

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Prioritization of Regional Services to Support the Regional Growth Strategy
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With adoption of Motion 09-1 in October 2009, GMPC directed the interjurisdictional staff team (IJT) to develop options for “new CPP policy language that will prioritize regional service delivery in ways that promote the regional growth strategy.” This report describes the staff work carried out in response to that motion, including 1) identification of regional services that may be addressed by such a policy, 2) review of existing regional and countywide policies, and 3) analysis of how well those policies have been implemented through functional plans of service-providing agencies.

The staff team reviewed Vision 2040, existing Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and functional plans for regional services that are related to the geographic distribution of growth, including parks and open space, wastewater and transit. Based on its analysis, staff recommends amending the CPPs to clarify and strengthen guidance for provision of transit service, specifically to ensure that transit allocations made by King County Metro are responsive to existing land uses and densities and locations targeted for future growth.

BACKGROUND

The current Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) describe a clear direction for managing the expected growth in King County. That direction focuses on having virtually all growth occur within the designated Urban Area, with a large amount of that growth going to the relatively small area occupied by the designated Urban Centers. The GMPC recently adopted new housing and employment growth targets that specify how that policy direction will be carried out through planned growth levels in each jurisdiction.

The CPPs recognize that local governments in Washington have limited tools for directing growth and that strategic use of all the available tools by local governments is necessary to bring about the desired development pattern. One set of tools includes the city and county comprehensive plans and development regulations that accommodate the growth targets. Another essential tool is the ability of government to invest in infrastructure and services. By making deliberate choices about these investments, King County and the cities can encourage the types and locations of growth that best meet the overall goals for growth management. Below are some existing policies from the CPPs that encourage the use of investments in this way:

FW-12(b). The growth targets...shall be supported by both regional and local transportation investments... The regional responsibility shall be met by planning for and delivering county, state and federal investments that support the growth targets and the land use pattern of the County...

LU-64. All Activity Areas that achieve sufficient employment and household densities should receive frequent peak-hour transit service...

FW-18. The land use pattern shall be supported by a balanced transportation system which provides for a variety of mobility options...

FW-19. All jurisdictions in the County, in cooperation with METRO, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the State, shall develop a balanced transportation system and coordinated financing strategies and land use plan which implement regional mobility and reinforce the countywide vision...

T-1. The Countywide transportation system...shall be a multi-modal system based on regional priorities consistent with adopted land use plans...

T-14. METRO should develop transit level of service standards which provide the County and cities with realistic service expectations to support adopted land uses and desired growth management objectives. These standards should consider that route spacing and frequency standards are necessary for differing service conditions including:

- a. Service between designated Centers served by high-capacity transit;
- b. Service between designated Centers not served by high-capacity transit; and
- c. Service to areas outside Centers.

FW-21. Infrastructure planning and financing shall be coordinated among jurisdictions to direct and prioritize countywide facility improvements to implement the countywide vision and land use plans.

CC-4. Human and community service planning activities shall support Countywide Planning Policies and the countywide land development pattern.

FW-29. Planning for and financing of services shall be coordinated among jurisdictions to direct and prioritize Countywide facility improvements to implement the Countywide policies.

In 2009, as the GMPC discussed the adoption of new growth targets for all jurisdictions in the county, Seattle's representatives raised questions about whether service plans actually promote achievement of those targets. Several suburban cities also raised concerns that existing policies and tools for providing the services and infrastructure necessary to accommodate targeted growth were insufficient. The importance of these questions is underscored by changes in the way the new targets were developed, compared with previous target setting by GMPC. Based on the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 plan, the GMPC moved from a subarea approach to targets to a finer grained categorization of cities within "regional geographies" based on their expected roles in accommodating growth. Using this framework to implement Vision 2040's Regional Growth Strategy, the GMPC targeted higher levels of growth to Metropolitan and Core Cities¹, which are now being asked to accommodate over 75% of the housing growth and over 85% of the employment growth through the year 2031.

The Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) contained in Vision 2040, also call for regional investments in services and infrastructure that support the centers and the Regional Growth Strategy. Examples include the following MPPs:

¹ The Metropolitan Cities are Seattle and Bellevue. The Core Cities are Auburn, Bothell, Burien, Federal Way, Kent, Kirkland, Redmond, Renton, SeaTac and Tukwila

MPP-DP-7: Give funding priority — both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development — to support designated regional growth centers consistent with the regional vision. Regional funds are prioritized to regional growth centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize to regional growth centers.

MPP-DP-13: Direct subregional funding, especially county-level and local funds, to centers designated through countywide processes, as well as to town centers, and other activity nodes.

MPP-H-6: Recognize and give regional funding priority to transportation facilities, infrastructure, and services that explicitly advance the development of housing in designated regional growth centers. Give additional priority to projects and services that advance affordable housing.

MPP-T-9: Coordinate state, regional, and local planning efforts for transportation through the Puget Sound Regional Council to develop and operate a highly efficient, multimodal system that supports the regional growth strategy.

MPP-T-11: Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.

MPP-PS-2: Time and phase services and facilities to guide growth and development in a manner that supports the regional vision.

Recognizing the value in aligning services with the desired growth pattern that is described in Vision 2040 and implemented through the approved growth targets, GMPC in October 2009 adopted Motion 09-1 directing the interjurisdictional staff team to develop:

... new CPP policy language that will prioritize service delivery in ways that promote the regional growth strategy. In developing that policy, staff should address these issues according to the schedule shown below:

- Define what constitutes the “regional services” affected by this policy;
- Identify the existing policy basis for delivering regional services;
- Draft new policy options that address regional service delivery for GMPC consideration by the end of the first quarter of 2010.

Adoption of CPP language developed through this process will be the first phase of an overall work plan for 2010 focusing on updating the entirety of the CPPs to bring them into alignment with the MPPs.

ANALYSIS

Staff began its analysis by identifying which “regional services” might be affected by a policy intended to further the regional growth strategy. Starting with a list of all the public services delivered in King County, staff identified regional services delivered countywide. Services delivered locally within a single jurisdiction and also regional services delivered to multiple counties were deemed outside the intended countywide scope of the CPPs in question. The list of countywide services was further narrowed based on the relationship between the delivery of each service and the location of growth within the county. Many countywide services, such as records and elections, licensing, emergency management, courts, and jail have no, or only minimal, relationship to the growth strategies. . Other countywide services, such as affordable housing programs and human services, have strong geographic components, but more often they react to locations of need rather than as attracters or shapers of growth. Of the countywide services,

staff identified a few that both respond to and shape growth: wastewater, parks and open space, and transit.

While the CPPs provide general guidance toward coordination of countywide service delivery in support of growth management objectives, the agency functional plans should implement those policies through direction on specific actions. As a next step in the analysis, staff reviewed the current functional plans for the three identified service areas to determine whether those plans were being used to actively support the growth vision of the CPPs.

Open space. The review of the King County Open Space Plan, adopted in 2004, showed that that plan is not inconsistent with the CPP themes. The plan acknowledges both growth targets and the King County Comprehensive Plan. In practice, however, the distribution of regional parks and open space within the county appears to be based primarily on the locations of natural features and opportunities rather than on the locations of current or future population. Given the preservation function that regional open space acquisition also serves, it is not unreasonable that regional parks and open spaces would be found in less developed areas than in urban centers. In addition, many of the county facilities are regional draws intended to serve all residents of the county. Finally, the open space plan also includes a framework for transferring local parks to cities in which they are located or to which they are annexed, which is consistent with GMA and CPP direction about cities being responsible for urban services.

Wastewater. The Regional Wastewater Services Plan, adopted in 1999 and periodically updated since then, is a functional plan that describes capital projects for upgrading and expanding conveyance systems and treatment facilities that will address existing problems and future growth. The plan appears to be generally consistent with the CPP's and the regional growth strategy. However, the plan does not explicitly refer to planning for future facilities in locations where the growth strategy encourages population and employment growth.

Transit. The King County Department of Transportation has prepared two plans related to transit – the *Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation* and the *Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2007-2016*, both adopted in 2007. Each of these plans highlights the strong relationship between transit service, existing land uses, and locations of future growth within the county. The Comprehensive Plan includes several goals and policies that tie transit service to the growth management strategy. Some examples of those policies are:

Goal 1.6 Work with other jurisdictions to ensure that land use and transportation planning and implementation are coordinated.

Policy 3.1.1 Growth Management. Support local and regional growth management plans and policies. Within each subarea, focus new and existing services and facilities to support targeted land use concentrations identified in local comprehensive and regional plans and within the urbanized growth area of King County.

Work with local jurisdictions to meet the goals and requirements related to transit services and facilities that are contained in the Growth Management Act, the Countywide Planning Policies and the Multi-County Planning Policies.

Policy 3.2.6 Services and Facility Development and Implementation. Establish services and facility development guidelines to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the system, and address public transportation's role in growth management. These guidelines shall be used to allocate and implement service changes and capital improvements during the six-year planning and annual service investment processes. These guidelines will include, but not be limited to:

- Descriptions of the conditions under which different types of services and facilities are appropriate;
- Basic and enhanced level-of-service targets;
- Facility access requirements, including non-motorized access;
- Mode split goals; and
- Performance measures.

These guidelines also will include evaluation criteria for allocating services and facilities including, but not limited to, consideration of:

- Demand management programs and
- HOV supportive land use actions, such as parking supply reductions and transit-friendly design standards.

The Strategic Plan cites the Growth Management Act, CPPs, Vision 2020, Destination 2030 and King County Climate Change Plan as some of the key legislation and policies to which it responds. Under the heading “Supporting Growth Management,” this plan includes the following strategies for transit service delivery:

Strategy S-3: Core Service Connections. Improve service levels on existing routes and create new routes serving established urban and manufacturing/industrial centers and urban areas where because of population or employment clusters, ridership and transit use is projected to be the highest.

Strategy S-4: Transit Improvements and Land Use. Identify areas of King county to become eligible for enhanced transit service when they meet the following criteria:

- By meeting or exceeding prorated established housing and population targets, or
- By encouraging higher density development and pedestrian activity through adopted regulations and policies that promote mixed-uses, establish minimum densities, reduce parking requirements, and carry out other efforts that support transit supportive development.

Preference will be given to areas that realize community or neighborhood development consistent with these criteria.

Strategy S-6: Transit Access in Rapidly Developing Areas. Expand service coverage in areas with rapidly developing population growth of sufficient density to support transit service, and with a street network that accommodates non-circuitous transit routing and pedestrian access. For developing areas that do not meet these criteria, provide service capacity at newly built, expanded or leased park-and-ride lots as warranted by ridership demand at those locations. When identified as a subarea priority, make a portion of the new service investment available for innovative vanpool programs to support park-and-ride lot based transit service.

Strategy S-7: Community Mobility. Improve community mobility options through increase in service levels on existing routes or through the creation of new services in transit-supportive higher household and/or employment density areas. Within each subarea, develop service proposals to serve residential and employment areas with the highest ridership demand and to promote circulation within the communities. In the communities where flexible service and other King County Metro mobility products and services connecting to the all-day service network can be provided more cost-effectively than fixed-route service, those services should be expanded in conjunction with modifications and improvements to the existing system.

The above strategies demonstrate how Metro service would be used to address growth management goals by emphasizing service to areas with established urban centers that have the highest potential transit ridership, because of existing population or employment clusters; areas that are meeting their pro-rated housing targets; and emerging centers and other areas that are promoting higher densities through development regulations. The strategies also describe how Metro would provide service to areas that do not have the densities or physical development patterns that promote ridership. These strategies are generally consistent with the CPPs.

The strategies also implicitly represent transit planning principles that describe two major goals of transit service: *ridership* and *geographic coverage*. Transit service that promotes ridership provides high environmental benefit because it focuses on providing the most people with opportunities to use transit rather than driving a single-occupant vehicle. This type of service also has positive effects on congestion, air and water pollution. Service that promotes ridership is also considered fiscally conservative because it generally produces higher revenue per mile traveled. As part of the county's overall growth management approach, transit service that prioritizes ridership makes the Urban Centers and other dense areas – locations where the CPPs say future growth should occur - more attractive for both residents and employers.

Transit service that aims at geographic coverage provides service to disadvantaged populations, such as senior citizens and disabled persons, who require transit for their personal mobility. Coverage service also is a way to ensure some basic level of service throughout the entire service area. In the context of the CPPs, transit service that addresses geographic coverage would provide service to areas outside the designated Urban Centers and other locations designated to accommodate growth.

An additional provision of the Strategic Plan addresses the allocation of growth in transit service. Strategy IM-3 states the following:

Strategy IM-3: Service Resource Allocation. ... With the implementation of each 200,000 annual hours of service investments that are subject to the subarea allocation requirement and at the end of the 2007-2010 Transit Now program investments, each King County Metro planning subarea would receive a share of actual service hours implemented: East 40%, South 40% and Seattle/North King County 20%.

Unlike the other strategies, IM-3 does not appear to be based on countywide growth management strategies and may frustrate Metro's ability to provide bus service that supports current and planned land uses. This strategy allocates service hours to three broad geographic subareas of the county that do not relate well to the more detailed geography used for growth management planning and which are the basis for newly adopted growth targets. Basing transit allocation decisions on the regional geographies identified in Vision 2040, including the urban centers, would be a more effective approach for supporting the Regional Growth Strategy.

Another problem is that the target shares of transit service to the three subareas do not appear to be clearly related to existing and future uses that could create demand for transit within each subarea. Strategy IM-3 therefore may not allow for directing future transit service to match the growth pattern that has occurred or that the CPPs intend to produce in furtherance of Vision 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. Analysis of the amount, mix, type, density and locations of existing uses and future growth would provide a sounder basis for allocating transit in response to the adopted growth strategy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consistent with existing Countywide and Multicounty Planning Policies, and based on the analysis carried out pursuant to Motion 09-1, staff has determined that more specific direction is warranted in the

CPPs to ensure better alignment between transit service allocation decisions and the actual and desired pattern of residential and commercial development within the county. Staff is not recommending any changes to CPPs that address wastewater, parks and open space, or other regional services at this time because our analysis showed that the existing functional plans for those services are consistent with the CPPs' growth objectives.

With regard to transit service, the interjurisdictional staff team recommends amendments to FW-18 and FW-19 to reflect more clearly the appropriate service intended for different types of areas and to clarify the relationship among jurisdictions regarding transportation system planning and development. Staff also recommends amending T-14 to provide more direct guidance for using transit service to advance the County's growth management goals.

- FW-18 The land use pattern shall be supported by a balanced transportation system, which provides for a variety of mobility options. ~~This system shall be cooperatively planned, financed, and constructed. Mobility options shall include~~ including 1) a high-capacity transit system which links the Urban Centers; and is supported by an extensive high-occupancy vehicle system, local community transit system for 2) a system of bus and other transit modes that links Centers, provides circulation within the Centers, and links to the non-center Urban Areas; 3) a high-occupancy vehicle system linking Urban Centers; and 4) non-motorized travel options.
- FW-19 ~~All jurisdictions in the County, in cooperation with METRO, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, The County and cities should work with the Puget Sound Regional Council, and the State, and other relevant agencies to shall develop a balanced transportation system that enhances regional mobility and reinforces and coordinated financing strategies and land use plan which implement regional mobility and reinforce the Countywide vision for managing growth. The Vision 202040 Regional Growth Strategyies shall be recognized as the framework for creating a regional system of Centers linked by high-capacity transit and an interconnected system of freeway high-occupancy vehicle lanes, and supported by a transit system of bus and other transit options.~~
- T-14 ~~METRO should develop transit level-of-service standards which provide the County and cities with realistic service expectations to support adopted land uses and desired growth management objectives. These standards should consider that route spacing and frequency standards are necessary for differing service conditions including:~~
- ~~a. Service between designated Centers served by high capacity transit;~~
 - ~~b. Service between designated Centers not served by high capacity transit; and~~
 - ~~e. Service to areas outside Centers.~~
- Transit service, throughout the county, in support of countywide growth management objectives, shall be prioritized to 1) areas where existing housing and employment densities support transit ridership and 2) Urban Centers and other areas planned for housing and employment densities that will support transit ridership. Transit providers shall also strive to meet the mobility needs of transit-dependent populations in allocating transit service.