

## 2 – Livability

---

### Quality of Life or "Livability" Issues

We hear a lot about "livability" and "quality of life," but what does that really mean? Our day-to-day experience of living in the Salem-Keizer region is what truly comprises our sense of livability or the quality of life that we associate with our community. This experience is made up of many discrete elements that, taken together, provide the overall texture of our daily lives. These elements are interrelated and interdependent; actions taken in one particular arena often have effects in many of the others. For example, the decision to improve or not improve some portion of the transportation system may affect several aspects of livability simultaneously: affordability, mobility, the environment, land use, and the level and distribution of public infrastructure. As a result, the overall goal of the Regional Transportation Systems Plan (RTSP), which is "To provide adequate levels of mobility on the regional transportation system while maintaining or improving our overall quality of life," entails choices and trade-offs among many, if not all, of the elements that manifest our core values and comprise our sense of livability. It is critical, therefore, that the community considers an entire range of affected issues in the development of the land use patterns that shape the urban landscape and the transportation systems designed to serve that land use pattern. Specific livability issues that need to be considered as we plan for our future include:

#### **Affordability**

- Cost of living (housing, food, clothing, travel, etc.)
- Cost of doing business (wages, benefits, distribution, etc.)
- Cost of providing public services/infrastructure

#### **Mobility**

- Access to opportunities (residential, employment, commercial, educational, etc.)
- Convenience of travel
- Safety
- Availability of modal choices
- Cost

#### **Environmental Considerations**

- Geography/climate
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Ambient noise quality

## **Public Services/Infrastructure (Transportation Systems, Schools, Police, Fire, etc.)**

- Level of service
- Distribution/availability

## **Opportunities**

- Economic (jobs, markets, suppliers)
- Residential (housing, customer base)
- Commercial (retail, services)
- Social (clubs, organizations)
- Spiritual (churches, synagogues, other places of worship)
- Entertainment (cultural, popular)
- Recreational (open spaces, scenic places, indoor and outdoor activities)
- Educational (schools, colleges, libraries)
- Civic (public services, public spaces, community events)

## **Community Character**

- Urban forms (land use patterns, architectural style)
- Neighborhood characteristics
- Sense of community (interaction, cohesion)
- Security (person, property)

Obviously, many (if not most) of these issues are beyond the scope of a transportation plan, and are most appropriately addressed through the community-wide development of a vision for the future that can provide a focused overall direction for the individual plans that deal with specific issues. It is essential, however, for those "specific issue" (i.e., transportation) plans to take into account important interrelationships that do directly affect the core concentration area of a given plan.

## **Issues Addressed by this Plan**

The development of the Regional Transportation Systems Plan has attempted to recognize the fundamental relationships between land uses, lifestyles, population and employment growth, and transportation demand. All parts of the region to some degree share common transportation needs for going to work, school, shopping, recreation, etc. The geographic extent of our community; its particular land use pattern; the number and distribution of opportunities for working, shopping, and other activities; the viability of transportation options among modes; and the street system all serve to influence our travel choices and the subsequent transportation demand. As new development alters the types and locations of activities we engage in, our daily travel patterns shift and evolve in new directions. Over a 20-year period, the sum of these land use changes can have a significant impact on the travel patterns in the area and the transportation system necessary to accommodate the travel demand associated with them. It is useful, therefore, to examine the interrelationship between land use patterns,

lifestyle characteristics, demographic trends, and infrastructure systems in the development of the long-range transportation plan.

## The Importance of Land Use and Development Patterns

The arrangement, density, and diversity of land uses contained in the comprehensive plans of the local jurisdictions in the region are the most significant shapers of travel demand. Much of our reliance on the automobile stems from historical land use policies that have encouraged the separation of land uses, limited density, and treated developable land as a limitless resource. As a result, our urban landscape has often embodied a pattern of sprawled development which makes most destination points too far apart or too geographically diverse to be within reasonable walking or biking distance or to be effectively served by transit. In addition, land uses have often been designed to specifically accommodate the automobile at the expense of other modes of transportation. As a result, we often feel forced to drive in order to meet our daily travel needs.

Historical development patterns also serve to limit the mobility of particular groups within our society who are unable or cannot afford to drive. These groups include youth, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled. Individuals within these groups are thus dependent on public transportation or other parties for meeting their daily transportation needs.

Although alterations in the land use patterns embodied in the adopted local comprehensive plans of the region are beyond the scope of this Plan, local jurisdictions are encouraged to incorporate the following activities in their plan review cycles:

- Allow proposals for more compact development. This could make walking or bicycling between destinations attractive and possible. It could also promote the higher population densities necessary to support an improved transit system. Specific strategies to increase compact development could include:
  - Emphasizing infill development in the currently developed area instead of new development on the outskirts of the town or city
  - Allowing higher density residential uses such as row houses, apartments, small-lot single family, and cluster developments
- Encourage a proximate mixture of land uses. For example, siting housing within one quarter of a mile of offices and retail opportunities could enable people to work and shop within walking/biking distance of their homes. Aside from the added convenience, this approach could substantially increase the transportation independence of the mobility-limited.
- Increase allowable densities along transit corridors. This could provide a larger potential ridership for improved mass transit systems by making them more efficient and thus more cost effective. Specific strategies include:

- Increasing housing density along transit corridors
- Siting transit-oriented commercial and office facilities along transit corridors
- Encourage transit- and pedestrian-sensitive designs for new business and office park developments. These designs make it easier for people to get to these destinations by taking the bus. Specific strategies include:
  - Siting buildings to minimize the walking distance to entrances of office park buildings
  - Providing bus connection points near the front entrances of major buildings
  - Equipping waiting and pedestrian areas with amenities such as benches, lighting, weather protection, and information
- Encourage pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly design considerations for new developments. These considerations facilitate the circulation of pedestrians and cyclists at the site and encourage these modes of transportation. Specific examples include:
  - Providing a separate internal circulation system for pedestrians and cyclists,
  - Developing paths through the site, as opposed to along its perimeter, for direct access and better safety
  - Selecting attractive landscaping, adequate lighting, and amenities to enhance the pedestrian/bicycling environment
  - Providing secure bicycle lockers, storage areas, and other amenities such as showers and changing rooms at worksites