

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939944**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to policies that would improve delivery and access to transit service per Ordinance No. 2019-67s.
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A – Proposed Amendments
Attachment B – Pierce Transit Comment Letter (dated 12/23/2020)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal provides additional transit-supportive policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Pierce County Council through [Ordinance No. 2019-67s](#) directed the Planning and Public Works Department to “...*determine the extent to which transit compatibility and support are integrated into [the transportation and land use policies of the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan].*” and to “...*identify any revisions to these policies which could be effective in improving delivery and access to transit service in the community.*”

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A** as originally submitted. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal with modification to T-16.10 as shown below. The underlined signifies the modified new text.

Proposal as Originally Submitted (only to T-16.10)

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit Benefit Area boundary.

Proposal with Modification

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit's Public Transit Benefit Area boundary for unincorporated areas as allowed by state law.

Staff supports the proposal with modification for the following reasons:

- incorporates additional strategies to support transit service to targeted uses and locations;
- consistent with Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and Countywide Planning Policies;
- consistent with Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050;
- fulfilling the intent of Ordinance No. 2019-67s; and
- clarifies that the reexamination is associated with unincorporated areas in Pierce County.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

No further implementation is necessary.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
The proposal would help support the rate of growth and development that is envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan through a potential increase of transit service.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
The proposal would enhance the County's ability to provide adequate transit facilities.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
The proposal would help support the rate of population and employment growth envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan through a potential increase of transit service.

4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.

The proposal would meet Plan objectives, including:

- Encourage High Density Residential Districts to develop with high density single-family and multifamily housing that is served by transit routes, and connect with Mixed Use Districts, and Activity, Community, and Employment Centers (**GOAL LU-35**).
- Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County (**GOAL EC-1**).
- Encourage the development of new housing within the urban growth areas where facilities and services exist or are planned (**GOAL H-2**).
- Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement (**GOAL T-1**).
- Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents (**GOAL T-16**).

5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.

By supporting transit service, the proposal may reduce transportation costs for transit riders. The proposal would neither affect land values nor increase housing costs.

6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.

Not applicable.

7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.

The proposed amendment conforms to GMA requirements and is consistent with Countywide Planning Policies.

The proposal is internally consistent with the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, including goals **LU-35**, **EC-1**, **H-2**, **T-1**, and **T-16**.

8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.

Not applicable.

9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.

Not applicable.

10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.

Pierce Transit submitted a comment letter dated December 23, 2020 (**Attachment B**), expressing support of the proposal and requesting minor modification to proposed policy T-16.10. The proposal with modification provides more clarity of the intent of new policy T-16.10.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

RCW 36.70A.020(3): Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Development Patterns Policies (page 96)

MPP-DP-31 Promote transit service to and from existing cities in rural areas.

Transportation Policies (page 132)

MPP-T-8 Strategically expand capacity and increase efficiency of the transportation system to move goods, services, and people consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. Focus on investments that produce the greatest net benefits to people and minimize the environmental impacts of transportation.

MPP-T-9 Implement transportation programs and projects that provide access to opportunities while preventing or mitigating negative impacts to people of color, people with low incomes, and people with special transportation needs.

MPP-T-12 Emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel and increase travel options, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers.

MPP-T-13 Increase the proportion of trips made by transportation modes that are alternatives to driving alone, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers, by ensuring availability of reliable and competitive transit options.

MPP-T-15 Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.

MPP-T-18 Promote coordination among transportation providers and local governments to ensure that joint- and mixed-use developments are designed in a way that improves overall mobility and accessibility to and within such development.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPs)

Economic Development and Employment (page 33)

Ec-2 The County, and each municipality in the County, shall promote diverse economic opportunities for all citizens of the County, especially the unemployed, disadvantaged persons, minorities and small businesses. The following measures may be used in accomplishing this policy, where appropriate:

- 2.7 encouraging the location of economic development activities in areas served by public transit and adequate transportation facilities.

Health and Well-Being (page 44)

HW-5 The County, and each municipality in the County, shall protect and enhance the environment and public health and safety when providing public services and facilities by:

- 5.3 encouraging the location of economic development activities in areas served by public transit and adequate transportation facilities.

Transportation Facilities and Strategies (page 72)

Tr-15 The County, and each municipality in the County, and in cooperation with transit agencies, shall promote the facilities and services to encourage alternatives to automobile travel and/or to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (modal split, trip generation and trip length) including:

Centers (page 101)

C-18 Roadways and nonmotorized networks should be designed to promote efficient transit services.

PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land Use Element / Urban Residential / High Density Residential District (page 2-31)

GOAL LU-35 Encourage HRDs to develop with high density single-family and multifamily housing that is served by transit routes, and connect with Mixed Use Districts, and Activity, Community, and Employment Centers.

Economic Development Element / Economic Vitality (page 6-12)

GOAL EC-1 Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County.

Housing Element / Solution to Housing Issues (page 9-12)

GOAL H-2 Encourage the development of new housing within the Urban Growth Areas where facilities and services exist or are planned.

Transportation Element / Transportation System Development (page 12-6)

GOAL T-1 Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement.

Transportation Element / Transit (page 12-11)

GOAL T-16 Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Land Use Element / Urban, Rural, and Resource / Public and Community Facilities / Location Criteria (page 2-89)

GOAL LU-119 Public and community facilities will be located in consideration of the following criteria.

LU-119.8 Branch government offices should be easily accessible and location in centers and/or in areas that are served by transit.

LU-119.12 Community facilities and health and human services should be located near transit whenever possible to ensure convenient access to services for all.

Capital Facilities Element / Introduction (page 3-4)

GOAL CF-5 Rank possible sites for planned public facilities and services using a priority system.

CF-5.3 Pierce County should consider locating County buildings in areas that are served by transit.

Economic Development Element / Economic Vitality (page 6-12)

GOAL EC-1 Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County.

EC-1.8 Explore strategies that focus job and employment density in the Urban Growth Area near existing or future transit routes with high frequency service.

Housing Element / Solutions to Housing Issues (page 9-12)

GOAL H-2 Encourage the development of new housing within the Urban Growth Areas where facilities and services exist or are planned.

H-2.4 Explore strategies that increase housing density and affordable housing opportunities near existing or future transit routes with high frequency service that could include implementation of transit-supportive zoning, regulations, and incentives.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Transportation System Development (page 12-6)

GOAL T-1 Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement.

T-1.4 Support development and implementation of technology innovations in the transit and transportation systems that improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Transit (page 12-11)

GOAL T-16 Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents.

T-16.2 Cooperate with transit agencies in the location of transit centers, park and ride lots, rail stations, and bus stops, and support transit services around these areas.

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit Benefit Area boundary.

T-16.11 Periodically review the changing demographics of the County to identify the degree to which the needs of minority and low-income communities are served by transit. The County should participate in review of the transit agencies assessment of the benefits, burdens, and relative impacts of transit plans and projects to help determine whether they will be equitably distributed among underserved and non-underserved persons and communities.

T-16.12 Support opportunities to serve or increase transit service to high-employment commercial and industrial centers within the Urban Growth Area.

T-16.13 Work with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit, WSDOT, and other jurisdictions in identifying infrastructure needs of common interest to the broader transit system.

T-16.14 Encourage Pierce Transit to explore and implement cost effective transit service to and from existing cities/towns in rural areas.

GOAL T-19 Explore strategies the County could implement that lead to higher levels of transit service.

T-19.1 Integrate transit-supportive design, in coordination with transit agencies, into Pierce County infrastructure such as well-connected street networks, transit signal priority/preemption, bus bulbs/islands, bus turnouts, and queue jump lanes.

T-19.2 Work with transit agencies to address first and last mile barriers to transit use and connections to jobs and housing including through locating bicycle lanes and sidewalks that best serve transit routes.

T-19.3 In areas not well served by fixed route transit, the County should work with partners to develop a range of alternative service options such as community shuttles, real-time rideshare, community vans, and other innovative options.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Rail and Freight (page 12-12)

GOAL T-20 Work with local communities, the Washington State Department of Transportation, railroads, labor groups, and shippers to:

T-20.3 Consider localized rail service as a means of public transportation and explore partnerships with local railroad operators to provide passenger rail service on existing railways throughout Pierce County.



December 23, 2020

Pierce County Community Development Committee
2401 S. 35th Street
Tacoma, WA 98409

RE: Support of the draft Transportation Policies – CP Application 939944.

Dear Executive Dammeier, County Council Members and Planning Commissioners:

Pierce Transit would like to thank your staff for their coordination and involvement with us as they drafted and prepared the transportation related Goals and Policies to align with Ordinance No. 2019-67s. Specifically looking at the Council directive to have policies that could be effective in improving delivery and access to transit service in the community. As the regions transit provider for Pierce County, we recognize the depth of the level of work your agency has put into the planning documents to provide support and guidance for the future growth of our region. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to participate and support the current draft language proposed.

We are highly supportive of the following:

- POLICY T-1.4 Support development and implementation of technology innovations in the transit and transportation systems that improve safety, efficiency, system performance and infrastructure return on investment.

This policy supports the work with the Transit Signal Priority we have been coordinating on regarding the future BRT Route on SR-7 and could benefit other routes in the future as our fleet improves with its technology.

- POLICY T-28.3 Support transit services focusing on transit stations and park and ride lots.

This policy can assist us in mitigating impacts of future development and provide additional investments in parking and transit centers.

We do request a minor adjustment (identified in red underline) to the following Goal to provide more clarity of the intent.

- “The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County’s land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit’s Public Transit Benefit Area boundary for unincorporated areas as allowed by state law.”

Pierce Transit remains committed in continuing to support Pierce County and provide for our shared communities as we continue to coordinate and collaborate on the best way to get users to our transit system. We have recently adopted updates to our Destination 2040 long range plan and have the most up to date information regarding our current and future levels of service there. We look forward to continuing our harmonized efforts in fulfilling Pierce Transit and Pierce County’s Mission Statements to continue to improve everyone’s quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan Wheaton".

Ryan Wheaton, Executive Director of Planning and Community Development
Pierce Transit

