

Technical Memorandum #2 Transportation Impact Fee Work Group

Subject:

Budget for establishing local baseline information regarding available and planned capacity of the City's transportation facilities.

Background:

Pursuant to Chapter 36.70A RCW (GMA) and Section 17D.010 of the Spokane Municipal Code (SMC) (the "Concurrency Ordinance"), all land development permit applications are subject to a concurrency test. Pursuant to SMC 17D.010.020, all facility and service providers are responsible for maintaining and monitoring their available and planned capacity. Annually, facility and service providers are responsible for reporting to the City's Planning Department, the total available and planned capacity of such facilities and/or services as of the end of each calendar year.

Consistent with these requirements, the Department of Public Works and Utilities (the "Department") is charged with maintaining and monitoring available and planned capacity of the City's transportation facilities, and with making annual reports to the Planning Department regarding the same.

For purposes of measuring concurrency, available and planned capacity is a product of the levels of service (LOS) and/or Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratios required by the City's Comprehensive Plan.

LOS is measured by collecting data to determine either AM or PM peak delay times at signalized intersections and un-signalized intersections that could potentially be upgraded.

The V/C ratio is determined by collecting vehicle count and turning movement data at an intersection. Both the AM and the PM peak must be counted to determine the highest time period and the inbound/outbound ratio between the AM and PM periods.

In order to determine the available and planned capacity of these transportation facilities, it is necessary to establish a baseline of the current performance of each of the City's signalized intersections. Establishing a baseline will involve collection of data from all of the City's signalized intersections and un-signalized intersections that could potentially be upgraded.

Data collection consists of evaluating a range of factors that affect performance, such as vehicle movements, bus activity, pedestrian crossings and percentage of grade at the intersection approach, to only name a few.

In the past, the City of Spokane has had a practice to collect these factors, but this has not been funded for many years. As a result, the City has relied upon individual development Traffic Impact Analyses (TIA) and their updates. The City was using the 2001 (and now the new 2006) Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) regional baseline model for capacity data.

Because the City lacks the ability to collect and analyze local baseline information, developers are currently required to collect this information and submit the data within a TIA. The excess expenditure of money occurs when several developments are required to collect baseline information in the same area. The result being a higher cost to the development financially, in addition this process leaves the City with no ability to refute any results when City Staff based on their experience and training, believe an error or omission has occurred.

A less confrontational and financially beneficial process would be for the City to regularly collect baseline information and post the data for easy download for private engineers to use in their analysis of traffic impacts when they develop their TIA.

Options:

Obtaining the LOS and V/C information as outlined above, is a responsibility of the Traffic Operations group of the Street Department. The effort to obtain this data is significant and requires trained technicians to physically observe and collect the data, analyze the data, then correlate it with regional and local models.

This work will require a minimum of two technicians to collect the data, as the AM and PM peak traffic periods can span over an eight (8) hour period. Poor weather conditions, holidays, and days that do not represent the normal commuter traffic, reduce the available days in the year that data can be collected. This creates a situation where two technicians may not be able to collect data for the entire City in one year.

The City currently has no employees that are trained and dedicated to the collection of this data. Existing technicians have been used in emergency situations to collect data, but only at the expense of their current job duties.

While the statements above only address the collection of data, other and more critical responsibilities remain unattended, in particular, analyzing the data and applying it to the traffic models. In order to properly collect data, analyze the data, correlate the data to regional and local models and manage employees necessary to perform this work, additional Staff would have to be added to the Traffic Operations group. Staffing would include three (3) technicians, level II; one (1) technician, level III; and (1) technician, level IV (performing the duties of a traffic system assistant). This staffing level would be at an estimated \$500,000 per year.

The cost analysis above does not consider where the new staff would reside (i.e. the Operations Complex is already at capacity); equipment they would need such as computers, desks, counting equipment or additional vehicles to perform the work; or to whom they would report within the City of Spokane.

Additional Considerations:

The External Work Group (EWG) and staff have been working on a more detailed description and analysis of what is necessary and desirable to create a city transportation baseline model and ultimately a traffic management plan in cooperation w/Planning Staff.

Professional and technical resources from both the EWG and Internal Technical Team (ITT) have combined efforts to develop an RFP for a baseline study. The Community Assembly and EWG strongly supported this concept in a letter to the Mayor and Council dated May 4, 2007

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(See Appendix A). In addition, subsequent funding has been allocated (\$400,000) by the administration to create a new citywide baseline model. It is anticipated the RFP for this work will be advertised in October 2007.

In association with this work, the Community Assembly and EWG also have strongly encouraged the addition of staff to maintain this baseline model once it is created. The cost of this proposal and the need for the baseline model were presented to the administration and Public Works Committee on July 19, 2007 (See attached Briefing Paper dated July 19, 2007). This provides updated cost and staffing information for 2007, 2008 and 2009 for consideration.

Recommendations:

The ability to collect the local baseline information and overlay the growth data that development creates would: 1) positively affect overall system operation/efficiencies on behalf of the City and all citizens; 2) facilitate and streamline the development process; and 3) result in a powerful tool to identify new capacity improvement projects which would be eligible for Impact Fees. This data would be beneficial in the scoping and prioritization of capital projects related to growth.

Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Spokane continue to use currently available data from TIA's, the 2007 - 2012 Six-Year Comprehensive Street Program, and the SRTC 2006 transportation model as the basis for identifying the capital projects required as part of the Impact Fee Rate Study. Note: the 2006 SRTC model was updated and trip information projected as outlined in Technical Memorandum #6.

It is also recommended that City of Spokane staff work with the Office of the Mayor, City Council and the Public Works Committee to continue to pursue funding and staffing for a functional traffic data collection and management program. This program will consist of technicians to collect the data, use of a consultant to create the baseline model, and professional staff to manage, update and utilize that data in the future.