

City of Seattle
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION

Date: 5/15/10

Applicant: Chris Leman

Mailing Address: 2370 Yale Avenue East

City: Seattle *State:* WA *Zip:* 98102-3310 *Phone:* (206) 322-5463

Email: cleman@oo.net

Name of general area, location, or site that would be affected by this proposed change in text (attach additional sheets if necessary) Seattle as a whole, but also all other areas of the world, which in common are affected by changes in climate caused by increases in atmospheric carbon, to which Seattle is a significant contributor.

Applicant Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Leman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Date: 5/15/10

Attachment A

REQUIRED QUESTIONNAIRE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Please answer the following questions in text and attach them to the application. Supporting maps or graphics may be included. Please answer all questions separately and reference the question number in your answer. The Council will consider an application incomplete unless all the questions are answered. When proposing an amendment, you must show that a change to the Comprehensive Plan is required.

1. Provide a detailed description of the proposed amendment and a clear statement of what the proposed amendment is intended to accomplish. Include the name(s) of the Comprehensive Plan Element(s) (Land Use, Transportation, etc) you propose to amend.

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 at least eighteen percent by 2020, thirty percent by 2035, and fifty percent by 2050."

Explanation. By a 2005 estimate, there are four billion vehicle miles traveled each year in Seattle. Comprehensive Plan Goal EG-7 commits Seattle to reduce carbon dioxide and other climate-changing greenhouse gases 30 percent by 2024 and 80 percent by 2050; and Transportation Policy 17 directs the City to "provide, support and promote programs and strategies aimed at reducing the number of car trips and miles driven (for work and non-work purposes) to increase the efficiency of the transportation system, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions." Unfortunately, neither goal or policy contains numerical targets for reducing vehicle miles traveled, Seattle's largest and growing source of carbon emissions. The targets proposed here (eighteen percent by 2020, thirty percent by 2035, and fifty percent by 2050) are exactly the same reduction as in House Bill 2815 (Revised Code of Washington 47.01), which easily passed the Washington legislature and became law in June 2008. Seattle should "meet or beat" these statewide VMT reduction goals, and should include them in the Comprehensive Plan. Unlike previous proposals, this one states that Seattle will achieve "at least" the numerical reductions, leaving room for the City to do better than those goals.

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

Attachment A

As outlined above, the Comprehensive Plan has excellent rhetoric about reducing greenhouse gases, but any scenario for achieving this goal needs numerical targets for reducing vehicle miles traveled. 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.

Yes, there are hopes for making internal combustion engines more efficient, for more combustion engines to be combined with hybrid electric power, for natural gas and biofuels to replace gasoline and diesel, for vehicles to be powered by fuel cells and hydrogen, and for plug-in electric vehicles. But technology and the infrastructure will not move fast enough to reverse Seattle's increasing contribution to greenhouse gases from the growth in vehicle miles traveled.

Even as vehicles become available that do not emit greenhouse gases, the political pressures will be irresistible to allow the more carbon-emitting vehicles to continue to operate. Such has been the case with motor vehicle emissions controls. And City Light has estimated that if all motor vehicles in Seattle were electric, it would require (even aside from future increases in vehicles and VMT) a 35 percent increase in electricity demand. Supplying that increase, too, will increase atmospheric carbon. There is no substitute for Seattle reducing, not increasing, its 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 rhetoric, the Comprehensive Plan needs numerical goals for reduction in vehicle miles traveled as a central component in Seattle's effort to

Attachment A

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.

It is now more two years since the legislature and governor by law adopted numerical 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 numerical goals for the reduction of vehicle miles traveled--and the City should adopt numbers that are equal to or more aggressive than the state numbers.

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 (and especially those poor island and tropical nations that are completely blameless in the global increases in atmospheric carbon). It will also produce greater trust that the City means what it says about wanting to reduce its carbon footprint.

Some have claimed that the VMT reduction targets should be in the Transportation Strategic Plan rather than the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. But oversight of compliance with the Transportation Strategic Plan is notoriously lax, with none of the enforcement mechanisms available for the Comprehensive Plan. Only the Comprehensive Plan is governed by state law, with requirements for public notice and comment, and the opportunity to enforce it through the Growth Management hearings board and the courts.

If this amendment is not adopted, the climate-induced damage to people and nature throughout the world to which Seattle is contributing will only worsen. Failure to meet or beat the state's numerical goals for reduction of vehicle miles traveled amounts to "fiddling while Rome burns." Adopting this amendment will place Seattle on the right side of history.

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 amendments (i.e. have you conducted community meetings, etc.)? Note: The City will provide a public participation process, public notice, and environmental review for all applications.

To great acclaim, the Governor and state legislature agreed on a similar measure (H.B. 2815, RCW 47.01) 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 reverse and reduce its high and growing vehicle miles traveled, and the way to do so is to include numerical reduction goals in the Comprehensive Plan.