While these intersections were not included in the Existing Conditions Memo, staff can learn about them from your experience.

- Tell us about driving here from your own experience.
- Do you drive here often?
- How does it make you feel? What makes you feel like that?

6. Rural Road – Walk

Moving out from the more intensely developed areas into less dense developments, the tour map shows the identified sidewalk sections in Tumwater. The sidewalks in this neighborhood become intermittent and lead to a detached bus stop that does not have sidewalks, yet development is starting to infill these areas. In some cases, there are sidewalk sections only in front of developments where standards have regulated the inclusion of these facilities.

Transit facilities serve Tumwater in two routes. Route 12 West Tumwater has a frequency of 30 minutes between buses and Route 12 East Tumwater has a frequency of 15 minutes between buses. Small sections of four other routes also serve Tumwater. A map of the routes is provided as Figure 9 in the Existing Conditions Memo found in Appendix C. Comparing the sidewalk facilities to the bus routes, some areas where transit service is available, there are gaps in the available pedestrian facilities.

Looking at the same neighborhood, the pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress map shows that many of these streets have a high level of traffic stress. Compare that with your own experience.

- Do you feel the map accurately reflects traffic stress for this neighborhood?
- What opportunities does Tumwater have to partner with Intercity Transit and others to jointly develop pedestrian facilities?
- As more infill developments occur, how can Tumwater ensure connectivity to the whole system without putting excessive burden on developers?

7. Kirsop Road

One of the principles of including data in planning is to ensure a balance between qualitative and quantitative data. Staff can measure and use numbers to provide metrics, but stories provide meaning to those data points. For example, in August 2024 after a meeting with Black Lake Palisades, Council members brought several concerns to staff regarding a proposed section of roadway. The concerns include speeding and trespassing issues and lack of sidewalks. Transportation staff, normally a staff of two, have both positions vacant. Through the interim, other staff are working with the Police Department to determine a course of action for enforcement.

The tour map also provides information about what development projects have been approved for Tumwater neighborhoods. Using this information, staff and decision makers can look ahead to what needs Tumwater can expect in the next few years as these developments are completed. The map identifies which of the developments are single family, multifamily and commercial or industrial. While Kirsop Road may feel like it is very rural now, there are dense residential developments that have recently been complete or are proposed all around it. This road also connects many people in the City and the County to services in the southern part of Tumwater such as the Black Lake High School.

8. Black Hills High School – Walk

In the Littlerock Neighborhood area, new investments have been made to improve transportation connections and additional streets have created connections between Tye Drive and Littlerock Road. The roundabouts on Littlerock Road are an example of the kinds of traffic flow that could be possible on Capitol Boulevard as funding become available for the proposed roundabouts in the Capitol Boulevard Corridor Plan. In newer residential zones, the neighborhood streets have been designed with the latest standards in place to make them more accessible and comfortable for pedestrians. Street standards are included as an appendix.

Both Tumwater and regional facilities that serve this area are limited. The furthest south stop for transit services is Israel Road. On a map the distance looks small, but it takes about 30 minutes for a high school student to reach the bus stop. The lack of transit services drives the need for more vehicular traffic.

Intercity Transit will be presenting a proposed route to their transit plan at the City Council meeting on March 4, 2025. This may be a good opportunity to work with this partner to support Tumwater's areas of growth over the next twenty years.

Street design standards work to provide guidance for those designing projects.

- How does Tumwater bring equity to its established neighborhoods to make their sidewalks comfortable and safe?
- What do you like about this kind of street?
- What issues do you notice?
- Are there ways to address the issues in Tumwater's design standards?

9. Old Highway 99

Another important corridor is Old Highway 99. This arterial connects the surrounding municipalities to the Olympia Regional Airport and provides access to residential developments along the corridor, such as the Bush Prairie, Sterling Crossing, The Preserve, and Melody Pines Estates neighborhoods.

Initially identified in 2036 Transportation Plan, the section of Old Highway 99 between 73rd and 93rd Avenues was the main subject of study for the Old Highway 99 Corridor Study. The initial assessment in the Comprehensive Plan identified that one of the intersections did not meet the acceptable level of service standards and many of the other intersections would be operating below acceptable level of service standards within 20 years. The more detailed analysis concluded that the section between 73rd and 88th Avenues is closer to reaching an unacceptable level of service and needs to be prioritized before improvements from 88th to 93rd Avenues.

The recommended improvements for this corridor include ten foot wide sidewalks and bike lanes, providing more multimodal facilities to the southmost parts of the Tumwater. Making cycling accessible for commuters, not just local trips, is part of a strategy that will reduce vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse gas emissions, meeting several of the Comprehensive Plan goals.

- What other areas have commute trips or connections to places outside Tumwater that would benefit from bicycle and walking facilities?

10. Update Schedule

The Comprehensive Plan update deadline is December 31, 2025.

The Transportation Plan is funded by two Department of Commerce grants, the Periodic Update grant, and the Climate Element grant. Both of these grants have deliverables due by June 2025. Staff will work with Commerce regarding the inconsistency of these dates and plan to have a substantive Transportation Plan completed for Planning Commission initial review by June 2025.

A. Transportation Plan Development

1. Continuing Community Outreach
 - January 2024 –December 2025
2. Joint City Council and Planning Commission Transportation Tour
 - February 25, 2024
3. Open House
 - In person March 19, 2025
 - Online March 19 – April 2, 2025
4. Discussion of Draft Transportation Plan
 - Planning Commission July 8, 2025
 - General Government Committee July 9, 2025
 - Public Works Committee July 17, 2025
5. Community Draft Review – July – August 20225
 - Thurston Regional Planning Council Review
 - Intercity Transit Review
 - State Department of Transportation Review
 - Community Groups Review
 - Public Outreach

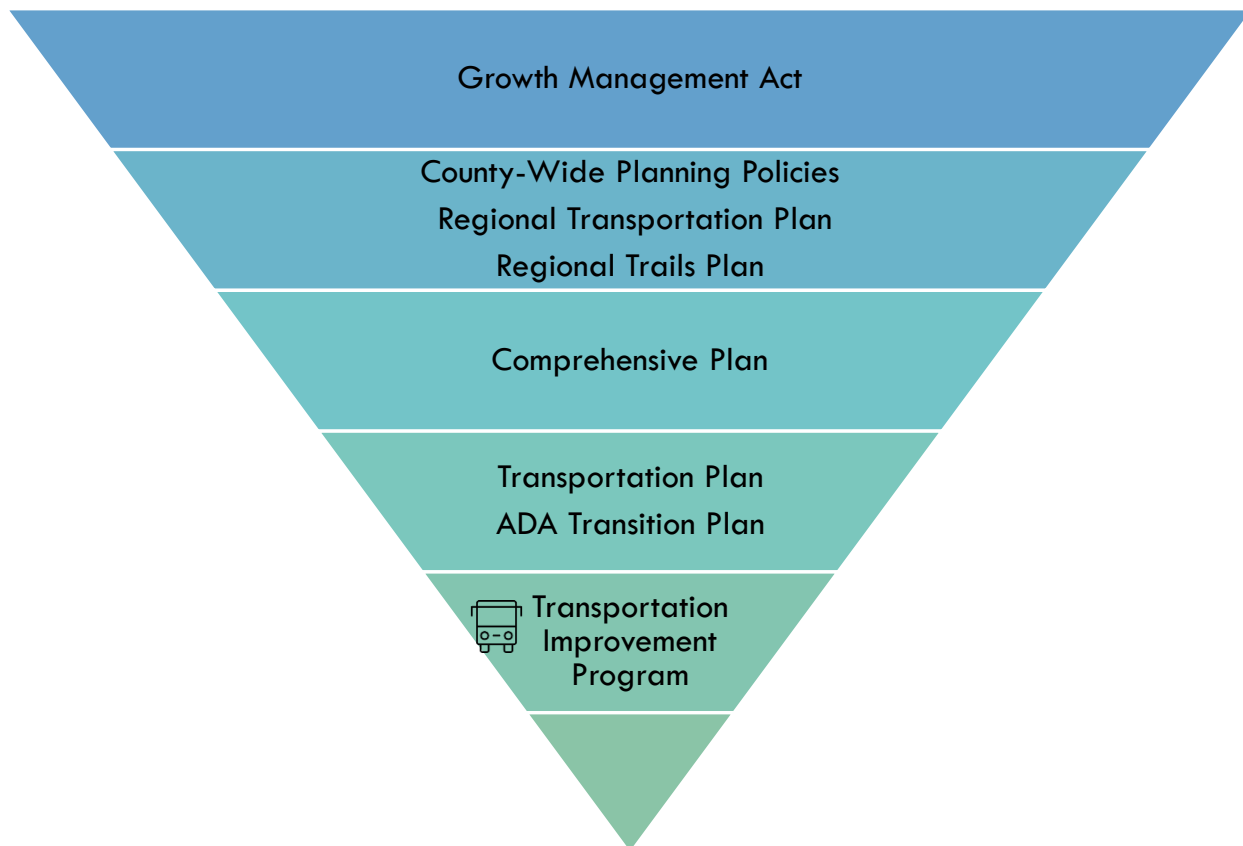
B. Comprehensive Plan Ordinance Adoption Process

1. Staff Prepares Ordinance
 - August – October 2025
2. Department of Commerce Notice of Intent Review
 - Starts October 2025
3. SEPA Review
 - Starts October 2025
4. Ordinance Adoption Process
 - Planning Commission October 2025 – December 2025
 - City Council January – February 2026

Appendix A – Requirements for the Transportation Plan Update

1. How All the Parts Are Related

The Comprehensive Plan is informed by laws at the State level and regional policies then is shaped by community needs and values. The following image shows the levels of guidance that inform plan level decisions as they impact service providers and users.



2. Growth Management Act

The State Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A Revised Code of Washington (RCW)) requires that Tumwater demonstrate that each element in its Comprehensive Plan meets the relevant planning goals contained within the Act. The fifteen goals guide the development and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations. Many of the goals provide guidance for several of the Comprehensive Plan's elements and need to be considered together while developing the Plan.

The Transportation goal was updated in 2023 by the State legislature to add reducing greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled. Achieving this goal will be done through a combination of goals, policies, and actions in the Land Use Element and Transportation Plan. The Land Use Element will contain goals, policies, and actions that ensure coordination with regional and local transportation plans. The Land Use Element will also propose residential, mixed-use, and neighborhood commercial land use designations that will encourage multi-modal, transit-

oriented development. Coordination with the new Climate Element will also be required as one sub-element requires goals and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3. County Wide Planning Policies

The Growth Management Act requires faster-growing counties and cities within their borders to coordinate plans for improved consistency in their respective regions. The County Wide Planning Policies provide a framework for that coordination. These policies were adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in 1992 and are updated as needed. The most recent amendment was in 2015, and a public hearing was held to update the planning policies in January 2025 and action is expected by the County Board of Commissioners later this year.

A link to the policies is provided in Appendix D.

4. Regional Transportation Plan

The Regional Transportation Plan fulfils State and federal requirements for planning at the regional level. The guiding principles of the Plan are shared by the region and inform decisions that impact the larger community:

- Sustainable, balancing needs today and in the future.
- Supportive of communities and people.
- Responsive to needs and change.
- Fiscally responsible, making wise investments.
- Safety conscious for all users.
- Environmentally sensitive to Tumwater's natural, social, and built settings.
- Collaborative in making informed, strategic choices.

Goals and policies in the Plan translate the guiding principles into a framework for decision making at all levels. The document includes twenty goals and over one hundred policies to implement the goals.

Several important State-maintained facilities also connect the region. Both Interstate 5 and US 101 are included in Tumwater's transportation system. It is important to maintain collaborative partnerships with WSDOT as Tumwater permits new development and seeks to maintain concurrency.

A link to the document is provided in Appendix D.

5. Regional Trails Plan

While a regional trails plan is not required under State or federal law, community interest and dedication has driven the planning for a regional trail network. The Thurston Regional Planning

Council has worked together with multiple partners and community members through an advisory workgroup to develop trails plans for the region. The initial plan was adopted 2007 and provides a framework of goals and policies to turn the unified vision into on the ground action.

The vision for the Thurston Regional Trails Network is to connect all Thurston County communities, be accessible, expandable, and effectively maintained provides safe and provide enjoyable recreation and active transportation for all users. Working together, the community set five goals to achieve the vision.

A link to the Plan is provided in Appendix D.

Appendix B – Current Transportation Plan

1. Background

The Transportation Plan looks at the transportation network within Tumwater and establishes projects to improve the network for forecasted future conditions. The Plan considers all modes of travel and looks at system performance while also discussing funding and needs.

The 2016 Transportation Plan covered the 20-year planning period from 2016 to 2036 and provides the functional framework for realizing Tumwater's transportation vision:

“Tumwater’s transportation system provides for the safe, efficient, cost-effective movement of people and goods in ways that support adopted land use plans, enhance neighborhood and community livability, support a strong and resilient economy, and minimize environmental impacts.”

The Transportation Plan includes maps that show Roadway functional classification, strategy corridors, bike facilities and pedestrian facilities. Other maps include street and intersection projects, bike projects, and pedestrian network project needs.

2. Structure

The current Transportation Plan consists of the following chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Vision
3. Sub-Area Plans
4. Consistency
5. Modes of Travel
6. Managing Demand
7. Future Conditions
8. Goals and Policies
9. System Inventory
10. System Performance
11. Capital Improvements
12. Funding
13. Opportunities & Needs

3. Link to Current Transportation Plans Tumwater 2016-36 Transportation Plan

<https://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/home/showpublisheddocument/12124/637225343085330000>

ADA Transition Plan Update (2021)

<https://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/home/showpublisheddocument/22939/637643584670570000>

Appendix C – Fehr & Peers Existing Conditions Memo

Appendix D – Other Resources and Guidance

1. City of Tumwater

[2025 Comprehensive Plan Update | City of Tumwater, WA](#) contains links to guidance material and information about the update.

2. State Department of Commerce

The Commerce has published guidance on the Comprehensive Plan periodic update and transportation Planning. They have guidance and resources for the State transportation system from WSDOT.

Periodic Update

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth-management/gma-topics/periodic-update/>

Transportation Planning

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth-management/gma-topics/transportation-planning/>

Your Community's Transportation System (2012)

<https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/erocgtpv3acyxv2m9bcb59c38s13qqjb>

3. Thurston Regional Planning Council

The Thurston Regional Planning Council provides regional planning for the cities within Thurston County. Their website hosts several regional plans for transportation.

Regional Transportation Plan

<https://www.trpc.org/662/Regional-Transportation-Plan---What-Move>

Thurston Regional Trails Plan

<https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/12180/Regional-Trails-Plan-FINAL---December-2023>

Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan

<https://www.trpc.org/909/Thurston-Climate-Mitigation-Plan>

Thurston Climate Adaptation Plan

https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/4936/ClimatePlan_pgs1_103?bidId=

County Wide Planning Policies

<https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/2362/Final-Thurston-County-Wide-Planning-Policies-amended-11-10-15?bidId=>

4. Municipal Research Services Center

The Municipal Research Services Center has a comprehensive planning webpage.

<https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/planning/gma/comprehensive-planning>

MRSC Article on Transportation Plans and Plan Elements

<https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/facilities/planning/transportation-plans>

5. Puget Sound Regional Council

In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council is conducting a series of workshops on a variety of topics related to the periodic update.

www.psrc.org/our-work/passport-2044-comprehensive-plan-workshop-series

6. Association of Washington Cities

The Association of Washington Cities has prepared a series of short five-to-eight-minute videos covering various a number of topics related to comprehensive plans from roles and responsibilities, budget, and economic development to implementation, and community engagement. Each video comes with a set of discussion questions.

<https://wacities.org/data-resources/gma-comp-plan-conversation-starters>