

FEEDBACK FROM NETWORKS PEG
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKING DRAFT, PART 1
June 10, 2013

Introduction

This memorandum summarizes input from the Networks Policy Expert Group (PEG) on draft goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan Working Draft, Part 1. It is based on presentations by technical experts and discussion of specific policy topics, as well as detailed review of Transportation and related goals and policies in the Working Draft.

While a wide range of topics are addressed in the PEG's input, topics that generated the most discussion and key themes in comments on these topics include:

- Green hierarchy – Avoiding exclusivity among modes, defining in detail how it will be applied, and recognizing that its application will be different in different areas.
- Freight – Recognizing the distinction between freight and movement of goods and avoiding creating conflicts with freight in applying a green hierarchy.
- Alternative mobility standards -- Before advancing the concept, expanding and clarifying measures and defining how system development charges (SDCs) would be allocated among modes.
- Equity -- Recognizing that the design of networks needs to be flexible to respond to differing needs among geographic areas; that avoiding gentrification needs to be considered when investing in infrastructure; and that investments should be focused on underserved areas.

Goals and Policies Generally

In reviewing draft goals and policies generally, the PEG pointed out the value of the commentary in explaining the rationale for and how goals/policies would be applied. It also felt that there is redundancy among goals/policies and confusion in terms.

- Commentary is critical to goal and policy interpretation; consider integrating the commentary into the goals and policies.
- There is unnecessary overlap among some goals and among some policies: redundancy can be reduced.
- The Transportation direction needs to be more proactive; it should build off the Portland plan and define priorities for the City. Draft goals/policies avoid the hard questions or fail to provide guidance on resolving conflicts.
- The economic prosperity role of the transportation system needs to be better reflected, particularly the use of the transportation system for serving the traded sector. Emphasize how the reduced use of the system by single occupant vehicles provides opportunities for freight/commerce.
- Draft policies overly focus on mobility; policy is also needed on network design and connectivity.
- Goals/policies need to address the future of transportation – how networks may operate/look differently in 2035. The network needs to be designed now for that future.
- In a number of cases, related policies are spread throughout the Working Draft, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive picture of the policy intent.

- Active transportation is not addressed in the goals/policies for Centers (Chapter 5).
- In places, terms are vague and need improved articulation.
- The terms “green” and “greenway” are used in different contexts throughout the Working Draft; creates confusion.
- Transportation is not directly addressed in the Working Draft’s Vision and Integrated Goals.

Healthy Connected Cities Concept

There is general support for this concept as an integrating and coordinating concept. It is also felt that such an approach may facilitate agency coordination on projects.

- The challenge is how to make Civic corridors and green connections work for a variety of modes. A mobility corridor approach may help to resolve concerns stemming from shared or limited rights-of-way.
- Land uses and transportation system elements will vary along a corridor, requiring different management strategies.
- A challenge will be to overcome internal resistance among bureaus to shared decision-making on priorities.

Green and Active Transportation Hierarchy

The PEG has a variety of concerns about the proposed hierarchy, including how it would be applied to different geographic areas and to different growth areas, e.g. civic corridors, TODs, centers, etc. A major concern is that, as written, the policy seems to set up conflicts among modes; the PEG believes that the concept should recognize that not all modes can or need to be accommodated on every corridor or street.

- This policy may belong at the goal level.
- The policy needs further articulation as to how it will work, including how conflicts will be resolved. A typology of 2-3 types of corridors would better distinguish how corridors and greenways would function.
- Policy needs to reflect that such a hierarchy will have to be applied differently in different areas. Exclusivity of modes should be avoided except where necessary. Not every street or corridor needs to or can be designed to accommodate all modes.
- A process will be needed to resolve conflicts among modes and to prevent differing interpretations of the hierarchy.
- As drafted, the hierarchy sets up conflicts among modes. The hierarchy should not represent a choice among modes, but a mechanism to accommodate multiple modes. A process is needed, not just a hierarchy, to resolve conflicts. What are the alternatives if specific modes cannot be accommodated? Because it’s a policy, different groups will interpret/use it differently.
- Additional context should be provided to explain how it is to be applied, e.g. classification versus project design. Need to distinguish between new streets versus retrofits.
- A matrix of factors that define the hierarchy is needed. Metrics and a clear process for selecting projects are needed.
- Presentation of the concept of a green hierarchy should be modeled after Vancouver’s Transportation 2040 Plan and include land use.
- Reconciling equity with flexibility needs to be incorporated into any hierarchy or classification system. The question that needs to be addressed is how to provide flexibility in design while avoiding creating unequal facilities. The goal needs to be to provide for tailored design without compromising quality and access -- context sensitive design versus one-size-fits-all.

- The TSP should include metrics and a clear process for selecting projects and establishing priorities for funding. A very transparent process is needed.
- Segregating projects by mode may be limiting funding possibilities; it sets up modes to compete against one another.
- The functioning of portals in/out of the City, particularly their regional connectivity function, needs to be addressed, with the goal to improve their efficiency and reduce impacts to surrounding neighborhoods.
- The role of corridors that pass through districts, rather than being confined to districts, needs to be considered.
- Stormwater treatment is a critical part of the network hierarchy. Policy should not imply, however, that water treatment trumps other modes, e.g. bicycle lanes, but rather that it is one important but not dominant consideration.
- Safe routes to schools may be another element of the green and active transportation hierarchy.

Civic Corridors and Greenways

There is support for green infrastructure where multiple objectives can be achieved.

- The intent of civic corridors is not clear; it is also not clear that this is a needed classification.
- Differentiation is needed between civic corridors, high capacity transit corridors, and flexible streets. A typology of 2-3 types of corridors would better distinguish how corridors could function.
- Clear definition of greenways is needed, differentiating between those that serve primarily a transportation versus recreation function.

Modal Policies

Maintaining freight access is identified as a critical modal issue, with concerns expressed about the potential impacts of active transportation on freight mobility. PEG members feel that freight mobility and walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-supportive streets should not be mutually exclusive but that not every street needs to accommodate all modes.

- The Plan needs to address how the TSP and modal plans relate to the Comprehensive Plan and how conflicts will be resolved.
- The integration of the Bicycle Plan and other modal plans should be a combination of amendments through the Comprehensive plan update and future amendments based on criteria developed through the Plan update process; a flexible process is the goal.
- Modal policies in the Portland Plan, Climate Action Plan and regional plans express a policy preference for non-automobile modes. The Comprehensive Plan should not be prejudicial against automobiles but rather recognize them as an integral component of the transportation system, while also supporting the safe and efficient operation of other modes.
- Modal policies fail to address air, trails and waterways as components of the transportation system.
- Waterways need to be recognized for their role in the movement of goods and as potential high capacity transportation corridors.
- There is confusion in the document between freight and the movement of goods. The use of the term freight causes confusion; perhaps use another term such as commercial traffic, especially in the green hierarchy. The traded sector should be the focus.
- Traded sectors drive the regional economy. To best accommodate freight, and thus meet economic development goals, modal functions should be distributed among roads

rather than having roads attempt to serve all modes. Given the limitations to expansion of the freight system, managing the existing system is key to facilitation of freight movement.

- The role of the transportation system in reducing air quality should be strengthened. There is a direct connection between air quality and major traffic routes.
- Policy needs to distinguish between “good” VMT (vehicle miles traveled) that grows the economy and “bad” VMT. Longer length trips may need to be more specifically addressed.
- The Comprehensive Plan will need to incorporate the results of an upcoming study on over-dimensional and emergency routes. A seamless permitting system for over-dimensional loads among the State, City and County should be the goal.
- Equity needs to be considered for all modes, including bicycle and pedestrian systems.
- Network design and connectivity are not addressed, e.g. appropriate distances between freight routes, over-dimensional routes.
- Improved inter-bureau communication will be key to avoiding or minimizing conflicts among Plan policies specific to the various transportation modes, to facilitating collaboration, and to leveraging resources.

Flexible Street Design

There is support for moving toward a more performance-based approach to street design that varies geographically and recognizes community context and that is intended to make streets more livable and active places, as modeled by the Cully Corridor and Local Street Plan. The PEG believes that a variety of performance measures are needed in order to adaptively manage Plan policy. The health equity matrix developed by BPS is seen as a model for project selection.

- A goal and possibly policies are needed on financial feasibility as a performance measure. Due in large part to declining gas tax revenues, there is an impending funding crisis that needs to be acknowledged in transportation policy.
- A goal is needed expressing the intent to adopt performance measures for safety, reliability, etc. that could be used in decision-making on transportation projects.
- The City needs to “walk its talk” and apply flexible street standards to its own projects.
- Broad and inclusive community involvement will be needed to gain support for the street-by-street program.
- At least as interim improvements, some improvements in an area are better than none, e.g. paved shoulders versus sidewalks and gutters in SW Portland; interim improvements should not preclude the opportunities for additional future improvements.
- To ensure the affordability of a street-by-street approach, funding options, including urban renewal or a citywide financing mechanism, need to be explored.
- Context-sensitive design policies should address the design of streets to support adjoining urban development.
- Street design (as well as all elements of the system) needs to recognize that functions and needs may be different in 2035; need to design now to meet a different future.
- Street design policies are presented in multiple locations; can they be incorporated into a single section?

Mobility Standards

While there is general support for alternative mobility standards, particularly their more balanced multi-modal approach, the PEG has numerous questions about the application of

measures to different modes and geographic areas and identified the need for measures on economic productivity, health and equity. Different standards will be needed for different areas, e.g. Lloyd Area Transportation Management Area (TMA).

- Standards need to address all modes, including emergency vehicles, delivery trucks, and other non-standard vehicles.
- Economic productivity, health benefits and equity need to be included as measures.
- Performance will need to be monitored over time.
- The relationship of SDC funded projects to TSP priority projects needs to be addressed. How would SDC funds be divided among modes?

Frequent and High Capacity Transit

Based upon a presentation from TriMet on its approach to service enhancement, the PEG agrees that frequent transit and streetcar service can be key tools in planning for future growth.

- There is interest in exploring a role for the City in developing a shared policy framework with TriMet that links increased transit service to support projected growth with City policies that support implementing transit speed, reliability, safety and other operational improvements in a constrained urban environment.
- Planning for future growth and high capacity transit service needs to recognize that the City's land use patterns will be affected by new transit connections to Vancouver and Milwaukie, as well as by Southwest Corridor and Powell-Division Corridor improvements.
- With completion of the Central City streetcar loop, there is an opportunity to assess whether the streetcar is an appropriate tool to affect growth patterns.
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements in proximity to transit should be a priority to ensure safe and efficient multimodal interaction and support access to transit.
- Equity considerations include the impacts of transit on housing affordability.

Public Rights-of-Way

There is broad interest in public rights-of-way accommodating multiple uses and serving as destinations/amenities.

- Policies need to address the coordination of the various functions to be accommodated and public service/community uses need to be added
- Policy should acknowledge but not prioritize the various uses allowed within the public rights-of-way. The policy should address coordination of the various functions. Public service/community uses, e.g. bicycle routes through parks, need to be added as a function.
- Policy is needed on maintenance responsibilities.
- The question was raised as to whether these policies more properly belong in the Transportation chapter.

Public Trail Policy and Alignment

- PEG discussion focused on the need to recognize the differences in trails that function as transportation corridors versus those that serve primarily a recreation purpose. Trail maintenance responsibilities need to be addressed.
- There should be different classifications and standards for trails serving primarily a transportation function versus those serving primarily a recreation function.
- Parks may not be the best manager for trails that serve a transportation function.
- If PBOT obtains new funding for trails, it should be applied to trail maintenance, irrespective of who the manager is.

- To avoid conflicts with recreation uses and open space, parks should be the location of last resort for trails serving primarily a transportation purpose.
- The Comprehensive Plan should establish policy to bring the entire trail system up to current standards and map incomplete trail sections and segments needing improvement.
- Parks and PBOT recreational trail maps and programs need to be reconciled and coordinated.
- Trails need to be designed trails based on function, accommodating a variety of functions at different times of day.
- Trail planning and design needs to incorporate illumination and other features that facilitate their uses. Policies should support well-designed trails with amenities.

Parking

The PEG was briefed on the status of City policy on off-street parking and preliminary input on the issue from the Neighborhood Centers PEG. Key concerns include:

- The cumulative effect on neighborhoods of reduced on-street parking capacity associated with build-out to approved densities.
- There are equity aspects of increased housing costs associated with off-street parking that need to be considered.
- How to funnel the savings realized by developers into the neighborhoods affected needs to be addressed.
- Over-reliance on on-street parking could limit options for accommodating non-auto travel, e.g. bicycle lanes.
- The policy link between transit service commitments and zoning and entitlement policies could be strengthened.

Technology

- The Plan needs to recognize ITS as a low cost method to reduce congestion and improve safety.

Implementation

Implementation is a key area of concern, with funding being a particular challenge that needs to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. A clear process for project selection is needed; it should be based on performance measures and targets, among other criteria.

- System improvement priorities should be based on a policy that, where the system is complete, maintenance is the priority; where it is not complete, the focus is on completion.
- The Plan needs to specify priorities for funding and development exactions.
- Exactions need to be structured to avoid partial street improvements, i.e. improvements to small parts of the network but not the overall network.
- A transparent system for financing improvements is needed.
- Economic, educational, health and equity considerations need to be factored into project selection.
- CIPs need to be integrated among bureaus.