

Date: June 15, 2016
To: Councilmember Mike O'Brien, Chair
Councilmembers Johnson and Sawant, Members
Sustainability and Transportation Committee
From: Eric McConaghy and Lish Whitson, Council Central Staff
Subject: Seattle 2035: Transportation Element

Overview

On June 21, the Sustainability and Transportation Committee will discuss the Transportation Element of the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan, "[Seattle 2035](#)." The Transportation Element provides policies that guide Seattle's funding, investments, programs and regulations related to movement of people, goods and services in Seattle. Key changes proposed for the element include:

- Replacing the current method for measuring transportation level of service (LOS);
- Adding transportation policies regarding enhanced livability and safety;
- Adding maps showing where Seattle plans to make investments to support transit riding, bicycle riding, and walking, based on existing planning documents¹;
- Updating transportation funding policies to support the maintenance or replacement of the Seattle Transportation Benefit District and the transportation levy (Move Seattle) funding; and
- Updating information in the Transportation Appendix regarding Seattle's inventory of various transportation facilities and providing analysis of the likely transportation impacts of the recommended growth distribution.

Discussion

Central Staff has identified the following as possible items for discussion:

1. Measuring Transportation Level of Service (LOS)

The Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070) requires that Seattle's Comprehensive Plan include "(l)level of service standards for all locally owned arterials and transit routes to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system..." The Washington Administrative Code provides the definition for level of service as "an established minimum capacity of public facilities or services that must be provided per unit of demand or other appropriate measure of need. Level of service standards are synonymous with locally established minimum standards."

¹ [Transit Master Plan Supplement](#), [Bicycle Master Plan](#), and [Pedestrian Master Plan](#)

The current Comprehensive Plan defines Seattle’s LOS for arterials and transit as “the ratio of measured traffic volumes to calculated roadway capacity (v/c ratio) at designated screenlines, each of which encompasses one or more arterials...” Seattle’s current method meets the requirement to have a LOS for transit because buses operate on the arterials.

The current definition specifies to measure “peak hour directional traffic volumes on the arterials crossing each screenline to calculate the screenline LOS.” Screenlines are fixed and shown on a map; the screenlines cross multiple arterials. For example, screenline 6.11 runs south of NW 80th Street from Seaview Avenue NW to 15th Avenue NW capturing traffic heading north and south on Seaview, 24th Avenue NW and 15th Avenue NW (see Attachment A).

The proposed, new LOS standard sets a target for the percentage of trips made by single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) for each of eight sectors that, together, encompass all of Seattle.² The new standard is described as being consistent with the emphasis in Seattle 2035 on reducing the percentage of all trips that are made using SOVs along with increasing the use of other modes of travel. The Transportation Appendix of the Recommended Plan states that the different performance levels recognize “diverse land use patterns and transportation contexts.” **Council may wish to ask the Executive to explain more completely the reasons for dividing the Seattle into sectors, how the boundaries of sectors were determined, how the targets per sector were determined, and how the number of trips per mode and total trips will be measured.**

An important reason given for changing how Seattle measures LOS is that it is not practical or feasible to increase road capacity to maintain a desired level of service when the v/c ratio is exceeded because Seattle is a built-out, urban environment. **Council may wish to ask about other LOS measurement options, in addition to the proposed SOV mode-share measurement, that also do not rely on the addition of new road capacity, for example pedestrian or bicycle LOS measures.**

GMA requires that development regulations of cities, like Seattle, “are consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan” (RCW 36.70A.040). The Executive has not yet transmitted legislation proposing amendments to Seattle’s regulations that correspond with and implement the proposed changes to LOS policies. Council expects that the Executive will transmit legislation to implement the proposed, new LOS standard. **Council may wish to wait to adopt new LOS standard policies until such time as the Executive transmits the implementing legislation so that a discussion can be had about how the new policies will be made operational, including an examination of any changes to development regulations and to the prioritization of Seattle’s transportation investments, and so that the policy and regulatory changes can be acted upon together.**

² The Transportation Appendix of Seattle 2035 and Appendix B.3 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Seattle 2035 provide information on the proposed LOS standard for arterials and transit routes.

2. Clarification of figures and terms

Mode-share figures. Proposed policy T 1.5 calls for investment to meet Seattle’s mode-share goals (see discussion above) as shown in the tables, Figure 1 and Figure 2. The labeling of the Figures does not make clear whether the 2014 actual statistic and 2035 mode-share goal (“target”) refer to trips originating, terminating or circulating within the listed urban centers.

Also, while Figures 1 and 2 show mode share goals for urban centers, Figure A-11 in the Transportation Appendix, a map, shows mode share goals for eight sectors that together cover all of Seattle (see Attachment B). Figure A-11 does not show the urban centers nor does it provide key reference features, like major roadways, to orient the reader and give meaning to the boundaries of the sectors. Similarly, it is not clear how the boundaries of the sectors were determined. Furthermore, the map title indicates that the map shows both 2015 SOV mode share performance and 2035 SOV mode share performance targets; it does not. It appears to show only the 2035 target. **Council may wish to request that the Executive clarify Figures 1 and 2 and the related information in the Transportation Appendix, including Figure A-11, dealing with mode-share goals.**

Terms. The text of the Transportation Element goals and policies include terms that are not likely to be understood by a general audience. **Council may wish to request that the Executive propose clarifications to the policy language or definitions in the glossary for terms** such as:

- mode-share
- flex area (flex zone)
- complete corridor
- shared use
- short-duration use
- vibrant pedestrian environment
- local access street
- boulevard network
- on-street parking pricing
- roadway pricing strategies
- regional transportation pricing
- green infrastructure
- Vision Zero

Council Review to Date and Next Steps

On May 17, Office of Planning and Community Development staff and Central Staff briefed the Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee (PLUZ) on an overview and schedule for review of the Mayor’s recommended Comprehensive Plan. On June 17, OPCD staff and Central Staff briefed PLUZ regarding changes proposed to the Growth Strategy and Land Use Elements. PLUZ is expected to continue the discussion of these elements on June 21.

After the Sustainability and Transportation Committee meeting on June 21, staff will be briefing other Council Committees on topics of interest to those committees. On June 27, at 6:00 in Council Chambers, a public hearing will be held on the Mayor’s Recommended Comprehensive

Plan. On August 2, we will return to PLUZ for an initial discussion regarding potential Council amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

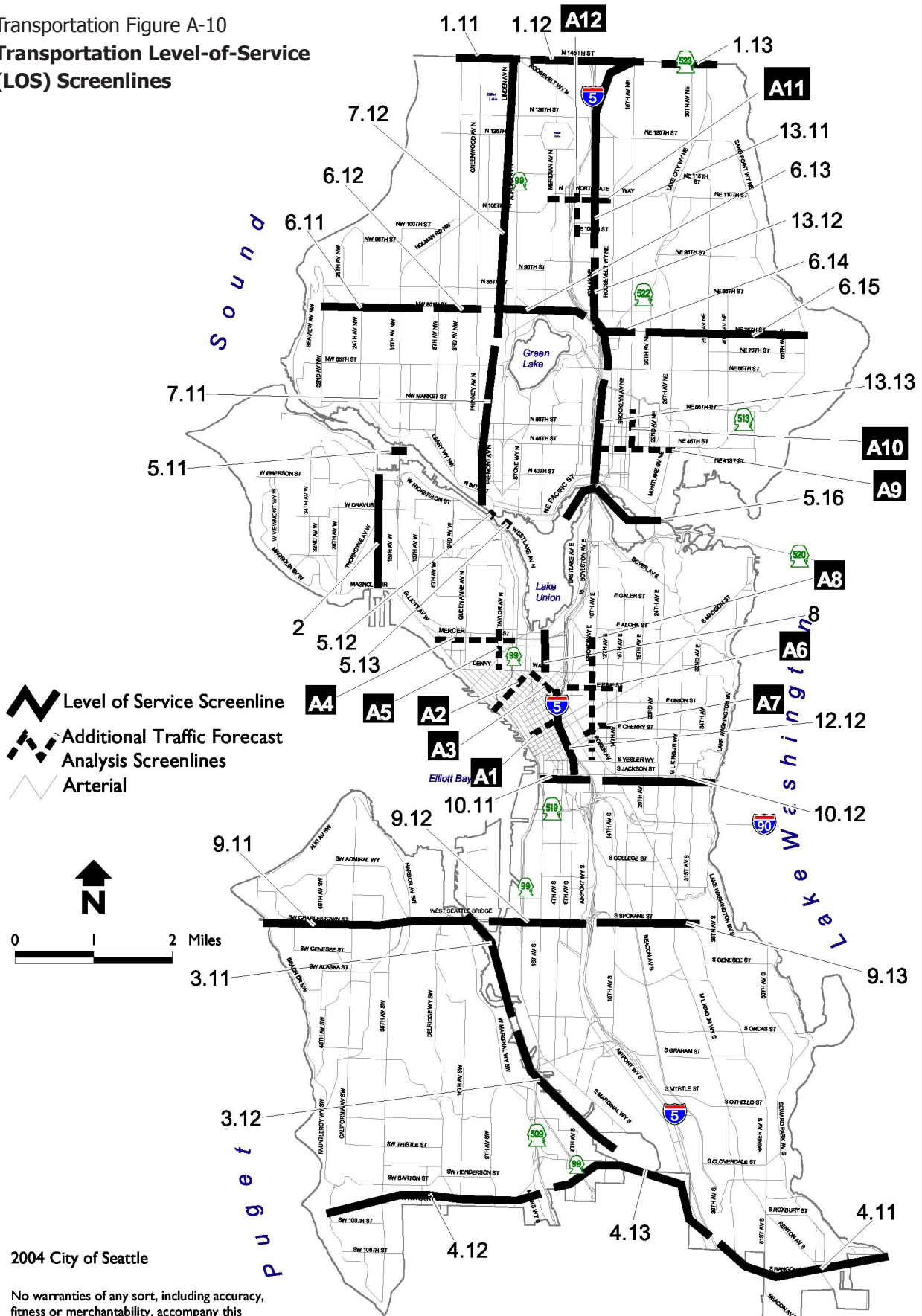
Attachments:

Attachment A: Transportation Figure A-10, Transportation Appendix, Comprehensive Plan

Attachment B: Transportation Appendix Figure A-11, Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan, May 2016



Transportation Figure A-10
**Transportation Level-of-Service
(LOS) Screenlines**



transportation appendix

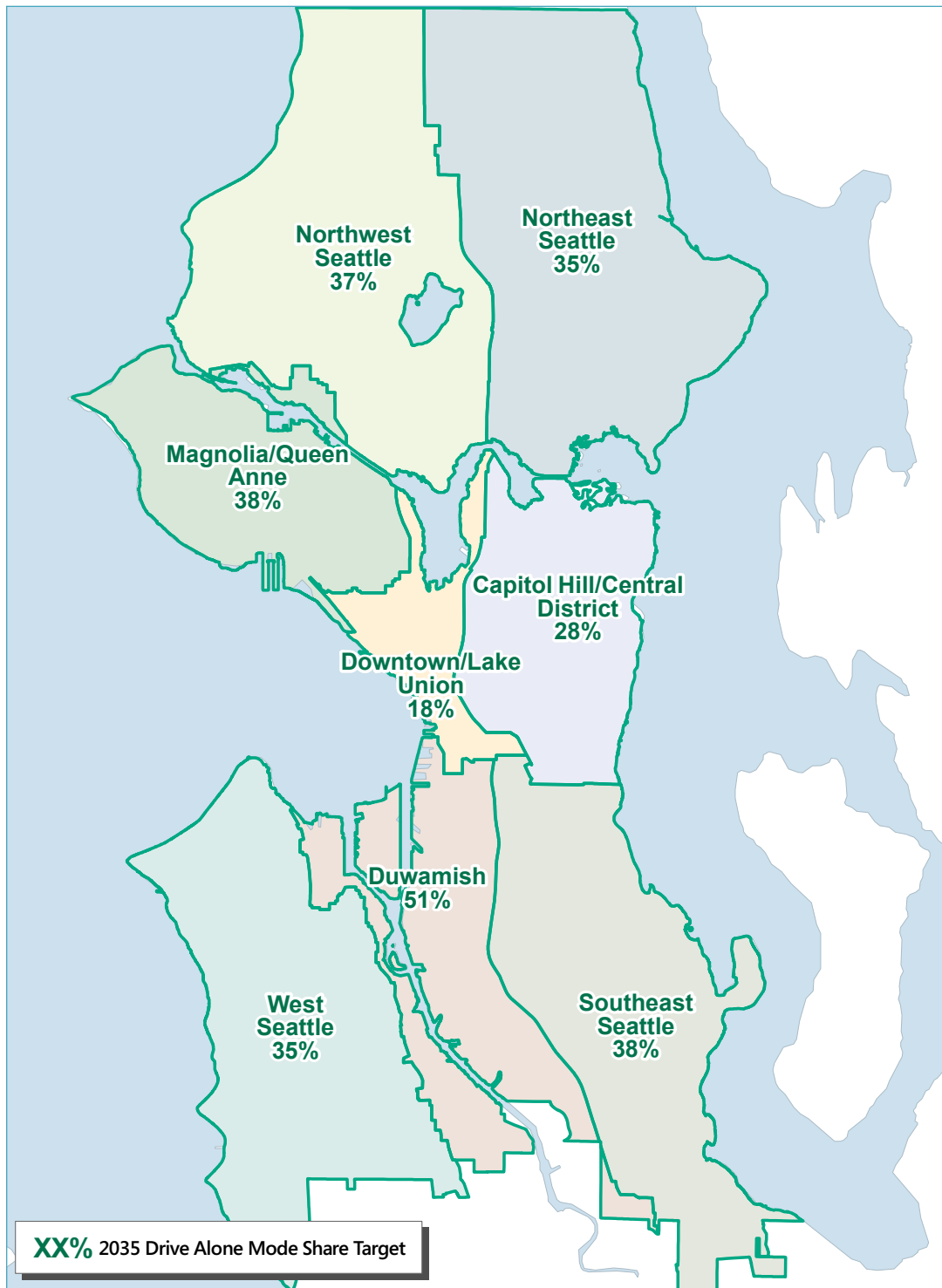
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Transportation Appendix Figure A-11

SOV Mode Share 2015 Performance and 2035 Targets by City Sector



Source: Fehr & Peers, 2016