

City of Seattle
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION

Use this application to propose an amendment to the goals, policies, Future Land Use Map, appendices, or other components of the adopted City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Applications are due to the Seattle City Council (sent electronically to: compplan@seattle.gov) no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 15th for consideration in the next annual review cycle. Any proposals received after May 15th will be considered in the review process for the following year. *(Please Print or Type)*

Applicant: Chris Leman

Date: 5/15/20

Email: cleman@oo.net

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City: Seattle

State: WA

Zip: 98102-3310

Phone: 206-322-5463

Contact person (if not the applicant): none

Name of general area, location, or site that would be affected by this proposed amendment (attach additional sheets if necessary):

Seattle as a whole

If the application is approved for further consideration by the City Council, the applicant may be required to submit a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist.

Acceptance of this application does not guarantee final approval.

Applicant Signature:



Date: 5/15/20

REQUIRED QUESTIONNAIRE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application

1. *Provide a detailed description of the proposed amendment and a clear statement of what the proposed amendment is intended to accomplish. Include the name(s) of the Comprehensive Plan Element(s) (Land Use, Transportation, etc.) you propose to amend.*

In the Transportation section of the Citywide Planning element, establish as a new Transportation Policy applying to all urban centers and urban villages, the following: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.”

Explanation. The amendment would protect and enhance the pedestrian environment at street level by discouraging skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in all urban centers and urban villages.

2. *For amendments to goals and policies only: Describe how the issue is currently addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Why is a change needed?*

The Seattle Municipal Code [SMC 15.64] contains notably strong language discouraging skybridges throughout Seattle and requiring the City Council to reject skybridge petitions “unless it finds that the skybridge is in the public interest and no reasonable alternative to the skybridge exists.” However, the Seattle Municipal Code does not have similar language regarding pedestrian tunnels or aerial trams.

Oher than language specifically referring to the Downtown urban center and the Eastlake urban village, the Comprehensive Plan contains no guidance regarding skybridges, aerial trams, or tunnels.

Given the guidance from the Seattle Municipal Code, it is important for the Comprehensive Plan to be updated to apply to all urban centers and urban villages the same policy that has for many years applied only to downtown: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.”

3. *Describe why the proposed change meets the criteria adopted in Resolution 31807 which sets criteria for Council to consider an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.*

This amendment fully meets all of the criteria of Res. 31807. It is consistent with the Growth Management Act, with state and local law, and with countywide and multicounty policies. It cannot be addressed through regulations, budgets, programs, or neighborhood planning; it meets the four elements of practicality; and it is likely to make a material difference in a future City regulatory or funding decision.

For the Comprehensive Plan’s many goals and policies to have meaning when they state a priority for maintaining an active pedestrian environment, the proposed transportation policy applies to all urban centers and urban villages the language on pedestrian skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels that now applies just to downtown. The Comprehensive Plan’s current failure to address skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in urban centers and urban villages is a serious omission and there is no reasonable alternative to correcting it other than by adopting the proposed amendment.

4. *What other options are there for meeting the goal or objectives of the amendment? Why is a Comprehensive Plan amendment needed to meet the goals or objectives?*

The Seattle Municipal Code has not proven adequate to the task of protecting the public interest in City decisions about skybridges, aerial trams, or tunnels. Despite the very strong language against skybridges, the City Council has repeatedly approved new ones and renewed the permits for existing ones. Clear guidance in the Comp Plan is needed in order to restore some balance and reality to the permit process, which in most of the City lacks guidance from the Comprehensive Plan.

Adopting this policy amendment into the Comp Plan would provide unique and irreplaceable stability to the City and to the public because the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) provides for each local Comprehensive Plan unique protections that are present in no other City legislation. The Comp Plan by state law can be amended only once a year, and then only under legally enforceable process requirements.

5. *What do you anticipate will be the impacts of the proposed amendment, including impacts to the geographic area affected? Why will the proposed change result in a net benefit to the community? Please include any data, research, or analysis that supports the proposed amendments.*

If adopted, the new policy will benefit the pedestrian and bicycle environment at street level by making it less likely in urban centers and urban villages that skybridges, aerial tramways, and tunnels will be constructed across the street right of way. Scarce public and private resources will go into improving pedestrian and bicycle conditions for all, not just for those few with access to the skybridges, aerial tramways, and tunnels, and which in the case of skybridges is usually closed to the general public. The result will serve equity by ensuring that investments made in public rights of way go into improving general pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience rather than into private benefit. The Comprehensive Plan's many references to promoting pedestrian and bicycle convenience and safety will thus be given greater meaning, rather than appearing in this case to be empty rhetoric.

The absence of a policy discouraging skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in the urban centers and villages other than downtown probably represents an oversight rather than deliberate policy, as that exact same language applying to the downtown urban center was adopted without controversy. Such restrictions are even less likely to provoke any controversy if applied to all urban centers and urban villages.

6. How does the proposed amendment support the existing goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan? If the proposal would change existing goals and policies or add new goals and policies to the Comprehensive Plan, describe how the proposed amendment is consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=36.70A>), the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 (<http://www.psrc.org/growth/vision2040/>), and the King County Countywide Planning Policies (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/CPPs.aspx>).

The proposed policy amendment gives meaning to the Comprehensive Plan as a document that provides for pedestrian and bicyclist safety and convenience. The amendment is completely consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act, the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

7. *Is there public support for this proposed amendment? If the amendment would change the Future Land Use Map or a Neighborhood Plan, please list any meetings that you have held with the community about the amendment. If the amendment would have a citywide impact, please list any organizations that you have discussed the amendment with. Notes: You may attach letters of support for the amendment. The City will provide public notice and opportunity for public comment, and environmental review for all applications.*

Both generally and as they apply to specific urban centers, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan contain hundreds of affirmations of the priority of the street-level pedestrian and bicycle environment. This policy amendment would make the Comprehensive Plan's policies more consistent with its rhetoric. It would also bring to the Comprehensive Plan the weight of enlightened urban design principles, which strongly discourage skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels across street rights of way when street-level pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements are feasible that benefit all. The proposed amendment would thus place a higher priority than the Comprehensive Plan yet does on maintaining a vital street-level pedestrian and bicycle environment in all urban centers, not just downtown. It would also rescue the City's skybridge ordinance from the current cynicism with which it is now applied.

8. *Has the proposed amendment been considered before by the Council? If so, when was it considered and what was the outcome? If the amendment has been previously rejected, please explain either:*

- *How the proposal has changed since it was last rejected, or*
- *Changed circumstances since the proposal was last considered that support reconsideration of the proposal*

While a similar amendment was submitted in the past, it never has been docketed for study in the Comp Plan amendment process; and public records requests have not found any evidence that it has received actual study, by the City Councilmembers or staff, by the Executive branch or by the Planning Commission.

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