

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

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TO: Mayor and Council Members

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SUBJECT: Transforming Flagstaff's Transportation System

Summary

This report details how City staff are moving forward with transforming Flagstaff's transportation system to meet the City's climate action goals and address a variety of community needs. This is a collaborative effort that spans Engineering, Community Development, and Sustainability.

Background

Achieving Flagstaff's climate goals will require managing transportation demand, providing multi-modal transportation choices, reducing transportation emissions and maintaining vehicle miles traveled. These strategies are not new, nor unique to the Carbon Neutrality Plan. They are embedded in various policy positions highlighted below:

- The **Flagstaff Carbon Neutrality Plan** (CNP, 2021) calls for a Big Shift in transportation and land use planning, where Flagstaff would “fundamentally shift our approach to neighborhood design and transportation. We would build our transportation corridors with various forms of micro-mobility as primary goal, rather than supporting the continued growth of automobile travel.” The success of the CNP depends on vehicle miles traveled being reduced to 2019 levels and maintaining that level of vehicle travel over the coming decades. This will require a transformation in the way we plan development and transportation systems, and the way Flagstaff residents and visitors get around town.
- The **Blueprint 2040 Regional Transportation Plan** (2017) calls for a renewed commitment to multi-modalism, protecting the environment, and greater investments in managing transportation demand. It is important to note that MetroPlan: Stride Forward, the next iteration of the regional transportation plan, is underway and climate action is central to this effort.
- The **Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030** (2014) sets a vision for a sustainable, resilient community that encourages efficient transportation modes, better connectivity, and active stewardship. Policies relevant to a more balanced transportation system include, but are not limited to:
 - o The Policy E 1.5. Promote and encourage the expansion and use of energy-efficient modes of transportation: Public transportation, bicycles, pedestrians.
 - o Policy CC 4.1. Design streetscapes to be context sensitive and transportation systems to reflect the desired land use while balancing the needs of all modes for traffic safety and construction and maintenance costs.
 - o Policy T 1.2. Apply Complete Street Guidelines to accommodate all appropriate modes of travel in transportation improvement projects.
 - o Policy T 1.6. Provide and promote strategies that increase alternate modes of travel and demand for vehicular travel to reduce peak period traffic.
 - o Policy T 3.1. Design and assess transportation improvement plans, projects, and strategies to minimize negative impacts on air quality and maintain the region's current air quality.
 - o Policy T 3.2. Promote transportation systems that reduce the use of fossil fuels and eventually replace them with carbon neutral alternatives.
 - o Policy T 3.8. Promote transportation options such as increased public transit and more bike lanes to reduce congestion, fuel consumption, and overall carbon emissions and promote walkable community design.

- The draft **Active Transportation Master Plan** (pending adoption) sets a policy framework and guidance for developing regulations and standards that better support bike and pedestrian transportation and prioritizes key infrastructure investments.

To achieve these policy goals and accelerate implementation, new transportation planning and design methods are needed. This work will begin with a MetroPlan funded grant that staff refer to as *The Transforming Flagstaff's Transportation System Project* (The Project).

The Project:

1. Train staff in best practices and emerging trends in transportation and climate integration.
2. Develop tools for assessing the climate impacts of transportation and development projects.
3. Develop performance standards to guide development and infrastructure projects.
4. Revise existing development regulations and standards, guidelines, and processes, including the City of Flagstaff Zoning Code subdivision regulations, and Engineering Standards.

This work will be completed in three phases, as described below.

Project Team:

This work will be led jointly by the Sustainability Office and Engineering Division, with key involvement by the Community Development Division. Jeff Bauman, Traffic Engineer, and Jenny Niemann, Climate Program Manager, will be the project leads. Other divisions will be involved as necessarily, including but not limited to Community Investment and Public Works.

Phase One: Training and Tools

The Sustainability Office secured a \$100,000 grant through MetroPlan Greater Flagstaff's mini-grant program. This grant will enable the City of Flagstaff and MetroPlan to partner on The Project, which will complement the development of the Stride Forward Regional Transportation Plan. To execute the grant, MetroPlan Flagstaff will engage a consultant to deliver the following project components:

1. **A training workshop** for City staff and MetroPlan partner agencies, to review best practices and emerging trends in transportation and climate integration, transportation demand reduction, and tools to reimagine transportation. Led by national experts, this workshop will increase understanding of best practices, review results in peer communities, and analyze available tools for applicability in Flagstaff.
2. **Develop tools** for assessing the climate impacts of transportation and development projects. This task will include an evaluation of the Flagstaff Regional Transportation Model for how it can best evaluate vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and the associated impacts of both private developments and infrastructure investments. This task also includes the recommendation or development of additional tools that may be needed to evaluate VMT.
3. **Develop performance standards** to guide development and infrastructure projects. The development of the performance standards should align with or rely on the results from the MetroPlan Stride Forward Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) process. The performance standards will incorporate concepts such as measurements for vehicle miles traveled (VMT) production, strategies to reduce VMT, methods to incorporate transportation demand management (TDM), and new standards for the level of service provided to bikes and pedestrians.

Timing: Anticipated completion December 2022.

Funding: \$100,000 in funding provided through the MetroPlan mini grant.

External Collaboration: MetroPlan is partnering with the City on Phase One. Staff will work to communicate results to the development community.

Phase Two: Code and Standard Revisions

The City project team will analyze and develop revisions to existing City codes, standards and processes. Much of this work will be conducted by outside experts (consultants) who work closely City staff and City partners.

1. Develop revisions and amendments to development regulations, standards, and processes. These revisions will be designed to support and implement the performance objectives developed in Phase

One and align with City regulations and policies. The following regulations will be reviewed and revised as needed:

- The City of Flagstaff Zoning Code, including but not limited to:
 - Parking requirements
 - Development requirements, including specifications for providing connections to FUTS trails, parking lots, etc.
 - Subdivision codes, including but not limited to connectivity and/or system density standards.
 - May include density bonuses or other mechanisms to induce beneficial land use patterns
- City of Flagstaff Engineering Standards (including TIA processes) for contextually sensitive street cross-sections and intersection designs, including but not limited to:
 - Roadway standards, including lane widths and the presence of turn lanes;
 - Sidewalk standards;
 - Bike facility standards;
 - Bike and pedestrian crossing standards, warrants and locations;
 - Bus stop and pullout standards and warrants (coordinated with Mountain Line); and
 - Transportation impact analysis (TIA) and warrants processes.

2. Review City of Flagstaff transportation practices and processes that guide transportation and development projects and make recommendations for revisions based on the principles of complete transportation, context sensitive solutions, and complete transportation. Review, revise or create the following processes:

- Travel demand management (TDM) policies, processes, and programs.
 - Create recommendations for incorporating TDM into transportation and land use planning, and the creation of a TDM program.
- Transportation processes and practices, including but not limited to:
 - Temporary traffic control plans (i.e., for pedestrian or bike closures and detours)
 - Expanded use of right-of-way
 - Neighborhood traffic calming
 - Sidewalk replacement, maintenance and encroachments
 - School pick-up and drop-off
 - Winter parking ordinance
 - Speed limits
- Project review process, including City Commissions and inter-division staff (IDS) review.

3. In FY22-23, the City hopes to begin a separate project to analyze City Codes for alignment or conflict with the Carbon Neutrality Plan and the 10-year Flagstaff Housing Plan if funding is made available. This analysis is a critical step in implementation for both Plans, as it will help the City identify areas of conflict between adopted policies and existing Codes.

Timing: Phase Two will begin after the start of Phase One, as some elements of this work can be completed concurrently. Other elements will begin after the conclusion of Phase One.

Funding:

- Initial funding is proposed through Proposition 419 transportation funds (\$75,000), and a one-time \$25,000 FY22-23 budget request submitted by the Engineering Team.
- Supplemental funding will be needed in future budget years. Comprehensive code and process change is a multi-year endeavor and will span several budget cycles.
- The Sustainability and Housing Sections have submitted two requests totaling \$250,000 to provide consultant support for this project.

External Collaboration: MetroPlan and Mountain Line will be critical partners.

Phase Three: Public Review and Adoption

After the consultant teams develops recommendations, tools, and code revisions, City staff will work to engage the public and solicit feedback. This work fulfills the policy direction of the Regional Plan, Carbon Neutrality Plan, and draft Active Transportation Master Plan. Recognizing the solid foundations of public participation that created those Plans, City Staff will endeavor to engage the public at an informational level.

Public engagement will serve two purposes:

1. Engage the Flagstaff community in conversations on transportation policies and regulatory changes with the public. This project has the potential to dramatically change transportation policy and planning in Flagstaff; its success rests on building strong public support for implementing the transportation vision established in Flagstaff's many planning documents. City staff will create an outreach plan to reach all parts of the Flagstaff community, hosting conversations around transportation decisions, trade-offs, costs and benefits.
 - Engagement will include an education campaign to discuss the transportation transformation project with the public. This will include:
 - A project webpage with details about this overall project, policy support, and individual recommendations.
 - Informational media on 'the big shift'.
 - Events to discuss transportation decisions, community tensions, and trade-offs.
 - A summary of previous community engagement on transportation choices, compiling the numerous City surveys regarding transportation conducted over the last decade.
2. Update the Flagstaff community on the recommended regulatory and process revisions, to inform, solicit feedback, and develop support. This work will take place on an as-needed basis, following the achievement of project milestones and leading up to Council adoption. Some engagement may be concurrent with phases one and two.
 - The City will present proposed Code changes to the community and Council in staged revisions, to reduce confusion and efficiently pursue adoption. For each batch of proposed revisions, staff will engage the public through the following methods:
 - Presentations to the Transportation, Planning and Zoning, and Sustainability Commissions, among other Commissions as needed.
 - A Council work session.
 - An online Open House to review the recommended actions and solicit feedback.
 - Social media and newsletter campaigns to encourage residents to learn more.
 - After this engagement process, City staff will present the Code/standard revisions to Council for consideration.

Timing: Public engagement, review and adoption will occur prior to each element of code changes going to Council.

Funding: Existing funding and staff time will be used to support outreach activities if possible. Based on staff workloads, external consultant support (and related funding) may be necessary.

External Collaboration: Partner agencies and community organizations will be asked to assist in reaching community members.

Conclusion

The work highlighted in this report represents the beginning of the Big Shift. As discussed in the Carbon Neutrality Plan, pursuing the Big Shift and meeting our climate goals will require difficult conversations and an honest acknowledgement of the tensions among community priorities and needs. This Project will help us meet these tensions with open dialogue and creative thinking. Because this Project is far-reaching and represents significant change from the status quo, City staff and leadership should expect lively conversations. Regular dialogue with the community will help the City to build community trust and find opportunities for productive discourse.