



# The Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) Update



*"Seattle is making smart transportation choices for a 21st century transportation network."*

*Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor of Seattle*



Get Seattle *moving*

 **SDOT**  
Seattle Department of Transportation





*Seattle Department of Transportation*

Grace Crunican, Director

Greg Nickels, Mayor

August 15, 2005

Dear Seattle Citizens:

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is pleased to present the 2005 update of the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP)--SDOT's 20-year work plan, describing the actions SDOT will take to accomplish the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan, and the Puget Sound Regional Council's Destination 2030 plan and in support of Mayor Nickels' four priorities for Seattle:

- 1. Get Seattle Moving:** Transportation will continue to be a paramount issue for our economy, the environment and the people who live in Seattle. In order for businesses to thrive, generating jobs and tax revenues, we must be able to move goods and people around the region efficiently. Building light rail, partnering with transit agencies and replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct are essential efforts to create a 21st century transportation network.
- 2. Keep Our Neighborhoods Safe:** Public safety is the paramount duty of the City. Our police and fire personnel are first rate and should be recognized as such. We need to give them the tools—training and equipment—to do these difficult jobs, insure accountability for actions taken, and insure we are the most prepared city in the United States for natural or man-made catastrophes. For transportation, this means ensuring transportation routes are available during a catastrophe and ensuring emergency access remains on our roads and bridges. It also means sidewalks where children can play and on-street bike lanes where bicyclists can get to work safely.
- 3. Create Jobs and Opportunity For All:** Economic opportunity means creating jobs and an environment that invites new investment in our City. Seattle's transportation system provides access so that people can get to jobs and goods can get to market.
- 4. Build Strong Families and Healthy Communities:** Healthy communities are the heart of a great city. Every part of this city is unique and vital to our growth and our ability to sustain what we love about living and working here. Our diverse cultures bring life, vitality and economic growth to Seattle. We must foster a renewed commitment to our neighborhoods. That means paying attention to the needs of each community and responding to those needs in a meaningful way. Our transportation system should enhance, not detract from the quality of our neighborhoods.

Since 1998, SDOT has used the original TSP to guide our work. Many of the 1998 TSP strategies have been accomplished. For example, Link Light Rail has broken ground, the University District's "The Ave" has been completely rebuilt, and the Flexcar car sharing program has more than 130 vehicles in 20 Seattle neighborhoods. Many TSP strategies are integral to SDOT work plans, and others have not been implemented due to lack of funding or changing priorities.

Thank you for your continued interest in transportation in Seattle. Additional copies of the TSP are available from SDOT, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 3800, Seattle WA 98124, at [www.seattle.gov/transportation/tsphome.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/tsphome.htm) or by calling 206-684-8542.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grace Crunican". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Grace Crunican, Director

Seattle Department of Transportation



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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
AWC	Association of Washington Cities
B	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Increasing Transportation Choices—Encourage Bicycling—It’s the easy healthy way to get around” element.
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
DPD	Department of Planning and Development
E	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Improving the Environment” element.
EMS	Environmental Management System
F	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Funding the Plan” element.
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GS	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Promoting the Economy—Moving Goods and Services” element.
HCT	High Capacity Transit
HOV	High Occupancy Vehicle
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
ICT	Intermediate Capacity Transit
OM	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Protect our Infrastructure” element.
P	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Increasing Transportation Choices—Price and Manage Parking Wisely” element.
R	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Connect to the Region” element.
RPZ	Residential Parking Zone
S	Strategy prefix for all Strategies in the “Making Best Use of Streets to Move People, Goods and Services” element.
SDOT	Seattle Department of Transportation
STN	Secondary Transit Network
SOV	Single Occupancy Vehicles
T	Comprehensive Plan Policy prefix used in the “Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies” section of each plan element
TR	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Increasing Transportation Choices—Make Transit a Real Choice” element.
TDM	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Increasing Transportation Choices—Demand Management” element. Abbreviation for Transportation Demand Management.
TG	Comprehensive Plan Goal
The Plan	City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2004
TMP	Transportation Management Programs
TSP	Transportation Strategic Plan
UVTN	Urban Village Transit Network
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
W	Strategy prefix for all strategies in the “Increasing Transportation Choices—Encourage Walking—It’s the easy healthy way to get around” element.



## Chapter 1.0: Introduction

*"Seattle residents have a clear vision for the future of this city. We want vibrant neighborhoods where we can conveniently shop, live, and be part of a community. We want a healthy environment with clean air and water; and we want a strong, secure economy. These goals are outlined in the City's Comprehensive Plan.... The Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) will be the City's guide for managing Seattle's transportation system. It outlines the...strategies and actions required to achieve the transportation goals in the Comprehensive Plan. It maps out the policies and investments required to achieve a healthy, efficient transportation system."— 1998 TSP*

The Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) is the 20-year functional work plan for the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). The TSP describes the actions SDOT will take to accomplish the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan over the next twenty years. In the intervening years since the 1998 TSP, Seattle has seen much change and growth. Many of the 1998 TSP strategies have been accomplished—Link Light Rail has broken ground, the U-Districts' "The Ave" has been completely rebuilt, and with the success of Flexcar, Seattle's car sharing program has 130 vehicles in 20 Seattle neighborhoods. Some of the 1998 TSP strategies are ongoing efforts that have become integral parts of City work plans and others have not been implemented due to lack of funding or changing priorities. To report on our progress, SDOT prepares a TSP Annual Report that catalogs accomplishments for the year.

With the Comprehensive Plan, the City continues the commitment to the land use strategy of building urban villages. The vision for urban villages, to concentrate growth in a series of compact and walkable neighborhoods, is renewed in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan update.

The TSP helps to define the transportation-related components of the Mayor's priorities, to address key transportation issues raised by the City Council about the long-term and day-to-day operations of Seattle's transportation system, and to instigate change within the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). Please note that the TSP and the Seattle Transit Plan are intended solely as planning documents and do not modify the Comprehensive Plan in anyway whatsoever.

### 1.1 Consistency with Regional and Local Planning Efforts

Seattle's TSP fits within a broader planning context both locally and in the region. TSP strategies must be consistent with the direction of both the City's Comprehensive Plan as well as the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Destination 2030 plan. Each of these planning documents serve different yet related functions as described in Figure 1: Planning Context.

### 1.2 Bringing Together SDOT's Resources

The TSP will address SDOT's new departmental emphasis by defining both day-to-day operational and long-term transportation strategies and the projects, programs and services to implement them (see Figure 2: The TSP --Bringing Together SDOT's Resources).



The Ave Gets Rebuilt

The TSP will have the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element as its foundation to ensure that projects and programs implement citywide transportation goals and policies. Creating a useful transportation plan for an operations-focused department such as SDOT is both vital and a challenge. The updated TSP will serve a number of functions for SDOT:

**Planning and Programming:** As a programming resource, the TSP strategies help prioritize resources and leverage project investments to meet multiple goals for the SDOT and the community. The TSP describes the projects, programs and services that will be implemented through SDOT’s capital budget and the operations and maintenance budget over the next 20 years.

**Project Development:** To develop future projects and programs, the TSP will be a central resource for planning tools, as well as transportation-related data that are critical to sound decision-making. Data resources include Seattle’s street classifications, planning areas (e.g., urban village boundaries), traffic volumes, construction activity, transit routes, sidewalk inventories, etc.

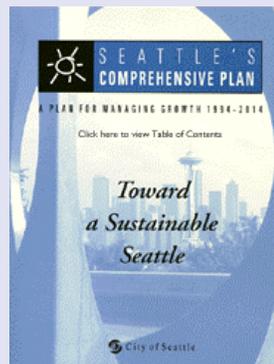
**Performance and Communication:** Defining SDOT’s performance goals and then reporting on progress through an annual TSP report will help SDOT communicate

**Figure 1: Planning Context**

**PSRC Destination 2030**

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

- Outlines region-wide goals, policies and actions.
- Anticipates more than we do today to increase mobility.
- Jurisdictions implement through local action.



**Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan**

CITYWIDE GOALS AND POLICIES

- Establishes Urban Village Strategy through Plan goals and policies.
- Sets direction for Seattle’s 20 year land use, transportation, community, environment, and economic development activities.

**Transportation Strategic Plan**

SDOT’S FUNCTIONAL PLAN

- Establishes SDOT’s near- and long-term work program.
- An operational plan for SDOT that defines the strategies, projects and programs to accomplish the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for transportation.
- Includes SDOT’s financial plan and defines process for determining funding priorities.



success towards these goals. The TSP will assist other City staff, elected officials, our partner agencies and the public comprehend our transportation system, funding realities, and the steps SDOT takes to manage the system as effectively as possible.

The TSP will serve all of these functions by bringing together the resources needed for transportation planning, project development and funding. Many of these resources, such as Seattle’s street classification maps and definitions, currently exist but are not readily available. Once combined, these resources make it easier for SDOT and the community to see the full picture of Seattle’s transportation system.

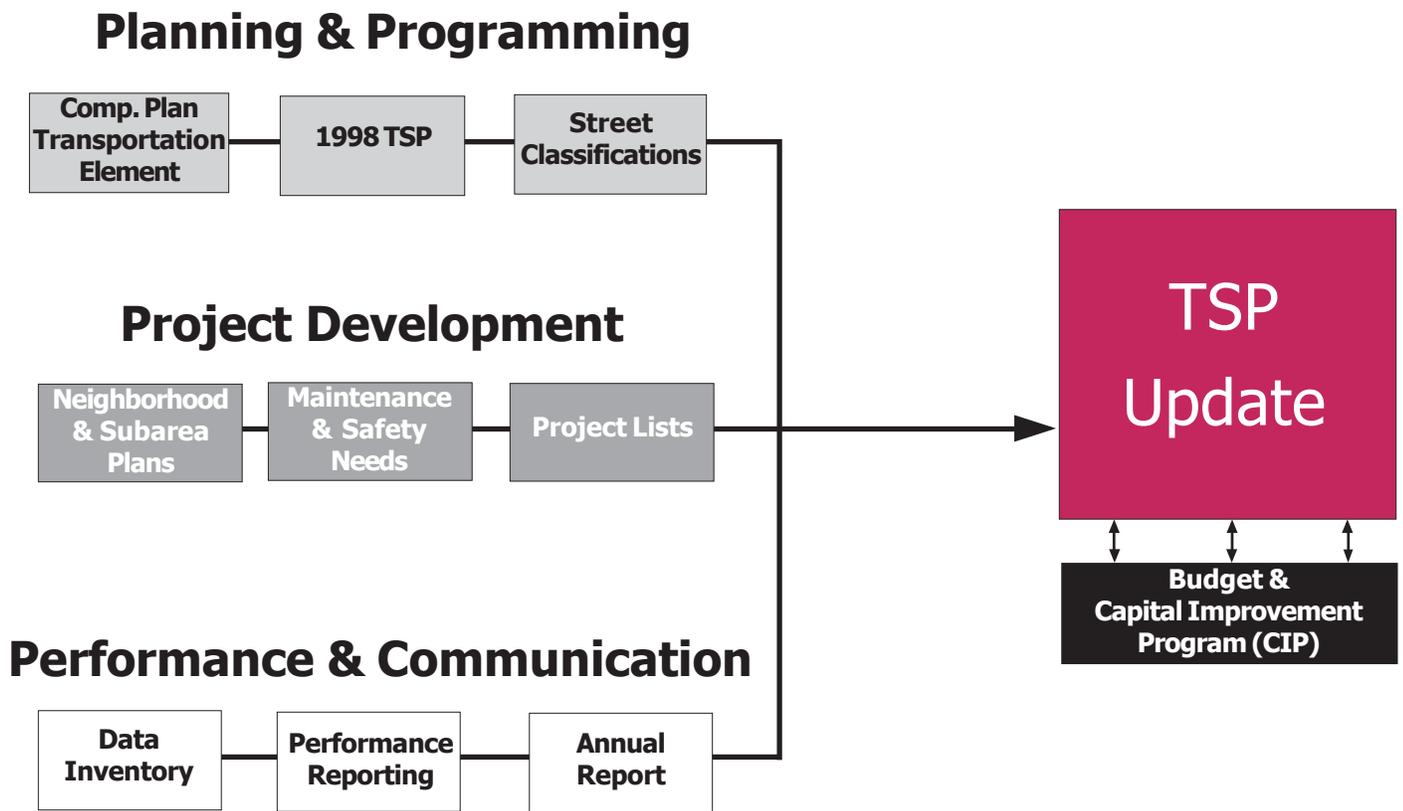
**1.3 Key Themes for the TSP**

During the TSP process, several recurring themes emerged. These themes, detailed below, are: improve safety; preserve and maintain transportation infrastructure; support the urban village land use strategy, and; provide mobility and access through transportation choices. The TSP establishes a framework for decision-making that balances each of these key themes:

**Improve Safety**

Promoting public health and safety is the fundamental purpose for government at all levels. SDOT’s role as manager of Seattle’s transportation system is to operate and maintain this system to support public health and safety.

**Figure 2: The TSP: Bringing Together SDOT’s Resources**



Other City departments work collaboratively with SDOT in these efforts. For example, the Police and Fire Departments are partners on enforcement of traffic laws, promotion of pedestrian and bicycle safety, and attention to street design standards to ensure that emergency vehicles have adequate access throughout the city. City Light and Seattle Public Utilities also work collaboratively with SDOT so that utility and transportation services and facilities are as mutually supportive as possible. For SDOT, managing the transportation system to promote safety is a high priority. In order to serve all users of the public rights-of-way, SDOT considers safety at all phases of a transportation project. Some safety issues that we keep in balance are reducing friction among modes, reducing conflicts and minimizing the consequences in case collisions do occur. Other safety priorities include seismic upgrades of bridges and other structures.

**Preserve and Maintain Transportation Infrastructure**

SDOT’s mission is to preserve the existing transportation infrastructure and use it to its fullest capabilities. Wise operation and maintenance of the transportation system promotes safety, efficiency, infrastructure preservation, and a high quality environment. Maintenance expenditures account for 75% to 80% of SDOT’s annual operating budget. This investment represents a very significant and recurring commitment to the conservation of the City’s transportation facilities, as dollars spent on maintenance today help ensure that many more dollars are not needed for premature replacement later.

Over the last two decades, even this level of investment in maintenance has not kept pace with the growing needs of aging infrastructure. Over the last two decades, as dedicated transportation funding has declined, the City has increased the share of other City resources dedicated to maintenance of our transportation system. Even this investment, however, has not been able to keep pace.

The results have been an increasing backlog of deferred maintenance and difficult choices between the requirement to maintain the existing system and the equally pressing obligation to develop new and better facilities to meet emerging demands. The City is steadfastly committed to exploring every avenue to develop new and sustainable revenue sources that would allow the City to improve upon maintenance and operations, utilize innovations in technology and best environmental practices, and expand the system to meet future demands.

### **Support the Urban Village Land Use Strategy**

The strong relationship between land development patterns and transportation is recognized by the Comprehensive Plan with policies that focus growth in urban villages and direct transit investments to linking these pedestrian-oriented activity centers. SDOT will continue to support the urban village land use strategy by planning for, and investing in infrastructure in urban villages, to enhance neighborhood livability.

Urban villages are mixed-use, walkable, transit and bike-friendly neighborhoods that are best served by travel modes other than single-occupant vehicles. The urban village strategy is appropriate in Seattle, given our geographic limitations, dense land uses and urban form which limits our ability to increase capacity for vehicular traffic. Outside of urban centers and villages, the City will also strive to align transportation facilities and services to support adjacent land uses.

### **Provide Mobility and Access through Transportation Choices**

Most people will not routinely use alternatives to driving alone unless they have viable choices that provide advantages in terms of travel time, cost, reliability, and convenience. A balanced, well-designed transportation system that allows people to get around by transit, bicycle, and walking is critical to making livable communities. Making all transportation modes efficient and effective choices for travel is also important for people who cannot or choose not to drive, including people with disabilities.

## **1.4 Transportation Principles**

The themes of safety, preservation and maintenance of infrastructure, supporting urban villages and mobility and access apply to all transportation modes. The TSP also establishes a set of transportation principles that provide a statement of intent for each individual mode or implementation element. In addition to setting direction, the transportation principles below, and on the next page, help organize the sections of the

Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, as well as the chapters of the TSP. The TSP Transportation Principles are as follows:

#### **Make the best use of the streets we have to move people, goods and services.**

Seattle's street system is largely complete, and the opportunity to add new links is limited. We need to make the best use of existing rights-of-way to move people, goods and services.

#### **Increase transportation choices.**

Cars will continue to be an important part of Seattle's transportation system. While recognizing that some trips will be made by car, lessen the dependence on the car for all trips. Strive for a more balanced transportation system by giving people viable alternatives to driving alone, including transit, bicycling and walking.



A street being chip-sealed. SDOT uses chip-sealing, a low cost and highly effective surface treatment, to preserve and maintain many of Seattle's non-arterial streets.

**Make transit a real choice.**

Make transit a fast, reliable, safe and convenient choice. Connect transit systems to each other and to other modes—such as biking and walking—to increase the usefulness of the whole transportation system for Seattle and the region.

**Encourage walking and biking—they’re the easy, healthy way to get around.**

Construct transportation improvements that make bicycling and walking safe, attractive, easy, and convenient forms of transportation and recreation for people of all ages and abilities.

**Price and manage parking wisely.**

Price and manage parking to support healthy business districts and transit use. Manage curb space to recognize the importance of principle arterials in moving people, goods and services.

**Promote the economy by moving freight and goods.**

Support local and regional economic vitality by moving freight and goods efficiently to, from, and through the city. Support policies and actions that improve freight access.

**Improve our environment.**

Incorporate environmental considerations into every decision to affect a positive change in the environment, Seattle’s neighborhoods, and public health.

**Connect to the region.**

Build a multi-modal transportation system to serve the city and connect to the region. Work with partners to ensure that Seattle’s regional interests are met and that the regional transportation system supports smart growth.

**Protect our infrastructure.**

Get the best return on taxpayers’ transportation dollars already invested by maintaining Seattle’s infrastructure and keep it operating safely, smoothly and in good repair.

**Make the most of transportation investments.**

Leverage investments, both public and private, used in transportation projects to get the best return on taxpayer transportation dollars.

**1.5 Funding the Transportation System**

Operations and maintenance needs could absorb all of the City’s transportation funding and more. While taking care of the existing system is a very high priority, there is also a tremendous demand for improvements. The City must address safety and mobility challenges and take advantage of opportunities to leverage funding, increase efficiency, and promote economic development. SDOT must also make geographic equity a key criterion in determining the projects, programs and services that are funded. The TSP outlines what the City strives to accomplish, not what the department can currently afford. In fact, only a small number of the projects, programs and services described in the TSP are currently funded.

The Funding Chapter discusses funding opportunities and challenges and describes how projects, programs and services are prioritized for funding. The appendices include information on funded projects and programs, as well as projects and programs for which SDOT will be seeking funding in the future. This approach allows SDOT to define a long range plan to preserve, maintain and improve Seattle’s transportation system given financial constraints. Managing our transportation assets in a fiscally responsible way ensures that transportation dollars are available for a wide range of transportation solutions. These



The University Bridge, constructed in 1919, carries over 30,000 vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians annually on average.

solutions include non-capital strategies (such as reducing travel demand), efficient use of resources, and cost-effective partnerships with other agencies.

The TSP helps SDOT leverage efforts to achieve the maximum benefits for the transportation system using available resources. It is, and will continue to be, SDOT's practice to shape ongoing operations, maintenance and safety-related projects to best address the long-term vision set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

## 1.6 Navigating the TSP

The TSP is divided into the following chapters:

**Chapter 1.0: Introduction** defines the goals of the TSP, the key themes that guide SDOT's work as well as a set of Transportation Principles that provide a statement of intent and set the stage for the strategies, projects, programs and services described in later chapters.

**Chapter 2.0: State of the Seattle's Transportation System** describes key transportation facts, figures and data resources as existing conditions used in analysis and decision-making at SDOT and by Seattle citizens and elected officials.

**Chapter 3.0: Plan Elements** includes the twelve plan elements. Each of these elements is organized as follows:

*Discussion*--A brief discussion about the element, consistent with the discussion section in the Comprehensive Plan.

*Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies*--Each modal plan element takes direction from the goals and policies adopted in the related section of the City's 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update. The goals and policies provide guidance and strategic direction for the more specific TSP strategies, projects and programs.

*TSP Strategies*--The TSP strategies are more specific than the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, but are not refined to the level of specific projects, programs or services. Many of the strategies are long term efforts and are being developed as projects or programs. Others have specific performance measures that are indicated in Chapter 5: Performance Reporting.

**Chapter 4.0: Funding Chapter** describes the local, regional, state and federal context for transportation funding, as well as the near- and long-term strategies for funding components of this plan.

**Chapter 5.0: Performance Reporting** describes SDOT's performance reporting processes.

**Appendix A: Projects and Programs that Support TSP Strategies** This Appendix describes the specific projects and programs that comprise SDOT's near-term work program and long-range plan. The projects and programs envisioned for near-term implementation (1-6 years) will have a higher level of specificity regarding timing and funding than those after year six. There are some new projects and programs, as well as those that are currently underway within existing strategic planning efforts such as the Freight Mobility Action Plan, the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Master Plan or the Seattle Parking Management Study.

A number of companion documents are available on the SDOT TSP website that provide additional details about some of the strategies in this plan. These documents include:

- Seattle's Street Classifications Descriptions and Update Process
- The Seattle Transit Plan
- The Freight Mobility Action Plan

- Sub Area Transportation Plans such as the University Area Transportation Study (UATS), and the South Ballard Corridor Study. Other sub area transportation plans will be added to this site as they are completed.

In addition to these documents, the TSP website also includes TSP and SDOT Annual Reports. The website can be accessed at [www.seattle.gov/transportation/tsphome.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/tsphome.htm).

## **1.7 Evaluation and Update Process**

Periodic reporting of progress in implementing the TSP provides a way for the public to verify that the plan is being implemented. Without a tracking system, plans can be left on the shelf and eventually forgotten. SDOT will strive to do a major update of this plan every five years to be adopted by City Council resolution. Consistent with the 1998 TSP, SDOT will issue an annual report that describes progress towards implementation as well as any changes proposed to the contents of the plan.

A progress report will summarize the strategies that have been implemented, results of evaluations, and performance reporting. It may also include recommendations for changes to specific strategies. Any modifications to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies will necessitate revision to sections of the TSP. These changes will be documented annually through the TSP Annual report and then completed during the five year update. The most current version of the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies should be accessed on-line. A link to the Comprehensive Plan website is available on the TSP website.