



# REPORT TO DEVELOPMENT OVERSIGHT COMMISSION City of Sacramento

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915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2671

STAFF REPORT  
February 5, 2007

Members of the Development Oversight Commission:

**Subject:** Transportation Level Of Service Policy Recommendations

**Location/Council District:** Citywide

**Recommendation:** Receive and file

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**Presenter:** Fedolia "Sparky" Harris

**Department:** Planning

**Division:** Long Range

**Organization Number:** 4912

**Issue/Policy Considerations:** In the context of the General Plan Update (GPU) and adopted Council policies promoting infill, smart growth, and mobility, City staff requested that the City's General Plan traffic consultant (Fehr & Peers) re-visit the City's procedures for evaluating and mitigating transportation impacts from development and infrastructure projects. This activity is being conducted as an early element of the GPU because it sets the policy framework for evaluating GPU alternatives with respect to transportation. Additionally, opportunities to implement Smart Growth policies are not being maximized with new transit-oriented developments (e.g. 65th Street/University Transit Village) that are being proposed during the General Plan update due to the significant impacts that can be assessed based on our current threshold.

The City's existing goal seeks to maintain an overall Level of Service (LOS) C throughout the city. The Council has adopted the following guidelines, principles, and standards to encourage a full range of mitigations that often conflict with maintaining the existing LOS C standard:

- Smart Growth Principles (2001)
- Traffic Calming Guidelines (2002)

- Pedestrian Safety Guidelines (2003)
- Pedestrian Friendly Street Standards (2004)

Level of Service C is a suburban goal that is difficult, and even undesirable, to maintain for settings in which the city is seeking to encourage a vibrant walkable environment, especially in special circumstances such as the downtown area or transit villages. The mitigations necessary to maintain vehicular traffic at LOS C often include road widenings and additional turn movements. These mitigations discourage walking by increasing crossing distances, increasing the potential for conflicts with automobile traffic, and decreasing pedestrians' comfort level.

Additionally, the attainment of an overall LOS C is becoming increasingly unrealistic as more people, jobs, and cars come to the city of Sacramento. In a recent survey, only 42% of 213 roadway segments throughout the city were shown to operate at a Level of Service C or better. Oftentimes, especially in the Central Business District, traffic impact studies are performed in order to identify mitigations for impacts deemed significant which are overridden due to physical constraints leaving the city with no improvements and developers with a 12-16 week delay and hefty traffic consultant costs.

Staff consulted with Fehr & Peers to clarify our existing traffic analysis procedures, surveying best practices, identifying significant issues and recommending options that could be implemented to address those issues. (See Attachment 1). This analysis revealed that many cities comparable in size and composition to Sacramento had already abandoned the LOS C standard as undesirable. It was also discovered that a provision that could be used to exempt projects from cumulative traffic impact analysis was rarely used due to the age and perceived invalidity of our adopted community plans. Finally, impacts and mitigations for modes other than automobiles were not well developed and rarely considered in the development of mitigation measures.

Fehr & Peers then developed a set of options for addressing these issues based on case studies throughout the western United States. This analysis uncovered that many jurisdictions use triggers similar to those employed by the City of Sacramento, but most urban areas use an LOS D or E as their threshold of significance with deviations allowed near transit villages, highways, and core urban areas. Multimodal evaluation methods were identified but were not widely utilized throughout the country. The options identified by Fehr & Peers focused on accomplishing the following goals:

1. Simplify the process
2. Conduct fewer studies, if possible
3. Determine when exemptions would be appropriate

Five alternatives were developed for discussion based upon the options provided. These alternatives proposed to:

1. Change the LOS threshold
2. Adopt a multi-modal LOS

3. Create exemption areas
4. Add informational measures
5. Combine alternatives

Staff evaluated the proposed alternatives and concluded that the Combined Alternative best accomplished the goals and objectives established. The recommendations that resulted from this alternative were shared with the General Plan Advisory Committee and the Planning Commission. With input from these two bodies, the resulting recommendations are proposed as follows:

1. Modify general intersection/roadway significance threshold from LOS C to LOS D.
2. Modify LOS threshold for projects on parcels within ¼ mile of existing and planned light rail stations from LOS C to LOS E.
3. Modify LOS threshold for projects within the Central Business District from LOS C to LOS E.
4. Develop a defensible method of measuring neighborhood level traffic impacts in order to devise appropriate mitigations.
5. Work with SACOG to develop and adopt regional mitigation strategies that address development impacts to State and regional facilities in a fair and equitable manner.

These recommendations are intended to fuel the policy discussion for the General Plan Update. Further refinement of these recommendations will occur following Council approval to ensure that the final policies analyzed in the General Plan will conform with the adopted Smart Growth Principles and promote an environment that encourages increased usage of alternative modes. Recommendations related to the establishment of fees are intended to open the door for further discussions with City staff specializing in the formation of fee districts rather than actually establishing the fees during the General Plan Update.

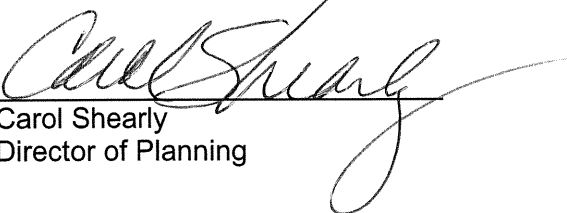
Respectfully submitted by:




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RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:




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Carol Shearly  
Director of Planning

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