

TRANSPORTATION CONVERSATIONS

PERSPECTIVES ON KIRKLAND'S TRANSPORTATION POLICY



Move People

Be
Sustainable

Be an active
partner

Link to Land
Use



City of Kirkland Transportation Commission

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INTRODUCTION

This document began as a tool to organize thinking around Kirkland's transportation policy. Kirkland is making progress in many areas of transportation, but principles underlying the different programs have not been enunciated. The Transportation Commission felt that the alignment illustrated in Figure 1 was missing --Kirkland's transportation vision wasn't clear and funding, project priorities and programs didn't flow logically. Securing agreement on principles that guide decision making is an important factor in achieving alignment of these elements. At a retreat in the spring of 2009, the Commission first developed these four principles.

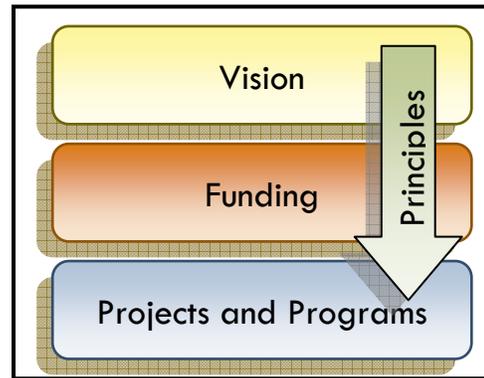


Figure 1 Consistent principles help align Vision, Funding and Projects and Programs

- Move People
- Be Sustainable
- Create Partnerships
- Link to land use

Often, the Transportation Commission is asked to recommend positions on issues for the City Council. Using the principles as a guide will help to give the Commission a uniform way of considering issues, and will also help ensure that the Commission's recommendations are grounded in principles that are supported by the Council and the Community. As the City's Comprehensive Plan undergoes a major update in 2011, revisions to the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan should rest on a foundation of the principles. One example of how the Commission has used the principles previously is shown in Figure 2.

| Principle → Concept ↓ | Move people | Sustainable | Partnership | Link to land use |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Maintain routes that perform well in one or more standard measures | Limits the amount of coverage but moves the most people per hour of bus service | Fewer higher frequency routes are cheaper and higher performance. | Serve all subareas, but don't be bound by formulas. | |
| Serve all subareas, but don't be bound by formulas in reductions and adds. | Formulas don't necessarily support this principle | | Strict formulas lead to turf wars. | Formulas don't maximize this link. |
| Focus most on all day routes with a few high performing peak routes. | All day routes are necessary for true mobility | Peak hour routes cost more in general and can encourage short car trips to park and rides | | All day routes support multi-use development |

Figure 2 Transportation principles are used to help evaluate policy choices. This table is an example of how the Commission used the principles to consider alternatives for Metro service cuts. The matrix entries show how the concept is or is not supported by a principle.

During the first months of 2010, the Commission will be discussing the principles with the Community. Based on those discussions, the principles will be refined and then be applied to three important transportation issues. Specific recommendations for each issue, developed by the Commission, and based on the principles will be presented. These recommendations will be in the form of work items for the Commission or policy goals to be adopted by City Council. The Commission plans to develop the recommendations in early 2010 and publish a revised document that combines both the principles and the recommendations.

THE PRINCIPLES

MOVE PEOPLE

SUPPORT A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, AND RELATED GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ACTIONS, THAT PROMOTES ALL FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION.

In the past, Kirkland’s transportation system has focused on moving cars. The principle of Moving People requires development of facilities and programs that support not only cars but travel by bicycle, transit and walking to move people where they want to go. The movement of people includes people who are moving in support of commerce, moving goods, freight and providing services. Moving cars has been the organizing concept for transportation during the past 70 years, but today people are seeking alternatives.



Figure 3 Juanita Drive is a complete street, with facilities for bicycles, pedestrians and cars.

Instead of considering how people can move around Kirkland, the city’s transportation policy decisions have been based mainly on how autos will fare. The level of service standards in our Comprehensive Plan that require transportation projects to be built consider only automobiles. Fees paid by developers to mitigate the transportation impacts of their developments can be spent only on projects that provide capacity for cars. Capital project spending is not currently balanced across modes; only a small fraction directly benefits cyclists and pedestrians.

Except for a few missing segments, Kirkland’s street system is fully developed for auto travel. In order to have a complete transportation system however, the street system has to be complemented by additional facilities for bicycles and more sidewalks. Improvements that allow buses to have increased speed and on-time performance are also needed.

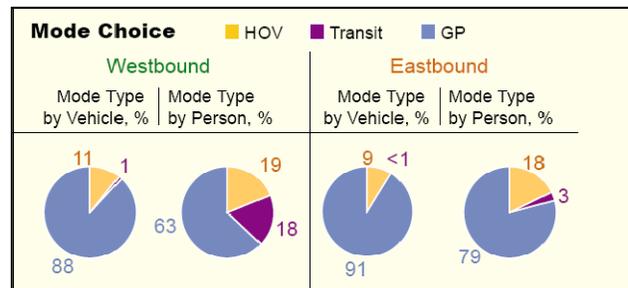


Figure 4 Mode split by vehicle trips and person trips, SR 520 bridge, AM period. In the westbound direction, transit carries 18% of the person trips in 1% of the vehicles. Source: WSDOT

BE SUSTAINABLE

SUPPORT A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT CAN BE SUSTAINED OVER THE NEXT 50 YEARS. ACT TO ASSURE THAT THE EXISTING AND FUTURE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM:

- **WILL BE IMPLEMENTED, OPERATED AND MAINTAINED OVER THE LONG-TERM USING REASONABLY ASSURED REVENUE SOURCES.**
- **WILL BE DESIGNED TO MOVE THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE SYSTEM TOWARD ZERO.**

If the transportation system is sustainable, its condition is stable or improving over time. Kirkland faces challenges in each sustainability area. Because approximately 50% of greenhouse gasses are transportation related, (Figure 5) it will be impossible to meet the Council's adopted climate change goals without changing the way we travel. Fiscally, even if all the current capital budget were spent on pavement preservation, it's likely that current maintenance standards could not be met. This is without funding the construction of other types of projects, like development of ITS and preservation of other transportation infrastructure. New funding methods must be developed and projects must be carefully prioritized in new ways.

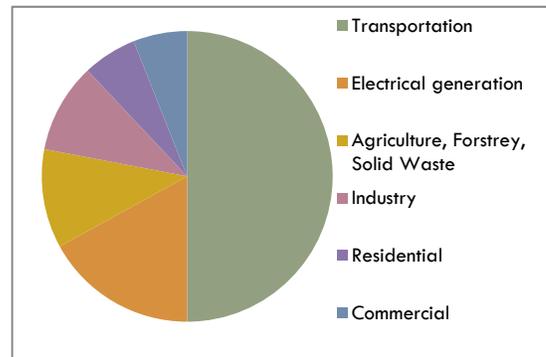


Figure 5 Relative contributions of various sources to greenhouse gas emissions, 2002. Source: Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.

BE AN ACTIVE PARTNER

ACTIVELY BUILD AND MAINTAIN PARTNERSHIPS LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY, TO FURTHER OUR TRANSPORTATION GOALS.

A shared vision is vital to accomplishing transportation goals and leveraging resources. Partnerships must be created locally –between neighborhoods, businesses and others; as well as regionally –among Kirkland, other cities and transportation agencies like Metro, Sound Transit and WSDOT.

In order to be successful, a renewed vision for transportation policy has to have support from stakeholders. At the same time, once agreement on a course of action is achieved, implementation must follow. The City of Kirkland has a sterling reputation for involving local stakeholders in decision making. However, too many times in the past plans have been adopted only to unravel during implementation when criticism from a few undermines previous resolve. Recent struggles around downtown land use decisions exemplify this problem. Traffic doesn't stop at city borders. Cars, busses, bicycles and pedestrians all travel within and between cities.

Kirkland is bisected by I-405, which is the responsibility of the Washington State Department of Transportation. Transit service is provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit both of which are governed by separate boards. Regional policy determines, to a large extent, the minimum number of trips that Kirkland must plan for. For all these reasons, working with other agencies is a requirement for achieving Kirkland's transportation goals. Kirkland must be proactive in its work with regional partners. Kirkland should come to other partners with a strong sense of our needs rather than reacting to what is offered by others.

LINK TO LAND USE

ENSURE CONSISTENCY BETWEEN LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION.

Transportation networks are often designed to support certain land use patterns. At the same time, transportation facilities can alter and influence land use patterns. Land use and transportation plans must be developed with consideration of effects each has on the other.

The interchange at I-405 and NE 124th Street has been reconstructed several times since it was first built. In 1936 (see Figure 6) the area was rural. A modest interchange supported the semi-rural land of the mid 1960's. However, the fact that there was an interchange at all presented an opportunity to intensify the land use. As the land use changes increased, more capacity was added to the interchange which in turn supported more land use growth.

System performance is a result of land use and transportation (Figure 7). The intersection of land use and



Figure 6 The I-405 NE 124th Street area 1936 (left) and 2007 (right). Land use and transportation changes combined to transform the area. Source: King County

transportation network takes place most fundamentally in Kirkland's Comprehensive Plan where the Land Use and Transportation Plans reside. Discussions about the implications of land use and transportation often take place during development review where the impacts of development are quantified and mitigations are proposed.



Figure 7 Transportation system performance is as much a function of land use as it is of facilities and programs.

ISSUES

The Commission has chosen three issues to examine in more detail in a future version of this report. These issues are relevant, timely and offer opportunities for progress. Taken together, they span Kirkland’s transportation spectrum and touch the life of every Kirkland citizen. Each issue will be examined in the context of the principles identified above.

Development Review. New developments cause impacts on the transportation system. Development review is the process by which city staff reviews those impacts and prescribes mitigating measures. Elements of development review include Transportation Impact Analysis, concurrency, SEPA¹ and impact fees. In 2008, the Commission proposed several ideas for improvements to concurrency but was not able to achieve adequate consensus to move forward. Several other aspects of development review are in need of improvement. Development review has important influences on both project funding and land use decisions.

Funding. Project funding and prioritization has not been comprehensively looked at for 10 years. Ensuring the adequacy of capital funding and its proper allocation is the most important challenge facing Kirkland’s transportation system.

Pollution, climate change and public health. Increasing attention is being paid to the role of transportation in climate change and in public health issues such as obesity. Automobiles are important contributors to air and water pollution. Kirkland has not yet comprehensively examined this relationship.

The following table shows how the three issues fit within the framework of the principles

TABLE 1 ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES

| Issue → Principle ↓ | | Development Review | Funding | Climate change/public health/pollution |
|----------------------------|-------------|--|---|--|
| Move People | | Analysis and mitigation currently focus on moving motor vehicles. | Clear funding levels and priorities have not been identified across the entire range of modal projects. | How people move will have determine impacts on climate change, health and pollution. |
| Be Sustainable | fiscal | Funds to construct projects to meet concurrency account use up a large portion of the capital budget. | Shift funds to meet sustainability goals. | Fiscal sustainability will require changing pricing mechanisms to align with this issue. |
| | environment | Environmental aspects of transportation are not currently addressed. | Choices of funding mechanism can impact vehicle miles of travel and green house gas production. | Environmental sustainability is directly impacted through this issue. |
| Create Partnerships | | Changing development review practices requires acceptance from a number of internal and external stakeholders. | Funding priorities will require agreement from many groups | These issues have the potential to be polarizing. Significant changes require state and regional partners. |
| Link to Land Use | | Development review is intended to directly relate land use choices and transportation facilities. | Determine development’s fair share of funding. | The combination of land use and transportation choices are central to working on these issues. |

In a future version of this document, the issues will be discussed further and recommendations will be developed for each issue, based on the principles. These recommendations will likely take the form of recommendations for the Commission’s work plan or policy objectives for the City Council to consider.

¹ SEPA State Environmental Protection Act

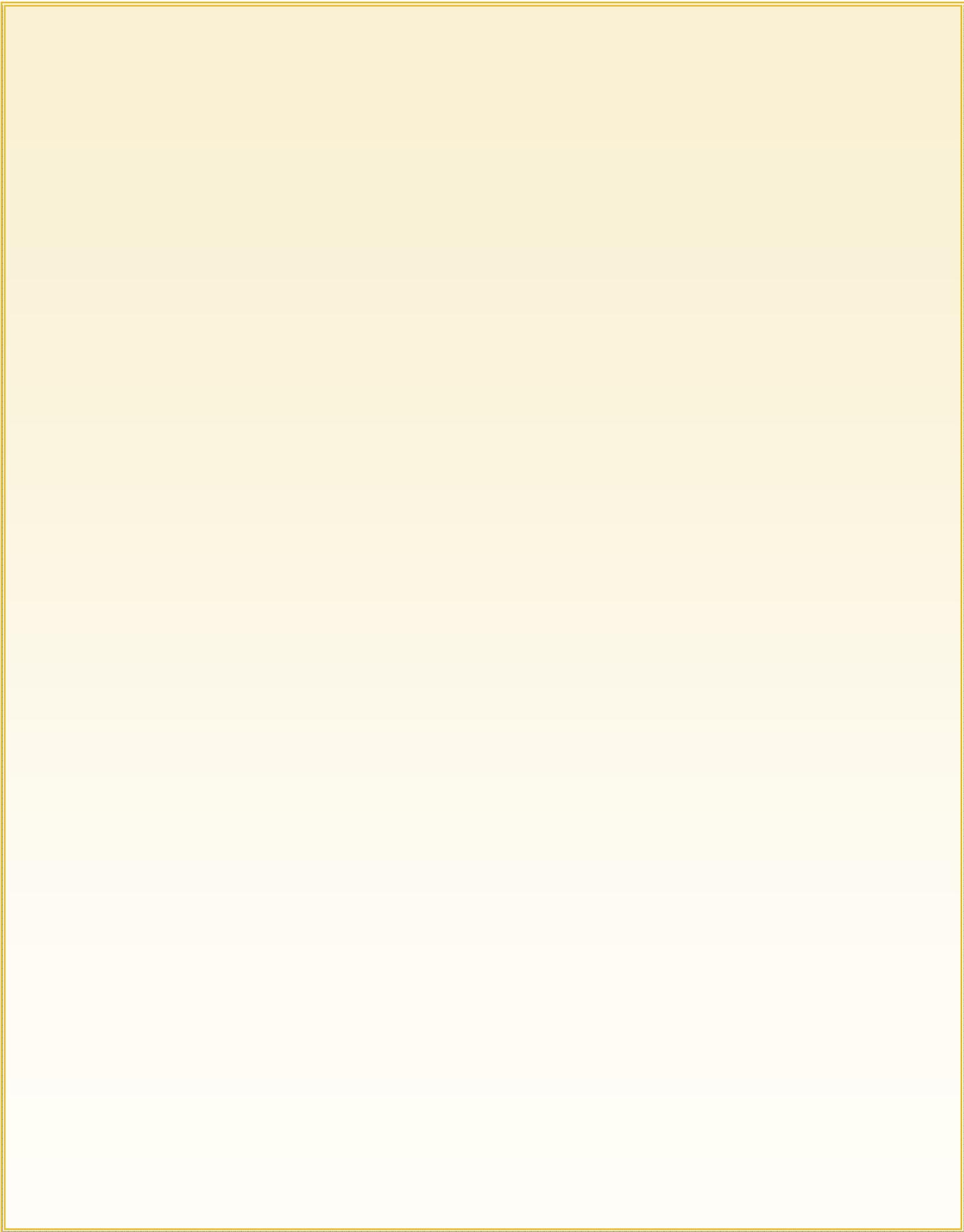
CONCLUSIONS

Every community needs principles to organize its transportation policy making. This report proposes four principles tailored to Kirkland's needs

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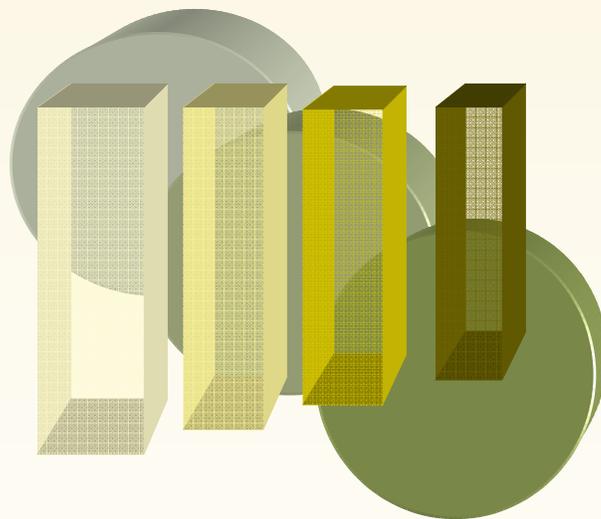
These principles provide a helpful lens for examining transportation issues facing Kirkland. Further, incorporating these principles into the Comprehensive Plan will give a consistent basis with which to view transportation decisions in the future.

In the next iteration of this document, three issues will be looked at in the context of the principles to illustrate how the principles can be brought to bear on existing problems to generate meaningful and coordinated recommendations. It is the goal of the Transportation Commission to incorporate the recommendations into its work plan in order to bring forth changes in the way Kirkland plans, designs, constructs, operates and maintains its transportation projects and programs.



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