

# TRANSPORTATION CONVERSATIONS

PERSPECTIVES ON KIRKLAND'S TRANSPORTATION POLICY



Move  
People

Be  
Sustainable

Create  
Partnerships

Link to  
Land use



City of Kirkland Transportation Commission

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## PREFACE

This document began as a tool to organize Kirkland's transportation issues. Kirkland is making progress in many areas of transportation, but principles underlying the different programs had not been enunciated. At a retreat in the spring of 2009, the Commission first developed the four principles described in this document. The concept of alignment resonated with the Commission as work on the document proceeded. We felt that the alignment illustrated below was missing. Kirkland's transportation vision wasn't clear and funding and project priorities didn't flow logically.

Clear definition of the principles and applying them to three important transportation areas gave us a structure for the document and suggested ways of restoring alignment.

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.

Cities and their surrounding regions are the social, cultural, and economic drivers of human civilization. Of especial importance is the design and composition of transportation networks, which not only enable the movement of people and goods within and between cities and regions, but which provide the physical foundation on which human settlements are based.

[www.cnu.org/transportation2009](http://www.cnu.org/transportation2009)

## INTRODUCTION

The Transportation Commission prepared this report for two major reasons. The first reason is to establish principles by which transportation policy can be made. The second reason is to provide recommendations on three areas of transportation that have particular importance.

In the first part of the document four key principles are described. These principles form the basis for the Commission's decision making and therefore recommendations for changes to policy should be supported by these principles. The principles are:

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

One example of how the Commission has used the principles previously is shown in Figure 1 below. It compares the principles with policy choices for cutting Metro service. Throughout this report, evaluations are made between Commission recommendations and the principles.

After an amplification of the principles, three major transportation issues are discussed.

- Development Review
- Transportation Funding
- Climate change and health

The culmination of each discussion is recommendations for action. There are many transportation issues facing Kirkland. These three areas were chosen because they are difficult, because the Commission felt improvement could be made and because they are broad in scope. For each issue, background is given then the Commission's major concerns are described. Concluding each discussion is a set of recommendations. The principles are used as a backdrop for analyzing those recommendations. For reference, the recommendations are grouped at the end of the report in outline form

## Service concepts v Commission principles

Principle → Concept ↓	Move people Integrated system that provides reasonable alternatives	Sustainable Environment, Fiscal, performance, maintenance	Partnership Not us v. them, leverage	Link to land use
Routes that perform well in one or more standard measures of effectiveness peak, off peak and night.	Limits the amount of coverage but moves the most people per hour of bus service	Fewer higher frequency routes are cheaper and higher performance. Riders per platform hour is an important measure.	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. Fewer routes, higher frequencies	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
Serve transit supportive land use. Dense, multi use, pay or limited parking.	Opportunity to move more people where this land use exists	These land types are more sustainable		Transit most efficiently serves certain land uses. These tend to be places where cars are less efficient
As routes are cut, restructure for a more efficient system	Try to make existing routes more efficient.			
Fund Transit Now elements such as BRT where money can be leveraged. Don't fund partnerships where ridership will be low.	BRT supports other principles. Case could be made for 255 being branded as BRT in the future.	Funding partnerships on routes with low ridership costs Metro hours that could be better spent elsewhere.	BRT can leverage federal capital dollars.	BRT supports high density land use.

Figure 1 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 PRINCIPLES

### MOVE PEOPLE

*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. Moving cars has been the organizing concept for transportation during the past 70 years, but today people are seeking alternatives.*

Instead of considering how people can move around Kirkland, transportation policy decisions are 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.

<photo of Kirkland complete street> <Chart showing person volume and vehicle volume across the 520 bridge>

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.

### BE SUSTAINABLE

*If the transportation system is sustainable, it's condition is stable or improving over time. Four areas of sustainability have been identified, fiscal, preservation and maintenance, environmental and performance. The ideal transportation system has:*

*A financing program that does not forecast a deficit*

*Preservation and maintenance programs that keep existing facilities from degrading*

*No negative impacts on water, air or climate*

*Stable or improving operational performance. <Is this what the Commission meant when they identified "performance" as an area of sustainability?>*

Kirkland faces challenges in each sustainability area. Because approximately 50% of greenhouse gasses are transportation related, 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 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. There is currently no regular, unified reporting of performance measures across the system.

## CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

*Durable agreements and shared vision are vital to accomplishing goals and leveraging resources. The current lack of shared transportation vision is a major stumbling block to making meaningful change. Partnerships must be created locally –between neighborhoods, businesses and others; as well as regionally –between Kirkland, other cities and transportation agencies like 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.

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. In order to be effective, bicycle facilities must be continuous across city boundaries. For all these reasons, working with other agencies is a requirement for achieving Kirkland's transportation goals.

## LINK TO LAND USE

*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 cannot be developed without 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. A modest interchange supported the semi-rural land of the mid 60'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. This can be seen as a small example of how performance of the transportation system depends on land use as much as transportation facilities and programs.

System performance might be good in a neighborhood of dense, mixed use development with complete sidewalks, pay parking and frequent transit service even if street capacity for cars is limited. On the other hand, the same amount of retail, residential and office space, segregated by use and spread out over a greater area with large amounts of surface parking needs a network of wide streets for good performance. Either concept can be successful, considering only performance, but matching the transportation infrastructure to the amount and distribution of land use is required.



Figure 2 Transportation system performance is as much a function of land use as it is of facilities and programs.

## ISSUES

The next sections of this report examine three large issues in the context of the principles identified above. 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.

**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, SEPA<sup>1</sup> 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 aspects of development review are still 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.

**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. Kirkland has not yet comprehensively examined this relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> SEPA State Environmental Protection Act

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

TABLE 1 ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES

Issue → Transportation Principle ↓		Development Review	Funding	Climate change/public health/pollution
<b>Move People</b>		Analysis and mitigation currently focuses on moving motor vehicles	Clear funding levels and priorities have not been identified across the entire range of projects	Moving
<b>Be Sustainable</b>	fiscal	Funds to construct projects to meet concurrency account for a large portion of the capital budget.	Fiscal sustainability is directly impacted through this issue	
	environment			Environmental sustainability is directly impacted through this issue.
	performance		Current combination of funding levels and performance expectations are not fiscally sustainable.	Performance standards that require
	pres & mntn	Access by means other than cars is needed to address these issues	New funding sources are needed to support existing facilities.	
<b>Create Partnerships</b>		Changing development review practices requires acceptance from a number of stakeholders.	Funding priorities will require agreement from many groups	These issues have the potential to be polarizing. Significant changes require state and regional partners.
<b>Link to Land Use</b>		Development review is intended to directly relate land use choices and transportation facilities.		The combination of land use and transportation choices are central to working on these issues.

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

### Background

Development review includes:

**Concurrency** analysis, which attempts to quantify system-wide impacts from development

**Impact Fees** are intended to help pay for projects needed to meet levels of service

**SEPA Analysis** looks at project impacts apart from the system wide impacts

**Traffic Impact Analysis** is the report which must be submitted to quantify the elements above.

Most of the development review elements are founded on the level of service standards in the Comprehensive Plan. Concurrency is a requirement of the Growth Management Act based on the notion that growth in a jurisdiction should be in step with the transportation facilities available to handle the trips so that appropriate levels of service are preserved. If a transportation level of service isn't good enough, development must stop. Supposedly this will allow time for more facilities to be constructed and the level of service to improve at which time development may resume. Impact fee rates are based on the total cost of the network necessary to provide a given level of service divided by a number of future trips. After various adjustments, impact fees cover only a portion of the cost of the network. SEPA analysis looks at project level impacts not covered by the system wide Concurrency analysis, such as how project driveways access streets or the development's impact on safety. The Traffic Impact Analysis is prepared by the project advocate and data that allows calculation of concurrency, SEPA and impact fee. It contains certain tests to make sure that large impacts to intersections are mitigated. In practice, these tests require improvements for only the biggest developments.

### Issues

Kirkland's current Concurrency system is too complicated. It is difficult for those interested in development; developers themselves, neighbors, City Council, to know when concurrency is close to its limits. It is also difficult to know exactly what would be necessary to make a development project that fails concurrency pass concurrency.

The role of development review is misunderstood. Concurrency is not an effective tool for solving congestion problems. Unfortunately, even when a city institutes a growth moratorium (the ultimate concurrency penalty) traffic doesn't necessarily improve—traffic from growth outside its borders impacts the city with the moratorium. At the same time, the economic benefits of growth are lost to the community. Another reason that development review's power is always limited is that it only affects a small portion (the redeveloping portion) of a city's land use, while traffic comes from the comparatively vast areas of surrounding communities. Stopping "too much growth" or "wrong projects" or even promoting good growth are not the functions of development review. These are the roles of a carefully developed and broadly supported land use and transportation plans. Specifically, concurrency should mainly monitor the approved land use and transportation programs and insure that they are being completed in relative harmony.

Currently, only auto trips enter into calculations. This is because the vehicular level of service standards from the Comprehensive Plan are based on motor vehicles and because underlying state laws don't allow more flexibility. This is the source of misalignment between what our level of service requires and the larger transportation vision for improved active transportation facilities.

Concurrency's major outcomes are to cause a moratorium or require no improvements. Triggering growth moratoriums cause harm and don't solve the problem concurrency is intended to solve. Recognizing this, efforts have been made to make sure that concurrency isn't triggered, rendering the entire program a useless burden. These efforts include funding construction of expensive and unpopular auto capacity projects. Since we must have a concurrency system, the most critical factor in designing it is deciding where the trigger point is in order that concurrency causes as small a problem as possible.

**Recommendations**

The Transportation Commission should recommend new level of service standards in the Comprehensive Plan, that better align with transportation goals. This will likely mean incorporating transit, bicycling and walking into the standards. In turn this will require concurrency to be multimodal.

Revise Concurrency. One of the major roadblocks to improving concurrency during previous discussions has been the lack of a shared understanding of concurrency’s role in the development process. Agreeing on the purpose will help understand where trigger points should be set. Concurrency should be simplified and made multimodal.

The traffic impact analysis process should be revised to include a multimodal approach and more explicitly consider the impacts of shared use development. Traffic impact analyses should be more relevant.

**TABLE 2 DEVELOPMENT REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

Issue → Transportation Principle ↓		Develop new level of service standards	Revise concurrency	Revise traffic impact analysis
<b>Move People</b>		Current standards focus on moving motor vehicles.	Concurrency should consider the capacity of the entire transportation system.	Should gather and analyze information on all modes.
<b>Be Sustainable</b>	fiscal	The level of service standards will have major impact on how CIP funds are allocated.	Funds to construct projects to meet concurrency account for a large portion of the capital budget.	Little or no effect
	environment	Level of service standards should specifically address environmental concerns.	If concurrency standards are not met, non-auto options should be available.	May encourage walking and cycling.
	performance	These standards will set performance measures.	Current combination of funding levels and performance expectations are not fiscally sustainable.	Measures performance effects of new development.
	pres & mntn	It may be possible to incorporate maintenance standards into the Comprehensive Plan	New funding sources are needed to support existing facilities.	Could incorporate information about effects on maintenance.
<b>Create Partnerships</b>		Changing development review practices requires acceptance from a number of stakeholders.	Funding priorities will require agreement from many groups	Should give partners a clear picture of development impacts.
<b>Link to Land Use</b>		Standards must be support future land use projections.	Don't control land use or transportation projects and programs decisions with concurrency. Instead rely on visions created for land use and transportation	Measures impact of land use changes.

## TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

### Background

The City of Kirkland delivers quality projects within schedule and budget. Systems are in place to prioritize sidewalk projects and concurrency projects. Other project categories have needed less precise prioritizing in the past. Council has struggled with funding the projects necessary to meet auto level of service standards, while leaving other categories inadequately funded. Some funding sources are limited in the type of projects they can pay for (chart) This leads to the dilemma of only being able to fund projects that are not necessarily desired. Capital funding for transportation is programmed through the CIP which is updated in even numbered years. Changes in policy, technology and costs make it impossible to precisely determine the funding needs over the next 20 years. Instead we should focus on *priorities* for funding and for project selection. Transit service is determined and supplied by Sound Transit and King County Metro. Therefore it is largely out of the direct control of any particular city.

### Issues

- Funding for capital projects is not currently adequate. For example, based on past performance, revenue will <GRAPH> not be adequate to keep Kirkland's pavement at targeted levels.
- Funding sources are not necessarily in line with our goals. For example, impact fees can be spent on sidewalks and bicycle facilities but only if they are part of larger automobile capacity improvement projects.
- Clear priorities need to be identified for spending. It's not currently clear, as an example, whether capacity improvements from the concurrency system or maintenance and preservation of our pavement system, or something else, should get the first available funding. It's also not clear how funds are distributed between transportation improvements and say, Parks or other macro project categories.
- Transportation Demand Management received city funding for the first time in the 2009-2010. In order to support the stated goals of reducing auto dependence, increased funding must be continued.
- An Intelligent Transportation System master plan was adopted by Council in 2008. It's total cost is relatively small but it has not yet been funded.
- Kirkland does not have a systematic program for replacing traffic signal infrastructure, one should be implemented.
- A multimodal transportation network should be identified. Construction of this network should focus on moving people. This would represent a decrease in prominence of the auto network and recognize the fact that realistic and practical additions to the street system are limited.

### Recommendations

- First funding priority should be given to preservation of existing investments. Therefore, the maintenance categories (shown in shades of green in Figure 3) should be funded with a greater fraction of available funding than the other capital projects (shades of yellow in Figure 3).
- Clear goals and clear prioritization systems should be developed for those areas where it does not currently exist. (See Figure 3) These will guide funding decisions regardless of the amount of total funding available.
- Concurrency projects should be limited to key connections and improvements that are affordable over a 20 year period and which fit with Kirkland's transportation goals. The list of projects should not be based on what is needed to achieve a specific vehicular level of service.
- State laws govern the use of impact fees and gas tax funding. Some real estate excise tax sources have restrictions as well. Kirkland should work to add flexibility to these laws so that multiple funding sources are available to construct projects in line with Kirkland's goals.

New funding sources have to be developed in order to fund a full transportation system. The cross-Kirkland trail is a candidate for a voter supported bond issue. Transportation benefit districts or other new funding sources should be considered.

TABLE 3 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue → Transportation Principle ↓		Fund Maintenance first	Establish clear goals and prioritization methods within and between programs.	Simplify auto capacity project network	Align funding sources with goals	Develop new funding sources
<b>Move People</b>		The current system is auto oriented. If the current system is only maintained, it may remain out of balance.	Allows spending across all modes based on priorities that everyone understands.		Construction of multiple project types is more likely	Fully expanding opportunities for all users cannot be done with existing funding
<b>Be Sustainable</b>	fiscal	Investments in maintenance have a more certain return than investments in system expansions. Pavement maintenance costs increase exponentially without timely intervention.		Reducing scope of auto network will increase potential for fiscal sustainability	Financial sustainability will increase	Achieving simultaneous sustainability goals (fiscal, performance, maintenance, environmental), will require additional funding
	environment		Emphasis can be placed on various categories to meet sustainability targets.			
	performance					
	pres & mntn					
<b>Create Partnerships</b>		The idea of “taking care of what you have before getting more” makes sense to most people.	Stakeholders can help determine the priorities.		Alignment will require changes in state law	Substantial funding sources must be voted upon.
<b>Link to Land Use</b>		If system expansion is reduced due to lack of funding, land use options may be limited.	Priorities can be adjusted to supported land use choices.		Land use and sources to fund transportation system have to be aligned.	

Figure 3 Current Capital Funding categories Maintenance and Capacity. Rows indicate funding categories, columns show category characteristics.

	Program category	Purpose	Projects	Goal	Prioritization system	Current funding (2009-2014)
Maintenance	Pavement Maintenance	Keep pavement in good shape	Overlay plus accessible ramps	PCI rating of?	PCI & classification	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Signal Maintenance	Keep signal system capital up to date	Upgrade equipment	Replace signal electronics		Current funding (2009-2014)
	Sidewalk maintenance	Sidewalk safety	Replace damaged sidewalks			Current funding (2009-2014)
	Pavement marking	Maintain pavement markings	All marking related projects	Repaint annually others as	Manual	Current funding (2009-2014)
Capacity	New sidewalks	Purpose	Projects	Goals from ATP	Active Transportation Plan	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Bicycle projects	Improve bicycle	Non-marking projects for bicycles	Goals from ATP	Active Transportation Plan	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Crosswalks	Improve existing crosswalks	Medians lighting, safety improvements		Trans. Commission memo	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Concurrency	Meet concurrency targets	Usually intersection improvements	Meet v/c targets in Comp Plan	Capacity ranking system	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Intelligent Transportation Systems	Complete ITS plan	ITS master plan		ITS master plan	Current funding (2009-2014)
	Trans Demand Management	Reduce drive alone travel	Mostly programs			Current funding (2009-2014)

## TRANSPORTATION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

### Background

It is undeniable that the future of transportation will not rely on automobiles fueled by petroleum. The Federal Government is likely to create a new transportation bill in the next 18 months that radically departs from previous orientations around construction of motor vehicle facilities funded by a gas tax. At the state level, current law calls for reduction in greenhouse gasses and vehicle miles of travel. The Governor recently signed an executive order with the similar intents and more specific reporting requirements. Tolling is being explored on I-405 and is to be implemented next year on SR 520. When it has been placed elsewhere, tolling has had the effect of reducing vehicle trips. Regionally, the transportation plan that is being developed has been criticized for not going far enough with reduction of greenhouse gasses, despite aggressive plans to shift emphasis away from roads toward bicycling, walking and transit. Meeting Kirkland's own adopted climate change reduction targets will similarly require changes in transportation policy. Changes in automobile technology will be helpful, but the auto fleet is so large meaningful change may take years to accomplish. Physical inactivity is linked to increases in obesity and chronic disease. Transportation choices such as walking and bicycling are relatively simple ways of increasing physical activity that are available to almost everyone.

### Issues

- Transportation policy goals have not been specifically linked to climate change or pollution goals. At the same time, transportation, by way of cars, represent the largest single source of greenhouse gases, air pollution and water pollution in Kirkland.
- The transportation landscape is changing at the federal, state and regional level. Greater emphasis is being placed on reduction of greenhouse gases and vehicle miles of travel. Locally, Kirkland has adopted aggressive goals for reducing green house gases.
- Public Health officials have implicated current transportation systems as a contributor to obesity and other "lifestyle" diseases.

### Recommendation

- Fund projects and program that support walking, biking and transit. It won't be possible to meet Kirkland's adopted GHG targets without offering convenient active transportation and transit options.
- Reduce vehicle miles of travel and emissions. Kirkland has a strong statement supporting pricing. This support should continue in order to put driving cost signals in line with community goals. Implementing infrastructure that supports more efficient vehicles should also be encouraged. This could include easy access to energy for electric vehicles.
- Be proactive in encouraging development of the BNSF right-of-way. Development of a multi use trail on the BNSF right-of-way would provide a first rate transportation corridor. Separate right-of-ways encourage walking and cycling for exercise.

TABLE 4 CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue → Transportation Principle ↓		Support Active Transportation	Reduce vehicle miles of travel and emissions	Develop a trail on the eastside rail corridor
<b>Move People</b>		The current system is auto oriented. If the current system is only maintained, it may remain out of balance.		The purpose of such a trail is moving people.
<b>Be Sustainable</b>	fiscal	Active transportation projects cost less than auto oriented projects, but funding sources are less institutionalized		
	environment			
	performance			
	pres & mntn			Maintenance responsibilities for a trail are not clear
<b>Create Partnerships</b>			Pricing and electric vehicle technologies require coordination at the regional level and in the case of pricing, implementation by others.	The County, Port of Seattle and others have own interests in the trail or the right-of-way. Community groups support the trail.
<b>Link to Land Use</b>		Certain land use choices can support and be supported by active transportation.	Mixed use developments and increased density support the need for less travel.	Establish connections between the trail and supporting land use. The trail is near or adjacent to areas of density.

## CONCLUSIONS

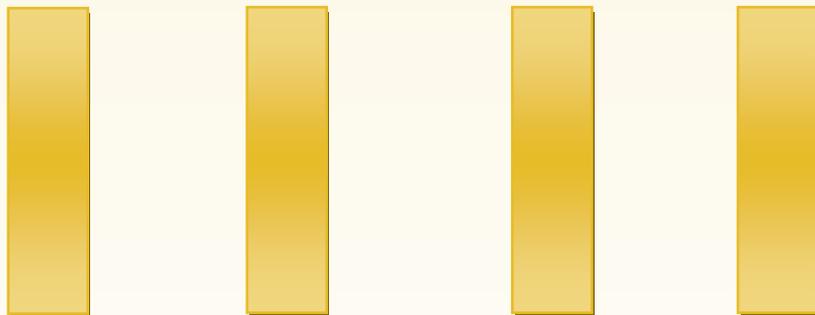
**RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY**





# TRANSPORTATION CONVERSATIONS

Perspectives on Kirkland's Transportation Policy



City of Kirkland Transportation Commission