

**From:** "Chris Leman" <cleman@oo.net>  
**To:** "Comprehensive Plan process" <compplan@seattle.gov>  
**CC:** "Freeman, Ketil" <ketil.freeman@seattle.gov>  
**Date:** 5/15/2009 4:06 PM  
**Subject:** Proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to the Transportation Element: Add to Transportation Goal 11 the state's already-adopted quantified targets for reduction in vehicle miles traveled in and through the city

CITY OF SEATTLE  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION

Date: May 15, 2009  
Applicant: Chris Leman  
Mailing Address: 85 E. Roanoke Street, Seattle, WA 98102-3222  
Phone: (206) 322-5463  
E-mail: cleman@oo.net

Name of General Area/Location/Site which would be affected: Entire City, state, and globe

1. Provide a detailed description and explanation of the proposed text amendment.

In the Transportation element, after the existing language of Transportation Goal 11, add the following: "To help realize goal EG-7 and state goals to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other climate-changing greenhouse gases, the annual per capita vehicle miles traveled in and through Seattle will be reduced by eighteen percent by 2020, thirty percent by 2035, and fifty percent by 2050."

Explanation. Goal EG-7 of the Comprehensive Plan commits Seattle to reduce carbon dioxide and other climate-changing greenhouse gases 30 percent by 2024 and 80 percent by 2050. Unfortunately, the Comprehensive Plan does not include a realistic strategy for achieving these goals. Such a strategy must rely on a significant reduction in motor vehicle miles traveled, because motor vehicles are the single greatest of Seattle's contributions to global warming, and their proportion of Seattle's contribution is increasing. The goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled (eighteen percent by 2020, thirty percent by 2035, and fifty percent by 2050) identified in this proposal is exactly the same reduction as in House Bill 2815, which passed the Washington legislature in 2008. Seattle should "meet or beat" these state VMT reduction goals, and should include them in the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Describe how the issue is currently addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. If the issue is not adequately addressed, describe the need for it.

As outlined above, the Comprehensive Plan has excellent goals for reducing greenhouse gases, but needs to include the practical strategy of reducing vehicle miles traveled in any scenario for achieving this goal. Without specific targets for reducing vehicle miles traveled, such as Washington state has already adopted, Seattle will never realize its hopes of a dramatic reduction in greenhouse gases, which instead will continue to increase.

While it is true that the existing Transportation Goal 11 has mode choice goals, it can be easily seen that, even if the Comprehensive Plan successfully shifts mode choice away from single occupancy and car-pool travel, the currently projected increases in vehicle miles traveled can

easily overwhelm any greenhouse gas reductions that may result from a shift in mode choice. Even with the desired shifts in mode choice, increases in vehicle miles traveled could produce an ongoing increase in greenhouse gases. Shifts in mode choice are needed, but to succeed as a greenhouse gas reduction strategy, they must be done in partnership with quantified goals for reductions in vehicle miles traveled.

3. Describe why the proposed change meets the criteria adopted in Resolution 30662 for considering an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The criteria are listed at the end of this application form. Is a Comprehensive Plan amendment the best means for meeting the identified public need? What other options are there for meeting the identified public need?

Unless Goal EG-7's strong greenhouse gas reduction goals are to be meaningless, the Comprehensive Plan needs quantifiable goals for reduction in vehicle miles traveled as a central component in Seattle's effort to reduce its greenhouse gas reduction goals. One could, of course, hope that most automobiles would operate without internal combustion, but this is not a realistic near-term hope, as was recognized in the state legislative debate on H.B. 2815.

While quantified goals for reducing vehicle miles traveled were considered in the 2008 amendment process, they were proposed for the Environmental element. In a step that appears not to have been subject to the normal public review process for Comprehensive Plan amendments, the City Council instead revised Transportation Policy 17 by adding the words "and reduce greenhouse gas emissions" as a reason for having "programs and strategies aimed at reducing the number of car trips and miles driven". Staff analysis was not provided to the public to compare the relative merits of this proposal with the proposal for quantified VMT reductions. And unfortunately, the adopted change in Transportation Policy 17 did not place the Comprehensive Plan on a course toward quantified VMT reduction. It is now more than a year since the legislature and governor by law adopted quantified VMT reduction targets, and no jurisdiction more than Seattle should have similar targets of its own. Just as state law already has done, Seattle's Comprehensive Plan needs to include quantified goals for the reduction of vehicle miles traveled--and the state numbers are the right basis for the Comprehensive Plan's VMT reduction goals.

4. What do you anticipate will be the impacts caused by the change in text, including the geographic area affected and the issues presented? Why will the proposed change result in a net benefit to the community?

The proposed amendment will help turn around the current trend of increasing vehicle miles traveled that is Seattle's worst contribution to global warming. This result will benefit the globe as well as Seattle, plus it will produce greater trust that the City means what it says about wanting to reduce its carbon footprint.

5. How would the proposed change comply with the community vision statements, goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan? Please include any data, research, or reasoning that supports the proposed amendments.

This revision to Transportation Goal 11 will lend on-the ground meaning to the fine rhetoric of the Comprehensive Plan's Environment element, and it would reinforce the parts of the Transportation element that speak of not wanting to encourage more driving. EPA's estimate is that 27 percent of greenhouse gas emissions nationwide come from the transportation sector, and that this proportion is growing. The percentage contribution of the transportation sector is higher in the Northwest and especially the Puget Sound region because the contribution of the

electric power industry to greenhouse gas emissions is so much less here. The proportion of this region's greenhouse gas emissions attributable to the transportation sector is growing faster than for any other sector.

6. Is there public support for this proposed text amendment?

To great acclaim, the Governor and state legislature agreed on a similar measure (H.B. 2815) in 2008 in Olympia. People in Seattle will support this change in even greater numbers. Any serious effort to address Seattle's contribution to global warming must come to grips with its high and growing vehicle miles traveled, and the way to do so is to include quantified reduction goals in the Comprehensive Plan.