Chapter Seven

Transportation Element

BACKGROUND

The existing circulation system in Pullman developed in response to the constraints of topography and the modes of travel at the time. Population growth in the past five years has increased traffic congestion, particularly at key intersections. Another significant concern is the increase in travel through residential neighborhoods. Residents would like to see these problems solved and provision made for encouraging the use of modes of travel other than the automobile.

Transportation has long been identified as an element critical to Pullman's future quality of life. Pullman's future transportation system must meet the varied needs of all of its citizens. The transportation network should include the following:

- streets which convey people and goods quickly and efficiently;
- sidewalks and pathways that are safe and pleasant for pedestrians to use;
- safe and efficient bicycle routes;
- a convenient, easy to use transit system; and
- air, rail and highway links to the outside world.

Land use, housing and other elements of this plan are closely linked to transportation. For example, housing densities help to determine whether a transit system will be cost-effective to operate. Also, convenient neighborhood-based retail can encourage walking and minimize vehicle congestion on collector or arterial streets. Encouraging people to use alternative ways of getting around will become more and more important as the city grows and the traffic increases.

Impacts on streets should be considered whenever new development is proposed. To the greatest extent possible, the costs associated with these impacts should be borne by the new development.

On busy streets, turning movements create conflicts which result in increased traffic congestion. These turning movement conflicts can be minimized by controlling or limiting points of access to these streets. Wherever possible, development should be designed to share access with its neighbors. Alleys are another way to reduce conflict on streets.

Properly maintained streets improve the flow of traffic. They also help to create a more pleasant visual environment. In order to maximize the impact of planned improvements, a regular street maintenance program should also include a maintenance schedule for adjacent public amenities such as signs, landscaping, and street furniture.

Much of the city's traffic congestion can be traced to vehicles using State Routes 27 and 270 to pass through the city. The city should continue to explore the feasibility of constructing one or more bypass routes in order to keep regional traffic, including truck traffic, out of the downtown area and create more options in the central business district for transportation routes, on-street parking, and sidewalks. The city should continue to encourage the Washington State Department of Transportation to take a lead role in making a bypass route a priority in the state budget. Until a bypass is constructed, the city should continue to establish a "ring route" around the municipality. This route, consisting of such streets as Terre View Drive and Bishop Boulevard, provides an alternative to the use of major arterials intersecting the central part of the city.

The city's transportation planning efforts should strive for a greater balance among different modes of transportation. The pedestrian/bicycle plan previously approved by the city can be an important tool in promoting nonmotorized forms of transportation. The city should continue its efforts to provide pedestrian and bicycle routes that are well-maintained and safe. A key element in promoting greater bicycle and pedestrian activity is public education. The city's system of trails should be publicized, and efforts to expand the system should be explored through a variety of methods. Maintenance of the system should also be a high priority.

The operation of a safe, convenient transit system is important to the community, and such a system has been in place in Pullman since 1979. Public transit reduces traffic congestion by providing an attractive alternative to automobile use. The transit system provides easy access to work, schools, or shopping and also provides mobility to those for whom automobile ownership is not an option.

There are many ways that land development policies can promote the safe, efficient, and affordable operation of a public transit system. Street design standards that provide for bus pullouts, funds for bus shelters in public places, and the development of commute trip reduction plans for major employers are but a few examples of available options. The city should work with other interested parties to evaluate and implement whichever of these options are deemed appropriate.

In today's global economy, maintaining connections with the outside world is essential. Pullman is served by a regional airport which provides convenient access to major cities. It is extremely important to uphold the viability of this airport in order to maintain a strong economy in Pullman and the surrounding region.

The airport's location on the outskirts of the community has allowed it to peacefully co-exist with its neighbors, but development pressures can change that situation in relatively little time. The city's land use policies should only allow developments in this vicinity which are compatible with the airport and consistent with the airport's master plan to ensure that future airport expansion opportunities are not restricted.

Whitman County's economy relies upon the availability of rail freight service for the transport of goods to and from the community. Maintenance of the existing rail

infrastructure is less important to the continued health of the local economy, but availability of rail is attractive to some industries. Rail freight service also reduces truck traffic through the city.

One of the greater challenges affecting the quality of life for city residents is the problem of where to put cars when they are not being used. While this problem affects all areas of the city to some degree, it is particularly endemic to College Hill. The lack of adequate off-street parking is exacerbated during the winter months, when heavy snowfalls can further limit parking availability. A two-pronged approach to the issue will involve examining alternatives to solve existing problems, while taking steps to ensure that new development does not increase these problems. At a minimum, development regulations should require that adequate off-street parking be built as a component of all new development.

New parking facilities should be both functional and attractive. They should be graded, surfaced, and maintained in a manner that minimizes storm water drainage problems. They should also be landscaped, with emphasis placed on perimeter landscaping.

The resolution of problems related to existing on-street parking, especially in the College Hill neighborhood, will require serious effort by all affected parties. The city should take a lead role in bringing the parties together to explore available options and implement proposed solutions.

Description of Transportation Plan

In order to provide for safe and efficient circulation in the Pullman area, this Comprehensive Plan sets forth a transportation plan for the community's future access needs. This plan is based on existing and projected population and employment figures, land use, regional traffic patterns, and citizen interests. This transportation plan is represented graphically by means of two maps: one for vehicular traffic (the Arterial Street Plan Map) and the other for nonmotorized modes of transportation (the Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Map). Together, these maps present the city's objectives regarding circulation within the community.

Arterial Street Plan Map

The Arterial Street Plan Map is depicted as Figure 7-1. This map shows existing and proposed major, secondary, and collector arterials, as well as existing local access streets. A description of this map follows.

A. Bypass Alternatives

The north bypass would connect U.S. 195 to SR 270 along the northern city limit boundary, with interchanges at North Grand Avenue and the proposed Coliseum Road (designed to access WSU). The city of Pullman, Port of Whitman County, and WSU have expressed interest in potentially taking the lead in constructing portions of a north

bypass alternative, but no action has yet been taken in this regard. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) purchased the right-of-way for the north bypass many years ago. However, present state transportation improvement funding limitations make it highly unlikely that the north bypass will be constructed within the foreseeable future.

The south bypass would also link U.S. 195 to SR 270, skirting the southern edge of town. The right-of-way for this route has not been acquired.

B. Other Major Arterials

Besides the bypass highway alternatives, there are several other streets designated as major arterials on the map. Major arterials carry large volumes of traffic (sometimes more than 15,000 vehicles per day) between various sectors of the city. In addition to locally generated traffic, these major arterials provide access for all vehicles traveling through Pullman to neighboring cities. Existing major arterials in the Pullman area are SR 270 (Davis Way/Main Street), SR 27 (Grand Avenue), U.S. 195, and Stadium Way.

In the mid-1990's, the WSDOT widened SR 270 (Main Street) between Spring Street and Forest Way. Continuing this expansion of SR 270 to four lanes between Pullman and Moscow has been a long-desired goal of many in the community. Funding for this project could be forthcoming in the next few years depending on legislative or voter mandates. Widening U.S. 195 between Pullman and Colfax has also been discussed with WSDOT, although the prospects for such a project in the near future are dim.

C. Secondary Arterials

Secondary arterials generally serve as links between major arterials and collector streets. They carry a moderately large volume of traffic (up to 10,000 vehicles per day). Examples of secondary arterials in Pullman are Colorado Street, Grimes Way, NE Terre View Drive, Airport Road, and Bishop Boulevard. The latter three roadways comprise the city's proposed "ring route" network on College and Pioneer Hills, helping to provide an alternative to the use of major arterials in town.

D. Collector Streets

Collector streets carry traffic between local access streets and secondary and major arterials, primarily providing access to residential neighborhoods. These streets usually convey upwards of 5,000 vehicles per day. Unlike major or secondary arterials, collector streets are most often constructed by private developers as part of new residential subdivision projects. Examples of collector streets are Harrison Street, Larry Street, Valley Road, Spring Street, Derby Street, Crestview Street, Golden Hills Drive, and NW Terre View Drive. The latter two roads (now only partially constructed) constitute the city's "ring route" links on Sunnyside Hill and Military Hill, respectively.

E. Local Access Streets

Local access streets are shown as the network of non-designated roads on the Arterial Street Plan. These routes provide a connection between collector streets and individual homes and businesses. Like collector streets, they are normally constructed by private developers.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Map

The Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Map is shown in Figure 7-2. This map displays a coordinated system of routes for both pedestrian and bicycle travel.

The network of "cross routes" established on the Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Map links the major activity centers in the community (such as schools, commercial districts, and parks) to help provide convenient and direct access for pedestrians and bicyclists. Of particular interest is the need to provide connections to the extensive system of pathways on the WSU campus. The plan also calls for more circuitous "loop routes" in each quadrant of the city to serve the interests of those who enjoy walking or bicycling for purely recreational purposes. The Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan calls for the establishment and/or maintenance of appropriate improvements along these cross and loop routes to facilitate nonmotorized transportation. Depending on the situation, these improvements may be provided by either governmental agencies or private developers.

For pedestrians, the city requires sidewalks along designated routes to be seven feet wide on arterial streets and four and a half feet wide on all other streets. Paths in open space areas (where no streets exist) are to be constructed at a minimum width of eight feet.

To provide for bicycle travel, three different categories of bikeways (Class I, II, and III) are envisioned for the routes on the pedestrian/bicycle network. Class I bikeways are designed for the exclusive use of bicycles and other nonmotorized forms of transportation. These paths are to be constructed at a minimum of eight feet in width. Class II facilities are bike lanes which are designated on a road surface with appropriate markings. These bike lanes have a minimum width of five feet. Class III bikeways, or bike routes, are shared roadways where bicycles and motor vehicles use the same street surface without designating specific portions of the road for either type of vehicle. Roadside "BIKE ROUTE" signs identify this type of bikeway.

Implementation of Transportation Plan

Implementation of this transportation plan is achieved through adoption of policies, programs, and ordinances; attainment of financing for improvements; acquisition of permits and environmental approvals; and design and construction of projects. As noted above, some of the improvements will be constructed by the city or another governmental entity and some of the improvements will be built by private developers in compliance with the city’s regulations.

The primary means by which major transportation projects are accomplished is through the city's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP, approved annually by the City Council, presents proposed capital expenditures for the upcoming six-year period. A significant source of funding for the TIP is the city's arterial street fund, which includes transfers of state gas tax and motor vehicle excise tax dollars. In addition, state and federal grant moneys are sometimes acquired to finance major projects. The city's street fund supplies the appropriate percentage of matching funds typically required from state and federal funding sources.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL T1: Provide facilities, access and circulation for all land uses to ensure free and safe movement of people and goods.

Policy T1.1: Promote safe, energy-efficient methods of transportation.

Policy T1.2: Design transportation facilities to minimize through traffic intrusions into residential areas and unsafe traffic movements.

Policy T1.3: Provide transit service to connect residential areas to employment and activity centers and encourage transit use through publicity and special programs.

Policy T1.4: Institute access control policies to improve safety and circulation on busy streets.

Policy T1.5: Maintain city streets in good condition to facilitate safe and efficient travel in all seasons of the year.

Policy T1.6: Improve the appearance of city streets by repairing them regularly and maintaining landscaping and signs.

Policy T1.7: As far as possible, require that new development bear the cost of mitigating the traffic problems it generates.

Policy T1.8: Discourage regional, through traffic in the downtown by supporting the development of bypass or ring roads.

Policy T1.9: Prevent the conversion of neighborhood collector streets to arterials if doing so would divide an existing neighborhood.

Policy T1.10: Encourage the proper setting of speed limits throughout the city to facilitate safety; enforce speed limits in a highly visible fashion.

Policy T1.11: Ensure that new subdivisions are designed to have more than one point of access at full build-out of the subdivision and adjacent area.

Policy T1.12: Where possible, limit use of cul-de-sacs in new subdivisions; promote the construction of paths at the end of cul-de-sacs in accordance with the Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan.

Policy T1.13: Direct that high traffic generating uses (e.g., schools, retail commercial establishments, large apartment complexes) be located on streets with adequate right-of-way width to accommodate increased ingress and egress traffic activities.

Policy T1.14: Explore changes to roadways or circulation in the central portion of the city that would facilitate more efficient traffic flow.

GOAL T2: Maintain and enhance the nonmotorized transportation system consistent with the city's approved pedestrian/bicycle circulation plan.

Policy T2.1: Encourage and facilitate the use of nonmotorized transportation by educating the public and developing a network of facilities.

Policy T2.2: Enhance and expand the existing nonmotorized transportation system to link major activity centers, provide sufficient access within neighborhoods, and separate pedestrian from vehicular traffic.

Policy T2.3: Maintain nonmotorized routes in the city in good repair and remove potential hazards promptly.

Policy T2.4: Promote safety and security with regard to nonmotorized transportation through design and reconstruction of facilities and "share the road" education and enforcement.

Policy T2.5: Separate truck routes from nonmotorized routes wherever possible.

Policy T2.6: Disallow proposed street vacations unless adequate provision is made to ensure continuity of the pedestrian and/or bicycle network.

Policy T2.7: Require that all uses provide separate clearly identified pedestrian access from the public street, through parking areas, to the building.

GOAL T3: Maintain and improve transportation systems connecting Pullman to the region and the world.

Policy T3.1: Support expansion of commercial air service to the Pullman region. Avoid development of incompatible uses, roadways, or other facilities adjacent to the airport.

Policy T3.2: Cooperate with the Pullman-Moscow Airport Board to take action as necessary to maintain the viability of the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport.

Policy T3.3: Comply with the findings and recommendations of the adopted Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport Master Plan in relation to activities at or near the airport.

Policy T3.4: Support the continued availability of rail service to transport goods (freight) to and from Pullman.

Policy T3.5: Promote the continued operation of inter-city bus transit in the area.

GOAL T4: Provide adequate, attractively landscaped parking for all developments within the city.

Policy T4.1: Require all new development to provide adequate off-street parking and loading to reduce congestion and improve safety. Encourage WSU to provide parking on and near campus for students and visitors.

Policy T4.2: Require that off-street parking areas are graded, surfaced, and maintained to avoid creating pools of standing water, causing excessive dust, or disturbing lawns and other landscaped areas.

Policy T4.3: Ensure that all off-street parking areas are attractively landscaped around the perimeter and that larger parking areas also have interior landscaping.

Policy T4.4: Establish on-street parking permit programs where appropriate, based on the characteristics of the particular neighborhood or district.