

Urban Form and Transportation

Background

Problems and Opportunities

The city's overall development pattern and how developments are designed significantly affect the distance and the way that people travel. The Urban Form and Transportation Advisory Committee focused on promoting development patterns--higher residential densities and mixed uses--that make active transportation such as walking and bicycling easy and even preferable and that support a choice to use public transit rather than requiring a dependence on driving and parking.

Compact, higher density development patterns shorten the distance people must travel to reach work, shopping, or other points of interest. Compact development allows people to conveniently walk or cycle to some destinations within a reasonable time. Higher densities also supply the potential ridership that can support more frequent transit service and a greater variety of routes. At the same time, well-designed density and compact development can contribute to vibrant, economically healthy neighborhoods and to centers that offer a variety of goods and services, social gathering places, recreation/entertainment opportunities and attractive character.

In Omaha, projects such as Midtown Crossing have demonstrated the opportunity to add to a neighborhood's revitalization through higher density mixed-use redevelopment projects. Opportunities also exist to redevelop older auto-oriented shopping centers into well-designed mixed-use areas with increased residential densities that improve the feasibility of public transit service and benefit the surrounding neighborhoods. At the same time, an awareness of the public costs associated with various development patterns and densities is needed to establish support for measures that promote the health of the existing City and avoid outward sprawl.

According to the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Liveable Communities "Transportation energy usage, the number one user of petroleum fuels, could significantly be reduced through more compact and mixed use land development patterns served by a variety of transportation choices."²³

The Urban Form and Transportation Advisory Committee looked at the opportunities for creating a more effective transportation system in Omaha by adopting design standards for Complete Streets²⁴. The concept is focused on providing for pathways of movement that are pleasant, safe, and effective for active transportation while strategically including transit routes as well as accommodating automobiles.

In 2008 82% of workers in the Omaha area drove to work alone and nearly 10% car-pooled. Approximately 1% of the Omaha metropolitan area population reported using public transportation in their work commute, just over 2% walked, and 1% used "other" means such as bicycling.²⁵ Although private autos seem to provide many people with convenience and independence, auto dependence is also associated with certain problems and costs:

- ❖ Traffic congestion
- ❖ Parking congestion
- ❖ Traffic accidents
- ❖ Road and parking infrastructure costs

- ❖ Automobile costs to consumers
- ❖ Inadequate mobility for non-drivers
- ❖ Excessive energy consumption
- ❖ Pollution emissions²⁶

Benefits and opportunities resulting from increasing and strengthening diverse transportation modes in the Omaha metropolitan area may include:

- ❖ Consumer Benefits - Consumers can save money and time by avoiding the need to chauffeur non-drivers. Improved walking and cycling conditions allow people to combine utilitarian and recreation trips, providing cost savings and health benefits.
- ❖ Efficiency - Increasing transportation diversity helps reduce traffic congestion, facility costs, environmental impacts and consumer expenses.
- ❖ Equity - People who are physically, economically or socially disadvantaged can have basic mobility and affordable transportation.
- ❖ Livability - In places where walking and cycling are safe and pleasant, communities become more “livable,” and property values and commercial activity are increased.
- ❖ Resilience and Security - A diverse and flexible transport system can accommodate changes such as energy supply disruptions and fuel price increases, poverty, and transport system stresses such as disasters, major sport and cultural events, and infrastructure construction projects.
- ❖ Economic Development - Economic development is promoted by reducing transport problems and costs (traffic congestion, road and parking facility costs, accident damages, energy consumption) and by improving employee access to jobs.²⁷

Another area of opportunity seen by the Urban Form and Transportation Advisory Committee was optimization of the function and use of the transportation system as a whole, planning the system through a regional scope. The Advisory Committee recognized that a whole-system view creates an opportunity for the public transit system to become an attractive option by its coverage and convenience, along with the ability to easily make connections between and among the various transportation modes within the system--a multi-modal system.

Issues and Directions

Input from the public meetings and from discussions in the Urban Form and Transportation Advisory Committee identified these issues and directions:

- ❖ Form a regional model through consensus with surrounding jurisdictions on the importance of controlling sprawl and development patterns, and handling transportation and growth;
- ❖ Promote an understanding of the benefits of higher density that will enhance neighborhoods and the community through high quality design and reduced costs of public services;
- ❖ Develop in a pattern of clusters of destinations and safe routes to destinations; potential pattern of one-mile access to clusters, five minute or ¼ mile walking distance, three mile biking distance;
- ❖ Create a significant shift in transportation modes from private auto to pedestrian, bicycling, and public transit;

- ❖ Adopt a bicycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly street design; identify “complete streets” design standards to support active transportation;
- ❖ Plan for public transportation for different needs; create a system that makes sense for all trips as well as all types of commuters—both rapid and slow transit; provide for convenient and safe interconnections between public transit and other transportation modes;
- ❖ Move toward an infrastructure for alternative fuels.

Concepts

The Urban Form and Transportation Advisory Group used the following concepts to develop the overall statement, measurements, goals, objectives, and strategies contained in the following sections:

- ❖ Reduce the impact on the environment and the per capita cost of services;
- ❖ Accommodate the urban population through compact and contiguous development;
- ❖ Support a development pattern with a transportation network that promotes low-impact and active transportation modes;
- ❖ Ensure that land is developed as clusters of destinations within walking distance;
- ❖ Use a regional model for transportation and growth management to measure and evaluate the public costs and benefits of various development patterns and densities;
- ❖ Coordinate with other communities in the region to prevent sprawl by focusing development and growth within existing communities;
- ❖ Promote well-designed higher density development to conserve land, to enhance existing neighborhoods, and to reduce per capita costs of public utilities, infrastructure, and services including public transportation;
- ❖ Design streets to make them safe and enjoyable for bicycles and pedestrians;
- ❖ Plan for and organize functional connections between and among various transportation modes.

Urban Form and Transportation Overall Statement

Omaha will substantially reduce its impact on the environment and the per capita cost of critical infrastructure and municipal services and substantially increase its level of urban quality and community health by:

- ❖ Accommodating its potential urban population within a compact, contiguous urban area;
- ❖ Productively and effectively using all land within its 2010 municipal limits.;
- ❖ Supporting an efficient city form with a balanced transportation network that increases the role of low-impact and active transportation modes in providing access to all parts of the city.

Measurements

We will measure our success by achieving five overall measurements toward sustainability at the end of the next 20 years:

1. Omaha’s population density will grow to 4,500 people per square mile. Our current population density is 3,489 people per square mile. Our population density in 1950 was 6,171 people per square mile.

2. Ten per cent of all trips in Omaha will be made by active transportation modes – pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation. Today about 2% of all trips and 4.4% of commuting trips are made by these modes.
3. Fewer than 65% of all work commuting trips will be made in single-occupancy automobiles by 2030. Currently, about 82% of commuting trips are made in single occupancy automobiles.
4. Using 2010 as the base year, decrease per capita motor vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by Omaha motorists by 10% by 2030. This will require creating a framework for measuring and monitoring VMT using indicators such as traffic modeling, traffic counts, gas consumption, population levels and or other relevant data. (Colorado Springs reference)

Urban Form and Transportation Goal Summary

LARGE-SCALE CITY FORM

Develop a city form that both reduces both the per capita cost of providing city services and establishes the density necessary to support more energy-efficient forms of transportation.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Generate development at higher residential densities and true mixed uses that produce more diverse environments and reduce the number of necessary automobile trips.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Create individual developments with components that are connected, walkable, and accessible to all modes of transportation, by providing safe, defined, and pleasant routes from the public realm to destinations, based on the needs of each mode. Through redevelopment and change to underutilized areas, establish densities that support transportation alternatives.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Develop a transportation network that moves people and freight within and through the metropolitan area efficiently, maximizing access and minimizing vehicle miles traveled, energy consumed, and pollutants emitted.

TRANSIT

Develop a public transportation system that offers a degree of coverage, convenience, and amenity, that both provides transportation equity for dependent customers and makes transit an attractive option for discretionary passengers.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Provide a high level of citywide access and continuity to pedestrians and bicyclists, making active transportation a realistic and integral part of the city's transportation network.

LARGE-SCALE CITY FORM

Develop a city form that both reduces both the per capita cost of providing city services and establishes the density necessary to support more energy-efficient forms of transportation.

Objectives:

1. Establish a minimum aggregate gross residential density in the range of 4 to 4.5 dwelling units per acre (du/acre) for new developable land converted from agricultural to urban use within Omaha's projected urban services area. "Developable land" excludes areas that cannot be developed because of environmental resources or constraints such as streams and floodplains.
 - 1.1. Amend the urban development policy (UDP) to establish an urban growth boundary whose modification is based primarily on population and density capacity rather than the percentage of land absorbed.
 - 1.2. Define target housing and population counts for each urban development policy sector, based on the 4 to 4.5 du/acre gross density standard. (Example: The target minimum number of housing units for a square mile of land within the zone of present development would range from 2,560 (640 acres x 4 du/acre) to 2,820 (640 acres x 4.5 du/acre).
 - 1.3. Monitor development density annually for the entire zone of present development, urban development policy sectors, and sections within those sectors. Recommend changes or modifications in development applications and proposals based on this annual review.
 - 1.4. Modify the UDP growth boundary when actual development in a sector achieves a specific threshold percentage of the housing production target for that sector.
2. Establish a minimum aggregate gross density of approximately 8 du/acre for new development or redevelopment within the 2010 city limits.
 - 2.1. Develop a citywide inventory of land within the 2010 city limits that is appropriate for residential or mixed use redevelopment. Based on this inventory, establish a minimum aggregate population and housing target for the land in this inventory, taken together.
 - 2.2. Annually monitor development density on new development, infill, and redevelopment sites within the 2010 city limits. Recommend changes or modifications in development applications and proposals based on this annual review.
 - 2.3. Require any project that includes residential development that receives city development incentives such as tax increment financing (TIF) to achieve a minimum density of 8 units per acre, unless the project fills another critical development goal, such as income integration in low-income neighborhoods.
3. Maximize the percentage of the metropolitan area population contained within contiguous areas fully served by urban infrastructure.
 - 3.1. Work with other metropolitan planning jurisdictions to develop a regional growth plan that identifies future extensions of urban services and establishes baseline population and housing goals for new development in urban services areas.

- 3.2. On a regional basis, prevent or control premature low-density development on lands within future urban services areas. Utilize innovative techniques such as build-through acreages to permit short-term development before extension of urban infrastructure without compromising long-term density targets.
- 3.3. Initiate and support state legislation that includes incentives for extension of urban services consistent with local and regional comprehensive plans and that increases the ability of metropolitan planning organizations (MPO's) to coordinate regional growth policy.
4. Employ conservation development techniques on a macro scale to preserve environmental resources, parks, greenways, and other open and natural areas without compromising overall density targets within Omaha's urban growth area.
 - 4.1. In the comprehensive plan, prepare an open space preservation map, identifying major environmental resources, drainageways, large parks (including parks proposed in the Suburban Parks Master Plan), and other features that will form a web of permanent open space within the zone of present development.
 - 4.2. Modify target densities for urban development sectors based on the quantity of permanent open space contained within each sector.
 - 4.3. Encourage and support proposals for higher development densities on developable land within these sectors to compensate for these major open spaces.
 - 4.4. Create a continuous green and public space network that links these open lands together with ribbons of boulevards, trails, green corridors, and green streets.
5. Establish true mixed use nodes that integrate residential activity centers, commercial development, and employment focuses into highly connected nuclei.
 - 5.1. Establish both minimum and maximum percentages of land that can be placed in any one overall use category (e.g. residential, office, commercial, industrial) within mixed use areas designated by the comprehensive plan or within mixed use development proposals.
 - 5.2. Apply standards established by the Urban Design Element to require a high degree of street, pedestrian, and open space connectivity among individual uses and to surrounding areas.
6. Provide comprehensive public review of major transportation and infrastructure investments that tend to disperse population, encourage low-density development, and increase vehicle miles traveled.
 - 6.1. Require an independent urban growth impact analysis of these projects to assess their impact on urban form and the ability of Omaha to meet the 2030 goals and measurements established by this plan. As part of this analysis, assess the benefits and impacts of the project.
 - 6.2. Include this analysis as part of any required reviews and approvals of the project by the Planning Board and City Council.

- 6.3. Enact enforceable and specific area development plans that include land use controls to minimize these influences when such projects have clearly demonstrable public benefits.
7. Ensure that regulatory standards and procedures, financing techniques, and public investment priorities do not favor low-density edge development over compact and/or mixed use projects, desirable development within Omaha's 2010 limits, or redevelopment on underutilized sites. "Low-density" development has densities below the target density for its specific area, as established by the comprehensive plan.
 - 7.1. Complete a rigorous assessment of the relative impacts and equities of development regulations, financing methods such as Sanitary and Improvement Districts (SID) and TIF, and capital investments.
 - 7.2. Correct or adjust policies that tend to favor low-density, decentralized development, or provide compensating tools to remove such a disparity.
 - 7.3. Restructure regulatory and investment processes to encourage mixed use development, mixed-density housing, and infill development and redevelopment.
 - 7.4. Determine the full cost to the city and region by allowing and supporting new development at the suburban fringe while vacant and underutilized properties exist within the urbanized area.
 - 7.5. Expand the use of the Urban Development Policy to ensure that infill development and redevelopment are fully considered when extending the City's Present Development Zone boundary. Also, work with MAPA and other agencies to encourage the creation of an urban growth management system for the region.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Generate development at higher residential densities and true mixed uses that produce more diverse environments and reduce the number of necessary automobile trips.

Objectives:

1. Encourage redevelopment of underused and/or obsolete commercial and industrial development sites within the 2010 city limits as mixed use developments or other suitable uses. In supportive environments, include medium- and high-density urban residential development as a preferred component of redevelopment projects.
 - 1.1. Complete an inventory of potential reuse sites within the city. Include in this inventory an assessment of the range of appropriate uses for each site.
 - 1.2. Maintain and market an "opportunity list" of underused and obsolete commercial/industrial sites that might be suitable for future redevelopment, with appropriate site development guidelines.

- 1.3. Adapt local tax increment financing applications to the redevelopment of underused or unused sites on a citywide basis. Adaptation includes the following steps:
 - ❖ Removing geographic limitations on TIF and other incentives for specific classes of projects, such as conversion of obsolete commercial or industrial sites to mixed-use development.
 - ❖ Through the legislative process, replace language in the state Community Development Law that requires a finding of “blighted and substandard” conditions with criteria that qualify an area or project as a “reinvestment” or “revitalization” district.
 - ❖ Amend both state and local criteria permitting the use of TIF to include a high level of vacancy (for example, 25% or above) in existing buildings, or a high percentage of underutilized land (for example, 50% of the land area in either disuse or unnecessary parking).
 - ❖ For projects that comply with this objective and are located within targeted areas, provide greater assistance through tax increment financing by extending the tax allocation period or using other techniques.
2. Provide regulatory, financial, and public realm incentives to produce desirable development within the 2010 limits.
 - 2.1. Establish a public consensus for reinvestment by analyzing and presenting the relationship between the unit cost of city services and infrastructure (trash collection, snow plowing, street maintenance) and population density. Decouple the perceived relationship between high quality and low density/large lots.
 - 2.2. Create an incentive structure that encourages developers to incorporate significant residential use in commercial/retail projects. Incentives may include flexibility on zoning and comprehensive plan requirements and limitations.
 - 2.3. Create a land use regulatory framework that promotes mixed-use and mixed-density development rather than single-use districts. Consider applicability of “smart code” provisions to Omaha. Smart codes generally establish districts based on intensity and configuration of development rather than land uses, and establishes development guidelines that fit the character of those districts.
3. Strengthen neighborhood centers by maximizing the competitiveness of traditional centers, such as neighborhood business districts, and increase the walkability and coherence of potential neighborhood centers.

- 3.1. Develop and promote new development financing tools such as transportation development districts and Community Commercial Districts that are available in other states and communities. These types of financing structures use dedicated sales taxes, above and below the line tax increment financing, special assessments and ad valorem levies, and other sources to finance eligible project costs. Efforts should include sponsorship of appropriate state legislation, working in common with rural and small city business district interests.
- 3.2. Modify the business improvement district law if necessary to permit voluntary assessment districts by which residents in surrounding neighborhoods can help finance capital improvements in their neighborhood business district. Participation in the district is voluntary (although assessment obligations after agreeing to participate are not) and based on the premise that a strong neighborhood business district increases the value of surrounding residential property.
- 3.3. Develop a “Shop Omaha’s Main Streets” campaign that includes joint marketing material and views neighborhood business districts as a collection of unique areas with the individual business districts, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Chamber.
- 3.4. Promote mixed use redevelopment opportunities in neighborhood business districts, with an emphasis on supporting urban residential development.
- 3.5. Adapt organizational or awareness-building techniques to potential neighborhood business districts to foster neighborhood vision and cohesion.
4. Eliminate or minimize conditions that diminish the economic value of established neighborhoods and endanger the security of investments in them. These conditions include land uses with negative operating effects, environmental hazards, deteriorating housing conditions, poor site maintenance, street and sidewalk deterioration, transportation impacts, and other influences.
 - 4.1. Create a website that allows citizens to identify blighted conditions for city follow-up action.
 - 4.2. Consider initiating state legislation that gives neighbors standing to seek civil damages against owners of deteriorated property that demonstrably affects the value of their properties.
 - 4.3. Maintain aggressive code enforcement and property maintenance programs.
 - 4.4. Provide community-wide volunteer assistance to people who have difficulty maintaining or repairing their own properties.
5. Orient Omaha’s development community to mixed use development within the established city as well as new “Greenfield” growth on the urban edge.
 - 5.1. Encourage a value-added trade association connecting developers who have developed or are interested in developing urban redevelopment and mixed-use projects.

- 5.2. Organize a series of Smart Growth Conferences to present the economic rewards of mixed use development.
6. Create a balanced transportation infrastructure that supports transit oriented development (TOD's), neighborhood connectivity, high-density residential settings, and a high-intensity, mixed use central corridor.
 - 6.1. Develop a rapid transit framework affordable and feasible for Omaha but with sufficient impact to create conditions that generate transit oriented development.
 - 6.2. Study the use of a fixed guideway system as a catalyst to generate a high-density mixed use central corridor between Downtown and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Create individual developments with components that are connected, walkable, and accessible to all modes of transportation, by providing safe, defined, and pleasant routes from the public realm to destinations, based on the needs of each mode. Through redevelopment and change to underutilized areas, establish densities that support transportation alternatives.

Objectives:

1. Apply standards for Areas of Civic Importance (ACI's) and Major Commercial Corridors (MCC's) in advance of, rather than in reaction to, new development.
 - 1.1. Systematically enact ACI and MCC overlays in areas identified in the Urban Design Element. Begin the process with stakeholder meetings that present the implications and benefits of the overlay districts.
 - 1.2. Conceive of developments as part of either horizontally or vertically mixed use "projects." Horizontally mixed use projects may involve single-use components that are highly connected to each other by streets, greenways, and pedestrian systems. Vertically mixed use projects add vertical integration of different uses in single buildings.
2. In new areas, apply a neighborhood unit concept to walkable residential design, with a civic heart that may include a neighborhood common and/or school, connected to surrounding residential neighborhoods and to mixed use centers oriented to principal external intersections.
 - 2.1. Add a level of detail to the land use plan that establishes a diagrammatic framework for neighborhood units.
 - 2.2. Encourage broader use of the Walkable Residential Neighborhood (WRN) overlay district proposed by the Urban Design Element. Examine the WRN proposal for provisions that may discourage its broader use.
 - 2.3. Modify subdivision regulations and street and sidewalk network development standards that encourage links and route options to important neighborhood features.

- 2.4. Provide internal and external street, pedestrian, and bicycle connections between adjacent neighborhoods that, taken together, generate network continuity.
- 2.5. Locate park dedications and school sites consistent with the neighborhood unit concept of a civic heart. This concept is consistent with the city's adopted Suburban Parks Master Plan.
3. Reduce the amount of land devoted to the storage of motor vehicles.
 - 3.1. Adjust parking requirements for complementary mixed uses in mixed use projects.
 - 3.2. Establish optimum parking requirements based on typical rather than incidental peak loads.
 - 3.3. Create disincentives for exceeding optimum parking requirements, based on excessive impact on the landscape, stormwater management, and inefficient use of land. Disincentives may include a financial impact fee or additional performance or site development requirements.
4. Require project designs that provide direct, safe, and secure links for pedestrians and bicyclists between the public environment and most commercial and office developments.
 - 4.1. Review and amend current city codes to require bicycle and pedestrian access and connections for major projects.
 - 4.2. Include external and internal pedestrian and bicycle access and links as criteria in the project review and approval process.
 - 4.3. Provide bicycle parking in large projects and projects in locations that are likely to experience substantial future bicycle traffic.
5. Increase the number of transit oriented developments and provide both the transit infrastructure and related facilities necessary to support them.
 - 5.1. Require development designs that cluster buildings for maximum transit access, yield, and destination options for transit users.
 - 5.2. Build a transit infrastructure with the solidity and capability necessary to influence development patterns.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Develop a transportation network that moves people and freight within and through the metropolitan area efficiently, maximizing access and minimizing vehicle miles traveled, energy consumed, and pollutants emitted.

Objectives:

1. Create a multi-modal transportation network that provides access to most significant community destinations for motorists, transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians, and personal transportation vehicles.

- 1.1. Complete and implement a Balanced Transportation Plan as the transportation element of the city's comprehensive plan. The Balanced Transportation Plan should address all modes as integral parts of the overall transportation system, and will guide city transportation investments for the next twenty years.
 - 1.2. Establish a permanent commitment within City government to a balanced system and to each constituent mode.
 - 1.3. Establish a unified transportation network financing system that has the flexibility and fungibility necessary to fund and sustain a multi-modal network.
 - 1.4. Accommodate transit, bicycle transportation, and pedestrian access into all major network investments as a default policy. Exclusion of any of these modes should require a project review that identifies alternatives that provide similar or better accommodations. Within the next five years, execute at least five strategic complete transportation projects that demonstrate techniques and efficiencies of this policy.
2. Create a financing structure for the development and maintenance of the balanced transportation network that is stable and consistent with public policy goals, including use of vehicles with maximum fuel efficiency, compact development, and reduction in vehicle miles traveled.
 - 2.1. Use vehicle miles traveled (VMT) or alternative techniques as a basis for user-financed maintenance of the transportation network.
 - 2.2. Implement a user-based funding program capable of funding a significant share of maintenance of the city's on-street bicycle transportation infrastructure.
3. Reduce congestion and increase access by increasing connectivity, reducing friction between through and local traffic movement, and providing multiple routes to destinations between neighborhoods.
 - 3.1. Design and use a "connectivity index" or other measure that evaluates street connections in project proposals.
 - 3.2. Maintain current comprehensive plan policies that require street connectivity at half- and quarter-mile points within development areas defined by section-line roads.
 - 3.3. Require internal street connections between major commercial and mixed use developments and adjacent neighborhoods. Design connections to prevent undesirable cut-through traffic within residential neighborhoods.
 - 3.4. Utilize techniques such as "rearage" roads and access loops to provide local access to development along major arterial corridors. Require that such access techniques also accommodate alternative transportation modes.

- 3.5. Implement H.W.S. Cleveland Boulevard and other boulevard and parkway links envisioned by the adopted suburban parks master plan as local corridors that emphasize low/moderate-speed inter-neighborhood traffic, and bicycle and pedestrian transportation within a high-quality street environment.
 - 3.6. Complete a street and sidewalk connectivity analysis of the existing network to identify opportunities to create or improve performance.
4. Implement a street design program that responds to urban contexts and the role of streets as public spaces. Incorporate green streets, featuring sustainable landscaping standards, streetscape elements, and effective storm water management practices, into this program.
 - 4.1. Analyze and map various development contexts served by the transportation network.
 - 4.2. Unify and operationalize Omaha's existing street design plates, the Green Streets Master Plan, the streetscape manual, subdivision regulations, and Environment Omaha recommendations into a new, consolidated design manual. Create an inter-departmental committee to create this unified manual and to define initial corridors and projects for implementation. Establish a specific time period for completion and application of this unified manual.
 - 4.3. Integrate features into street designs that control speeds without compromising safety to any class of street users. Recognize the danger of over-designed streets that encourage travel at unsafe speeds. Within the balanced transportation element and the unified street design standards, proposed above, establish guidelines and techniques that will reduce the propensity of motorists to travel at speeds that are inappropriate to their contexts. These techniques include narrower lane widths; bike lanes; improved pedestrian crossings; traffic calming devices such as roundabouts or traffic circles, neck-downs and curb extensions, chicanes, and other techniques; street alignments; enhanced street landscaping; and streetscape features that add human scale.
 - 4.4. Require design consultants on city projects to consider street projects as designed environments that respond to their urban contexts. Utilize internal reviews and the Urban Design Review Committee to review and approve street project designs.
 - 4.5. Establish a base level for "green street" features that are included in basic project costs. Direct existing programs (such as the Transportation Enhancements program) and new funding sources (such as an "urban design bond program") to enhancements and retrofit projects.
 - 4.6. Assure that Omaha receives a proportionate share of state-administered Transportation Enhancement funds and subsequent programs designed to encourage alternative transportation.

- 4.7. Invest in streets and the public environment in ways that create a sustained and desirable private market response within neighborhood centers and business districts (see Land Use and Development Policy Objective 3). In established areas, consider capital projects that upgrade the street environment to be equivalent to transportation investments and capacity improvements in developing areas.
- 4.8. Institute a multi-variable framework to guide the design process in planning, designing, and evaluating street improvement projects. Examples of criteria include:
 - ❖ Transportation Performance: mode share, safety and level of service (LOS). A lower LOS may be advisable to accomplish other objectives in strategic settings. (For example, the South 24th Street project degraded traffic operations but created a much stronger local business district)
 - ❖ Community Development Performance: The effect of the project and its design to enhance (or at least not degrade) the urban environment and to create urban places.
 - ❖ Economic Performance: The ability of the project to generate additional economic opportunity and improve commercial viability/compatibility, service, and values of adjacent development.
 - ❖ Community Health Performance: Accommodation within the project for active transportation, physical activity, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
 - ❖ Sustainability Performance: Use of materials and techniques that can be efficiently maintained, minimize or contain environmental impacts, avoid disturbance to unusual resources, and make maximum use of sound environmental management practices.
5. Establish and implement a Complete Streets program that establishes a network of multi-modal streets providing appropriate features to accommodate motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and public transportation.
 - 5.1. Define the city's Complete Street network through a Balanced Transportation Element of the comprehensive plan. Use this network as a guide for street design projects and bond issues.
 - 5.2. Coordinate the complete street network with alternative transportation initiatives, including an emerging Metro Area Transit system and BikeOmaha.
6. Facilitate an infrastructure that supports alternative fuels as these vehicles reach market scale.
 - 6.1. Work with the Omaha Public Power District and private owners to establish demonstration electric charging facilities at strategic locations when straight electric or plug-in hybrids reach a threshold level.

- 6.2. Provide permissive zoning and potential incentives to encourage private development of charging facilities and infrastructure for other alternative fuels, such as compressed natural gas, hydrogen, biofuels, and other potential sources.
- 6.3. Establish a baseline and a target in 2011 that will aggressively reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. When established, place this measurement in the "Measurement" section.
7. Expand the use of technology and innovative design techniques to maximize the capacity of the street system within a fixed street section.
 - 7.1. Test and implement new management technologies, such as adaptive controllers for intersections that continually monitor traffic via cameras for all approaches and adjust the signal timing immediately in response to demands.
 - 7.2. Expand efforts to improve corridor timing of traffic signal controllers to reduce congestion and delays.
 - 7.3. Increase the percentage of transportation funding directed to technology and traffic system management in relation to capital roadway projects. Recognize that investments in these technologies can minimize or delay the need for more expensive and intrusive measures such as lane additions.
 - 7.4. Continue to monitor advances in traffic management technologies and their application to Omaha.
8. Apply development criteria to new corridors if and when they are established that prevent or minimize population dispersion and non-contiguous development.
 - 8.1. Develop land use master plans, incorporated by ordinance as comprehensive plan sections, to control the nature, density, and timing of development in new corridors.
 - 8.2. Unify city, county, and metropolitan planning policies to apply these land use plans to areas outside the jurisdiction of the City of Omaha.
9. Expand the use of low and moderate speed motorized urban vehicles (such as low speed electric vehicles, scooters, electric bicycles, and future technologies), characterized by ultra-low emissions and extremely high fuel efficiency, for appropriate urban trips.
 - 9.1. Define a legal and geographic context for the on-street operation of low-speed, high-efficiency urban vehicles. The context should consider speed limits of various streets, operating zones, and performance and safety standards for vehicles.

- 9.2. Develop and implement regulations that address the use of motor-assisted personal mobility vehicles on portions of the city's active transportation infrastructure (multiple-use pathways, trails, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks). Personal mobility vehicles include Segways, electric bicycles, and very low-emission personal scooters. These regulations should address the size and performance limits of PMV's; compatibility with active transportation modes, types of permitted vehicles, methods of propulsion, tax status, and impact on infrastructure.
- 9.3. Create a marketing campaign that encourages people to acquire and use vehicles appropriate to the nature and length of their specific trips.
10. Provide for efficient intercity movement of freight and people in and through the metropolitan area, while reducing conflicts between through and local movements.
 - 10.1. Support projects that route intercity truck traffic not bound for Omaha away from major in-city highway corridors, extending the service life and capacity of those corridors (such as Interstate 80 through Omaha). Require that adequate land use controls be put into place to minimize premature development along these corridors.
 - 10.2. Create seamless intermodal hubs to connect people and freight at a low financial and social cost.
 - 10.3. Improve ground transportation services linking Eppley Airfield, Downtown, and other key community destinations for air travelers arriving in the city. Consider high-image, direct public transportation services that provide direct and rapid access to destinations, rather than local services that are unattractive to intercity travelers.
 - 10.4. Coordinate public and private airport ground transportation services, and provide good transportation access for employees.
 - 10.5. Maintain good connections between general aviation airports and ground transportation if demand emerges without incurring unsustainable new costs.
 - 10.6. Participate in initial interstate discussions to bring enhanced passenger rail services to Omaha. Probable initial targets include additional Chicago-Omaha-Lincoln service via Des Moines and the Quad Cities, and direct north-south service to Kansas City.
 - 10.7. Participate as required in projects that minimize delays in rail service for freight, and minimize potentially hazardous conditions, such as grade crossings.
 - 10.8. Establish new routes that take truck traffic originating in older industrial districts away from emerging mixed use corridors such as North Downtown.
 - 10.9. Promote carpooling and flexible work hour arrangements.

TRANSIT

Develop a public transportation system that offers a degree of coverage, convenience, and amenity that both provides transportation equity for dependent customers and makes transit an attractive option for discretionary passengers.

Objectives:

1. Develop a broad-based community consensus on the need for a quality transit system. Allocate the necessary resources to build and operate such a system.
 - 1.1. Conduct an education campaign for the Omaha metropolitan area on the economic benefits of a strong and adequately funded transit operation.
 - 1.2. Apply the findings of a targeted zip code telephone survey to obtain baseline data for use in performing a revised system needs analysis. Completion of the survey is scheduled for early September 2009.
 - 1.3. Complete an updated system needs analysis, to include potential new routes and service expansions. Obtain community feedback through use of public forums and presentations. Have process completed by spring 2010.
2. Establish Metro as a regional transit district, encompassing a metropolitan area-wide route structure and financing base for public transportation.
 - 2.1. Clarify Metro's ability to expand to a regional authority set forth by state statute in the next legislative session. Some key issues include funding, taxing authority and limitations, and governance.
 - 2.2. Meet with officials in a potential regional transit district (including Council Bluffs, Sarpy County, Washington County, Bellevue, Blair, Gretna, La Vista, Papillion, and Ralston to review service needs and system design. (Discussions with Bellevue, La Vista, Papillion and Ralston are underway).
 - 2.3. Reconstitute Metro as a regional district with an equitable funding system possibly based on level of service to various jurisdictions; based on results of the above actions.
3. Develop a metropolitan transit system that integrates different functions and demands of the metropolitan market – rapid long-distance service, local services, circulators, and flexible services that respond to individualized requirements.
 - 3.1. Complete a master plan for the development and funding of a comprehensive transit network, incorporating a full spectrum of services. Use the current survey and needs analysis processes to provide base information for the plan's directions.
 - 3.2. Address at least the role and potential application of the following service types within the transit plan:

- ❖ Bus rapid transit (BRT), with limited stop, high image, all-day services along transit corridors with highest densities, concentrations of destinations, and heaviest current use.
- ❖ Local services intersecting rapid transit services along other major corridors.
- ❖ Neighborhood-based circulators that provide fine-grained, flexible services that intersect both local and rapid transit services.
- ❖ Peak-hour only express services.
- ❖ Future use of higher-order transit services, including fixed guideway or exclusive right-of-way operations.

3.3. Include a phasing and financing program, and begin orderly implementation of the transit plan.

4. Create a strategic framework of rapid transit substantial enough to influence development patterns, but appropriate to both reasonably available resources and the configuration of the city.

4.1. Establish new proto-BRT services in the short-term at relatively low cost that are capable of demonstrating the potential of bus rapid transit, utilizing existing streets. The service should include limited stops with distinctive shelters, high-image vehicles with LRV-like design characteristics, and all-day operation that complements local services. Operate the new demonstration service at least on the east-west Dodge Street route and consider other well-performing candidate routes.

4.2. Identify and implement technologies, operating preferences, and infrastructure features for the BRT that can be implemented in the short-term.

4.3. Adjust existing local and circulator routes to provide direct and convenient connections to the proto-BRT services.

4.4. Use lessons learned through this experience to institute a more comprehensive rapid transit framework.

5. Locate major public facilities, hospitals, services, and employment centers at sites with good all-day access for transit users.

5.1. Designate transit-oriented development nodes to guide the location of significant community destinations at points of maximum access by all modes of transportation. Use public facilities as initial “seeds” to channel the development of these nodes.

5.2. Use the zoning ordinance to establish good transit access as a required condition for specific land use types. Define “good transit access” as sites with all-day service and headways no less frequent than 30 minutes.

- 5.3. Use the development review process to establish transit access as a criterion for approval. Include Metro Area Transit as a party to internal project review.
6. Develop a strong transit system identity with a highly positive image. Operate the system with “green,” clean, high-image, and attractive vehicles and support facilities, including use of alternative fuels and means of propulsion.
 - 6.1. Encourage Metro to continue converting its fleet to ultra low emission vehicles.
 - 6.2. Commission and implement a new transit design program, to be applied to all aspects of the system within a year from roll-out. To maintain brand integrity, cap the percentage of the fleet wrapped by advertising.
 - 6.3. Upgrade the level of vehicle interior and exterior appearance.
7. Utilize technology and improved access to information to increase transit’s competitiveness with private automobiles and increase access for transit-dependent customers.
 - 7.1. Focus on real-time information, expedited operations, and route flexibility to meet demands. This could include on-bus WI-FI and GPS bus location information at major stops.
 - 7.2. Apply technology on circulator or neighborhood service routes to provide “field” rather than fixed route services.
 - 7.3. Establish a regional transit brokerage system to coordinate transit trips for elderly, disabled, and low income between Metro / MOBY, HHS, and other public and private providers.
 - 7.4. Improve Metro’s online services to the public including continued website upgrades.
8. Maximize multi-modal transportation by strengthening the point of transfer from one mode to another (pedestrian to transit, bicycle to transit, or motor vehicle to transit), or between intersecting routes. Coordinate the city’s bicycle and transit systems to expand the use of the bicycle and personal mobility vehicles (PMV’s) as a means of local circulation.
 - 8.1. Coordinate the city’s bicycle and transit systems to expand the use of the bicycle as a means of local circulation.
 - 8.2. Strengthen bicycle/bus intermodalism with features at transit centers that encourage bike to bus transfers. Features should include convenient bicycle parking, maps, and other amenities.
 - 8.3. Incorporate a Bicycle Station, offering secure storage, light repair, and retail services at a new Downtown Transit Center. Issue a competitive request for proposals for operation of the station, offering nominal rent and other incentives to qualified private operators.
 - 8.4. Incorporate vehicle parking when possible at transit center developments to promote park and ride.

- 8.5. Incorporate existing Metro route information on bicycle/trail maps. Relocate and/or add stops to assure convenience from one mode to the other.
 - 8.6. Establish new transit centers serving Downtown and Midtown. Coordinate development of a state-of-the-art Midtown Transit Center with UNMC campus development.
 - 8.7. Use City project review and zoning approvals to require projects developed at transit center sites as identified by the balanced transportation element and Metro's comprehensive transit system development plan to accommodate the facility according to specific access and convenience criteria.
 - 8.8. Respond to emerging demand for new services, including intercity and commuter passenger rail services; and local, rapid, and regional bus services. With this response, develop an intermodal center that serves these emerging modes.
9. Study the use of a fixed guideway system such as a modern streetcar with supportive feeder services along potential development corridors (such as Downtown to UNMC or 24th Street to North Omaha), to produce and support high-yield, mixed-use development or meet community development and reinvestment objectives.
 - 9.1. Complete current studies/small starts and alternatives analysis.
 - 9.2. If feasible, seek funding and implement the study.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Provide a high level of citywide access and continuity to pedestrians and bicyclists, making active transportation a realistic and integral part of the city's transportation network.

Objectives:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive citywide bicycle system composed of multi-use pathways, complete streets, shared streets, and other links that meet the following criteria of service to most community destinations:
 - ❖ Coherence
 - ❖ Directness
 - ❖ Safety
 - ❖ Attractiveness
 - ❖ Comfort
- 1.1. Complete major commuter trail elements of the city's proposed multi-use pathway system by 2020. These major elements include the East-West Trail, connecting the Keystone and Field Club Trails; the Riverfront Trail from Bellevue to Boyer Chute; the West Papio Trail from Millard to Papillion; the 180th Street Trail; the Elkhorn/West Branch Trail from Elkhorn to the West Papio Trail; the Keystone Trail from Cunningham Lake to Democracy Park; and the Big Papio Trail from Bennington to Maple Street.

- 1.2. Expand the initial Bike Omaha pilot system into a 200-mile, primarily on-street system to complement the multi-use pathway system. The Bike Omaha system uses bike lanes, shared routes, off-street pathways, and identification and directional graphics.
 - 1.3. Provide a range of on- and off-street facilities within the system that respond to the skills, capabilities, and comfort levels of various types of bicyclists.
 - 1.4. Complete a Balanced Transportation Element of Omaha's comprehensive plan that places a high priority on active transportation. Develop a bicycle infrastructure master plan and capital development program as part of this document.
 - 1.5. Establish a user-based program to fund maintenance and upkeep of the city's emerging on-street bicycle infrastructure. A potential funding source is a surcharge on sales of bicycles and bicycle-related items, with all proceeds dedicated to system maintenance and development.
2. Identify, conceptualize, and in the long-term develop a major east-west bicycle/pedestrian corridor. The facility may share a corridor with motor vehicles, but be separated or insulated from conflicts with automobile traffic.
 - 2.1. Identify and evaluate possible east-west corridors.
 - 2.2. Develop a conceptual long-term design for the east-west corridor, for future implementation.
3. Develop educational, outreach, and capital programs that make bicycle transportation a logical choice for certain types of trips, including short trips of three miles and under in Omaha.
 - 3.1. Design and implement a Bicycle Ambassador program in metropolitan area schools, based on Chicago's ambassador program.
 - 3.2. Provide a bicycle education program that focuses on specific areas in succession, based on a Portland model and designed to increase the percentage of people using bicycles on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.
 - 3.3. Encourage and assist with district-wide bicycle sharing programs, where such programs are both appropriate and efficiently solve local transportation problems. An ideal pilot project would involve a bike-sharing district uniting UNO's north and south campuses and Aksarben Village.
4. Provide adequate bicycle parking throughout the city.
 - 4.1. Install 1,000 individual bicycle parking installations in the public realm by 2030 or an annual goal of 50, consistent with adopted city standards. Concentrate installations in Downtown, local business districts, mixed use nodes, schools, hospitals, and similar high-demand locations.
 - 4.2. Require convenient bicycle parking in development projects with parking lots over 50 stalls located on or near a component of the city's planned bicycle system.

5. Establish a clear understanding of the rights of bicyclists and pedestrians, and a mutual respect for the responsibilities that motorists, motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians have for one another. Enact laws that enable safe operation of all vehicles on shared rights-of-way.
 - 5.1. Enact safe bicycling practices that enable safe operation of all vehicles on shared rights-of-way. A provision of these laws should provide a minimum safe passing distance for automobiles passing bicyclists. Additionally, establish laws that recognize the differing operational characteristics of motor and human-powered vehicles.
 - 5.2. Design and implement an educational campaign to inform the public of the rights of bicyclists and pedestrians and how they fit within the transportation environment. Use drivers' education and license renewal processes as points of entry for this campaign.
 - 5.3. Increase the number and reach of League of American Bicyclist-approved Bicycle Education programs in Omaha, including corporate participation.
 - 5.4. Implement design standards that provide clear crosswalk markings, sidepath crossings, and appropriate cautionary signage.
 - 5.5. Maintain strong positive relationships between the Omaha Police Department and the bicycling community, and provide strong enforcement of existing ordinances.
6. Make safe routes for children on foot and bicycle to schools, parks, recreation facilities, and other features of their neighborhoods a priority for Omaha.
 - 6.1. Complete a specified number of neighborhood-based mobility audits annually that identify obstacles to safe access for children to school and other neighborhood destinations.
 - 6.2. Establish a "neighborhood access rehabilitation programs," analogous to the neighborhood street rehabilitation program, to remove obstacles (both physical barriers and administrative policies) that discourage or prevent children from walking or cycling to these neighborhood destinations.
7. Maintain pedestrian access to destinations in commercial districts and employment centers, and ensure that safe access is maintained throughout the public realm.
 - 7.1. Require that private developments, such as retail and employment centers have safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists from adjacent streets, sidewalks, and pathways; adequate bicycle parking; and internal walkways. Ensure that planned connections are implemented during construction.
 - 7.2. Design and maintain sidewalk and pedestrian system continuity through neighborhoods.
 - 7.2. Implement snow removal and construction policies that maintain accessible sidewalks on a year-round basis in both the public and private environment.

8. Achieve “gold” status in the League of American Bicyclist’s Bicycle Friendly Community program.

8.1. Maintain close communication with the LAB to monitor progress toward BFC designation

8.2. Implement programs within two years that sufficiently accomplish at least “bronze” BFC status.