

Future City

MOBILITY

The Mobility section of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on current, near-term, and long-range transportation needs and priorities in and around Victoria. Fundamental to this area of planning at the municipal level are procedures for the preservation of rights-of-way for thoroughfare system development, while also coordinating improvements and initiatives for various other modes of transportation. As in any urbanized and growing community, Victoria must have an adequate street network to collect, distribute, and convey traffic within and through the community. Other focus areas include ensuring the safe and efficient movement of goods and people, providing for more widespread implementation of dedicated pedestrian and bicycle routes and infrastructure, and continuing to plan for essential public transportation services.

The Victoria Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which includes both the City of Victoria and Victoria County, is responsible for conducting transportation planning processes that allow the agency to receive federal and state transportation funding. The MPO uses a locally-driven planning process, working with a variety of area agencies and interests, including the City, to appropriately direct funds toward priority projects and programs. The most recent five-year update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the Victoria area, as overseen by the Victoria MPO and adopted in April 2015 by the MPO's Policy Advisory Committee, addresses the eight planning factors specified by the U.S. Department of Transportation for such plans, which are also aligned with the City's mobility interests:

1. *Economic Vitality:* The transportation network provides the region with access to jobs, shopping, education, and recreational activities. It also enables inter-regional travel and affects freight movement and international trade.
2. *Safety:* Motorized and non-motorized users of the transportation system expect and deserve a safe experience while traveling.
3. *Security:* Concerns for security, and preparedness to respond to natural disasters and other potential threats, have gained more prominence in transportation planning in recent years.
4. *Accessibility and Mobility:* Improving the accessibility and mobility of both people and freight is a key objective of transportation planning. Access refers to the ability of a person to acquire a good or a service regardless of their physical location. Mobility refers to the ability of a person to physically move to another place where a good or a service is available.
5. *Environment, Energy Conservation, and Planned Growth:* People are increasingly conscious of how their actions affect the environment and show concern that Victoria's natural resources can meet their needs both today and in the future. Both population growth and economic development tend to increase the amount of travel and impose more intense demands on the natural and built environment. Transportation investments can help address this issue by building toward a more efficient and balanced intermodal system that considers quality of life issues as well as access and mobility issues.
6. *Modal Integration and Connectivity:* Transportation planning for the Victoria area leads to projects that support a balanced and integrated multimodal system for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit, air travel, and movement of goods via rail and water.
7. *System Management and Operation:* Getting the most out of the existing transportation infrastructure through efficient and cost-effective projects is a key goal in the Victoria area. This can lead to projects involving improved traffic signal synchronization, better access management along existing roadways, upgraded intersections, and elimination of at-grade railroad crossings.
8. *System Preservation:* While growth in the region certainly calls for increased



transportation capacity, it is just as important to maintain the existing infrastructure in a state of good repair.

KEY ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Five key issues and considerations related to Mobility were identified through the comprehensive planning process and should be addressed as the City's associated vision, goals, and strategic action priorities for the coming years are pursued.

1. Continued traffic demands on the Navarro Street corridor with a northward growth trend.

- In all public forums, both large and small, for this comprehensive planning effort, participants invariably pointed to increased traffic along Navarro Street and periodic congestion near Victoria Mall and the Loop 463 vicinity as adverse to their quality of life. One long-time resident said this trend had "changed his enjoyment of living in Victoria" with bigger city issues and frustrations starting to affect his daily routine.

2. Extension of and upgrades to the thoroughfare network based on projected growth.

- The City's annual budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) continue to focus on some of the community's most important streets through a Thoroughfare Street Program. The City's newest adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2015-16 funds this program at \$3.5 million. The City's Sales Tax Development Corporation is funding the 2016 Thoroughfare Street Program. Ongoing downtown street upgrades are also occurring through the CIP.
- The City's subdivision regulations address right-of-way acquisition. A definite concern, as a notable amount of new development continues to extend into Victoria's fringe areas, is whether expectations for street and infrastructure construction as part of

new development in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) are set high enough. A sprawling development pattern can be encouraged through cost advantages to ETJ development.

Standards for street design and construction within an incorporated city, with rare exception, should reflect its more urbanized or at least suburban character relative to rural and exurban areas. This usually means provision for curb and gutter construction, sidewalks, street lighting, signage, and sufficient open space for right-of-way landscaping. Many of these standards typically should apply within the ETJ as well, especially where the City is likely to annex such areas and be responsible for public street maintenance in the future. Curb and gutter, sidewalks, street lighting, and urban-style means for storm drainage are all often appropriate in prime growth areas adjacent to the current City limits. In outlying areas of a city's ETJ, where development character is more likely to remain rural or mostly in estate-size lots (one to three acres or more), the standards may be varied to mirror the area character yet remain reasonable and feasible (e.g., drainage via open ditches; street lighting more widely spaced or at important intersections, if provided at all; generally no sidewalks except around schools or other pedestrian-oriented destinations, etc.).

The City of Victoria already implements this approach by requiring ETJ developments within one mile of existing City utilities to design subdivision improvements to in-city standards. It is essential to monitor ongoing ETJ development trends and applicable City policies and standards to ensure desired outcomes are being achieved.

3. Local street conditions and maintenance.

- Despite a recent drop-off in U.S. domestic energy exploration and production, Victoria needs to remain vigilant if renewed Eagle Ford Shale activity leads to further heavy truck traffic in or around the city.



- In the meantime, while City standards for construction of new streets have been upgraded, greater development and construction activity in the city in recent years has been another source of wear and tear on existing local roadways.
 - The City should monitor its current street design and construction standards to ensure that public streets last, especially for rural roads that may end up handling higher traffic volumes due to growth.
- 4. Greater emphasis on safe and convenient bicycle/pedestrian circulation to both routine and high-profile destinations in the city.**
- First and foremost, the City must be more assertive in prioritizing bicycle/pedestrian circulation and safety in general and as part of its own capital projects planning. This will require close coordination among key City departments (e.g., Development Services, Public Works, Parks and Recreation) plus greater synergy among the planning, projects, and philosophies of multiple agencies (City, Victoria MPO, Texas Department of Transportation, etc.).
 - Part of this is recognition of mobility relative to recreational needs, and of opportunities to leverage resources and make joint improvements that suit both purposes (e.g., Safe Routes to Schools projects that also tie into local trail segments and fill sidewalk system gaps).
- The vicinities of the University of Houston-Victoria and Victoria College campuses are among priority areas for this focus in Victoria.
 - When attendees at a public workshop for this Comprehensive Plan were asked to identify locations on a city map “you consider unsafe when driving, walking or biking,” dots were placed in numerous locations across the community. However, the greatest concentration was along Navarro Street near Loop 463 and the Victoria Mall stretching from Guy Grant Road on the south to Broadmoor Street (Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club vicinity) on the north.
- 5. Effective and reliable public transit services, especially for transit-dependent populations.**
- Public discussion for the Comprehensive Plan update included mention of expanded evening service for workers on non-daytime schedules, which will require consideration and potential action by Victoria Transit.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The Mobility framework for action is organized in three tiers: Vision statements, Goals, and Strategic Action Priorities. These topics are intended to mesh with and support the other aspects of this Comprehensive Plan. The Strategic Action Priorities convey tangible actions that will, in the long run, lead to achievement of the Goals in line with the Vision.

VISION STATEMENTS

- V1:** Victoria offers safe, convenient accessibility within the city, region, and state via all modes of transportation.
- V2:** Victoria continues to capitalize on and protect past investments made in local transportation capacity.
- V3:** Victoria looks to new projects and funding opportunities to expand and upgrade Victoria's transportation network and enhance the community's connectivity to the surrounding region.

GOALS

1. A roadway network that accommodates the safe and efficient flow of traffic in, through, and around Victoria.
2. Expanded regional accessibility via improved highway, rail, air, and barge canal modes of transportation.
3. Alternative transportation options for Victoria residents including public transportation, hike/bike networks, and improved pedestrian circulation.
4. Transportation strategies that will continue to ensure the city's clean air quality.

STRATEGIC ACTION PRIORITIES

>> Measures that apply a Transportation System Management (TSM) approach to major roadway corridors where efficient traffic flow and safety are priority concerns now or into the future.

- A TSM approach emphasizes efficient use of existing roadway capacity when added capacity projects are unlikely to happen in the near future, or ever, due to physical or fiscal constraints. Typical TSM measures that should be considered for significant corridors (such as Navarro Street, Business US 59, Main Street, Laurent Street, Sam Houston Drive, and John Stockbauer Drive) include:
 - Intersection improvements to increase traffic capacity, including added turn lanes, turn lane length, and the

consideration of traffic circles and roundabouts where appropriate.

- Access management involving raised median installation, driveway retrofits, cross-access requirements, etc.
- Acceleration/deceleration lanes added at major site access points, where feasible.
- "Pull-outs" at transit stops to remove stopped buses from the travel lanes.
- Traffic signal upgrades and "Intelligent Transportation System" (ITS) technologies.
- Rapid incident response to remove stalled vehicles from roadway main lanes, expedite clean-up, and restore normal traffic flow after collisions.

>> Ongoing funding commitment to local streets rehabilitation and maintenance.

- The City has continued to invest in street rehabilitation and improvements over the years, dating back to public surveys conducted for the previous Victoria 2025 Comprehensive Plan that showed "better streets" as the greatest community need identified by respondents. Therefore, as stated in the City's previous annual budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15, "in order to dramatically improve the conditions of our residential streets over the next decade," the City stepped up even more through a 225 percent increase in funding devoted to street programs – from \$1.83 million one year earlier to \$4.13 million in the 2014-15 budget. In the City's newest adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2015-16, funding was increased even further for the Residential Street Reconstruction Program (approximately \$4.2 million). Just over \$2 million was also allocated to the Residential Preventive Street Maintenance Program, which is aimed at making cost-effective treatments to roadways still in good condition to avoid later deterioration and extend the service life of structurally sound pavement.
- Continue to fund regular updates to the City's Street Inventory to monitor conditions city-wide, prioritize near-term

"COMPLETE STREETS" TREND ACROSS THE NATION

The streets of our cities and towns are an important part of the local community fabric. They help to organize and orient our built environment – neighborhoods, centers of commerce, and public institutions. As such, these streets ought to be designed for everyone whether young or old, on foot or on bicycle, or in a car or a bus. Too often streets are designed only for speeding cars or creeping traffic jams.

In communities across the country, a movement is growing to “complete” the streets. States, cities, and towns are requesting their planners and engineers to build roads that are safer, more accessible, and easier for everyone to move along and cross. In the process, they are creating better communities.

According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, instituting a Complete Streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and allow the entire roadway to operate with all users in mind – including bicyclists, pedestrians of all ages and abilities, motorists, and public transportation vehicles and riders. This often involves implementation of a “road diet” to reduce vehicular travel lanes so other travel modes may be accommodated within the available right-of-way. As in the illustration below, this could result in dedicated or shared lanes for transit vehicles, designated and signed bike routes and marked on-street lanes, and possible incorporation of protected and painted “green lanes” for use solely by cyclists, as well as the possibility of adding or restoring on-street parking.



An ideal Complete Streets policy:

- starts with a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets;
- specifies that “all users” includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, and automobiles;
- applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations for the entire right-of-way;
- makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions;
- encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes;
- is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads;
- directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs;
- directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community;
- establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes; and
- includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

SOURCE: National Complete Streets Coalition, Smart Growth America website (<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/>).



The main street in Hamburg, New York, is welcoming to all users. Wide sidewalks, curb extensions, and well-marked crosswalks help pedestrians travel to the various businesses along the street. On-street parking gives those traveling by car easy access. Colored pavement narrows the travel lanes, keeping vehicle speeds at an appropriate level.

SOURCE: Dan Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

maintenance projects, and anticipate longer-term needs.

>> Measures to enhance bicycle/pedestrian safety in areas with the greatest such activity now or in the future.

- Part of the equation for this will involve ongoing public education and police awareness of the respective rights and best practices for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians to follow when sharing roadways.
- Review and update the Paseo de Victoria Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, the City's Parks Master Plan, and other plans and studies that lay the groundwork for phased construction of an interconnected and safe bicycle/pedestrian system for both recreational and alternative transportation needs.
- Prepare a city-wide Sidewalk Master Plan
- that builds on earlier sidewalk inventories and mapping efforts.
- Dedicate funding to fill gaps in the existing sidewalk system.
- Continue to explore opportunities to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian components and amenities into new and redesigned roadways, where available right-of-way allows and where safe outcomes can be assured.
- Consider formalizing a "Complete Streets" policy and design approach for new and reconstructed roadway corridors, where appropriate. Under this philosophy and method, which is being implemented in jurisdictions nationwide, more effective corridor design and operation is considered from the start rather than as an afterthought "where available right-of-way allows." A Complete Street provides for the

“PIRATE BIKES” — SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY’S BIKE SHARE PROGRAM

Southwestern University, a private university in Georgetown, Texas, implemented the very first Bike Share program in Texas in 2005. The program was free of charge for students, faculty members, and visitors. The 50 original “Pirate Bikes” were donated by Heidi Meyer Curry in memory of her brother, a Southwestern alumnus who had died in 2004 following a bicycle accident in Austin. The program was designed and is supervised by the Southwestern Student Foundation, a student organization. In March 2010, District IV of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) awarded the Foundation its Grand Gold Award for Best Student Program.



Advertised as a “grab and go” program, 120 bright yellow bikes are now distributed across the Southwestern campus for single or daily use. The Pirate Bikes are monitored by the campus police and may only be used on campus. Other rules are also enforced involving how bikes should be handled, where they can be parked, and general riding courtesy. The campus police also oversee bicycle maintenance, periodically gathering the bikes each year to perform inspections and repair any damage. During the “Pirate Bike Appreciate Week” on campus, students and faculty are encouraged to contribute to the bike maintenance to sustain the program. The image above shows the annual Pirate Bike Parade on campus. Other Texas universities have begun offering bike share programs for students; however they typically require registration by the individual and a semester fee for bike use. Municipalities in Texas, including San Antonio, Houston, and Fort Worth, have their own public bike share programs in certain areas and districts.

SOURCE: Southwestern University Pirates Bikes Program webpage
(<http://www.southwestern.edu/about/piratebikes/>).

mobility and safety of all users of the transportation system and not just automobile traffic. As described by the National Complete Streets Coalition (www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets), elements of Complete Streets can include: sidewalks/trails, bike lanes, raised crosswalks, wide shoulders, refuge medians, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bulb-outs, pedestrian amenities, special bus lanes, bus pull-outs, shade and shelter, and trees and landscaping.

- Consider funding support for bicycle rental/sharing facilities in conducive locations (e.g., higher education campuses, downtown, Riverside Park, etc.), looking to successful programs elsewhere for lessons learned.
- Gradually work toward annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) allocations for bicycle/pedestrian projects within the Victoria MPO area.
- Identify other potential funding sources and seek funding for bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

OTHER ACTIONS

Along with the short list of Strategic Action Priorities outlined above, this section captures other potential action items discussed through the long-range planning process. These items are compiled in five categories that are the main ways Comprehensive Plans are implemented:

- (1) Capital Investments
- (2) Programs and Initiatives
- (3) Regulations and Standards
- (4) Partnerships and Coordination
- (5) Targeted Planning/Studies



Capital Investments

- A. Continue to use the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to prioritize locally funded street extensions and expansions.
- B. Initiate timely capacity improvement projects in the form of additional lanes, divided facilities with medians, turning lanes, and extensions of existing streets.



Programs and Initiatives

- A. Continue to implement a standard operating procedures manual for the City to use on Ozone Action Days.



Regulations and Standards

- A. Implement the Thoroughfare Master Plan through the right-of-way dedication provisions of the Subdivision and Development Ordinance to ensure the preservation of rights-of-way for roadway extensions and expansions.
- B. Update the Thoroughfare Master Plan to include complete street design principles.
- C. Continually monitor the City's pavement standards for local streets to ensure the long-term durability and value of streets dedicated for the City's maintenance.
- D. Consider updates to the City's subdivision regulations and associated technical design criteria to ensure that streets constructed

and dedicated to the City by private development in the ETJ will be built to last and up to par. This potential amendment process should also address whether lesser standards for ETJ streets are contributing to urban sprawl outcomes in certain locations at Victoria's edges, especially north and northwest. This can include when a development is not required to bring up to current standard an existing substandard road that abuts the development site (in various other cities developers are required to upgrade the half of the road adjacent to the property).

- E. Work in coordination with the Victoria MPO and Victoria County to establish a non-radioactive hazardous materials route in accordance with state and federal guidance.
- F. Consider adopting Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) provisions that would authorize the City to require a TIA study if projected traffic from a particular development site would exceed a certain established traffic generation threshold or specified development conditions (e.g., square feet of non-residential development, number of residential lots or units, etc.). The TIA helps to quantify the altered traffic conditions and assess and justify mitigation steps that may be required. TIAs are commonplace in many Texas and U.S. communities. They are used to help evaluate if the scale of development is appropriate for a particular site and what mitigation steps may be necessary, on and/or off the site, to ensure safe and efficient access and maintain traffic flow on affected public roadways and at nearby intersections.

Partnerships and Coordination

- A. Continue the Traffic Management Team to encourage coordination between a variety of stakeholders, including the City, MPO, Sheriff's office, Texas Department of Transportation, Victoria ISD, and Victoria Transit, to identify traffic issues and develop solutions.
- B. Continue to utilize the Victoria MPO as a forum for expressing the City's transportation needs and priorities to the Texas Department of Transportation, other entities in the region, and the public.

- C. Identify and implement methods of increasing public participation in the transportation planning efforts of the Victoria MPO and Texas Department of Transportation.
- D. Coordinate with Victoria ISD on the management of vehicle queuing at school campuses during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods.
- E. Maintain coordination between the City, Victoria MPO, and Texas Department of Transportation regarding preparedness for special transportation funding opportunities (e.g., Proposition 1 and Proposition 7 funding allocations approved by the Texas Transportation Commission) and by having a set of "shovel-ready" projects.
- F. Work closely with appropriate federal and state agencies to implement plans for developing I-69 through Victoria County.
- G. Collaborate with Victoria County to better synchronize street design and construction standards within ETJ areas.
- H. Coordinate with local rail companies to identify improvements that can reduce traffic delays, improve safety, and alleviate the impacts of train traffic, including City support for additional railroad grade separations and implementation of "quiet zones" to reduce noise from train horns.
- I. Continue the Interlocal Agreement with the Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) to provide local

INTERSTATE 69 OUTLOOK

Victoria is located on the proposed Interstate 69 corridor that covers much of the current U.S. Highway 59 route through Texas. Designated by Congress as a high priority corridor in the 1990s, I-69, when completed, will be the most direct interstate linking the industrial centers of Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The I-69 corridor already accounts for more than 63 percent of the nation's truckborne trade with Canada and Mexico. This corridor currently has the nation's busiest border crossings on both the Canadian and Mexican borders.

The Alliance for I-69 Texas highlights Victoria as a major hub of activity for the proposed interstate. The interstate is being developed as a piece-by-piece road improvement project over an extended period, with several sections of I-69 currently dedicated in Houston, near Corpus Christi, and in the Rio Grande Valley. Portions of US Highways 77 and 59 are proposed to be reconstructed and become I-69 East and I-69 West, respectively, with Victoria at the heart of where these two highways converge. Located in Segment 3 for dedication, Victoria will likely become a key distribution location as it is a population center, has access to an intracoastal

waterway, and is a major circulation point on the existing highway system.

Although businesses, residents, and travelers through the area will experience some congestion as the roads are upgraded to freeway standards, Victoria may reap multiple benefits from I-69 passing through the city.

- The City of Victoria could see gains in property, sales, and hotel occupancy tax revenues as more hotels and restaurants will likely be needed to accommodate the increased highway traffic.
- With Victoria emerging as a major distribution point, companies may want to expand in or relocate to an area with easy access to several types of distribution (truck, rail, waterborne).
- Victoria could experience a higher rate of population growth, with new development and an increase in ad valorem taxes from the new residents.

While the I-69 project will take years to complete, Victoria needs to prepare for the expected traffic effects in and around the community.

SOURCE: Alliance for I-69 Texas website
(<http://www.i69texasalliance.com/index.html>).

match funding and in-kind services toward the implementation of the transit system.

- J. Work closely with GCRPC in the planning of transit routes and stops.
- K. Continue to work with the "Air Victoria" Committee to educate the community on air quality issues.
- L. Work with the "Air Victoria" Committee, local news media, and other entities to improve and expand the Ozone Action Day program.
- M. Work cooperatively with local industry and business to encourage employees to walk, bicycle, or share a ride to and from work.



Targeted Planning/Studies

- A. Periodically review the Thoroughfare Master Plan and amend as necessary. [NOTE: The newest adopted Thoroughfare Master Plan map is maintained by the City's Development Services Department and is available for viewing and download from the Planning Services section on the Department's webpage. At the time this Comprehensive Plan was adopted, the online location was: <http://www.victoriatx.org/departments/development-services/planning-services->]
- B. Develop a Corridor Enhancement Plan, which will address access management, landscaping, street lighting, sidewalks, and other street enhancement issues for key roadway corridors in Victoria.

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