



**Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum**

Date: May 26, 2011
To: Committee on the Built Environment
From: Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Subject: Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments - Green House Gas Reduction Targets for Vehicle Miles Traveled, Building Emissions, and Solid Waste

Background

The vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan establishes environmental stewardship as a core value.¹ This core value is reflected throughout the plan. In 2005 the Council added an Environmental Element to the Comprehensive Plan which, among other things, sets out goals and policies related to reducing emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change.

This summer the City will begin to update the Climate Action Plan. That work will include refining draft goals and targets for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions by sector and developing action plans. That process could inform a Council discussion on proposed numerical goals for emissions reduction.

Proposed Amendment

Amend Environmental Goal Seven (EG7), as follow:

To control the impact of climate change globally and locally, reduce per capita emissions of ~~((carbon dioxide and other))~~ climate-changing greenhouse gases in Seattle by 30 percent from ~~((1990))~~ 2008 levels by ~~((2024))~~ 2020, ~~((and))~~ by ~~((80))~~ 60 percent from ~~((1990))~~ 2008 levels by ~~((2050))~~ 2030, and by 90 percent from 2008 levels by 2050.

And establish, as goals or policies, the sector-based per capita 2020 and 2030 reduction targets set out in the table below.

¹ City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Toward a Sustainable Seattle, p. v-vi.

Sector	Reduction in GHG Emissions-Producing Activity	Reduction in GHG Emission Intensity of Activity
2020 Per Capita Reduction Targets		
Transportation	<u>Reduction in vehicle miles travelled (VMT)</u>	<u>Decrease in GHG per mile of Seattle vehicles</u>
Passenger	20% reduction in light duty VMT/capita	35% reduction
Freight	No more than 7% increase in total VMT	25% reduction
Buildings	<u>Decrease in energy use</u>	<u>Decrease in GHG intensity of energy mix</u>
Residential	15% reduction in residential energy use/capita	15% reduction in tonnes CO2e/billion BTU residential and commercial buildings combined
Commercial	15% reduction in commercial energy use/employee	
Waste	<u>Increase in recycling and composting rate</u>	<u>Reduction in GHG intensity of waste</u>
	Increase diversion rate from 49% to 69%	50% reduction in methane emissions commitment per ton waste disposed
2030 Per Capita Reduction Targets		
Transportation	<u>Reduction in vehicle miles travelled (VMT)</u>	<u>Decrease in GHG per mile of Seattle vehicles</u>
Passenger	30% reduction in VMT /capita	75% reduction
Freight	No more than 15% increase in VMT	50% reduction
Buildings	<u>Decrease in energy use</u>	<u>Decrease in GHG intensity of energy mix</u>
Residential	30% reduction in energy use/capita	25% reduction in tonnes CO2e/billion BTU residential and commercial buildings combined
Commercial	30% reduction in energy use/employee	
Waste	<u>Increase in recycling and composting rate</u>	<u>Reduction in GHG intensity of waste</u>
	Increase diversion rate from to 70%	50% reduction in methane emissions commitment per ton waste disposed
TOTAL GHG Emissions Reduction	30% reduction in per capita emissions by 2020 60% reduction in per capita emissions by 2030 90% reduction in per capita emissions by 2050	

Application of Amendment Criteria

Resolution 30662 sets out criteria the Council considers in determining whether to include a proposed amendment in the Comprehensive Plan docket-setting resolution. Those criteria seek to answer the questions:

- Is the amendment appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan,
- Does the amendment meet existing state and local laws;
- Is it practical to consider the amendment; and
- Has there been a neighborhood review process, or can a review process be conducted prior to final Council consideration of the amendment.

Each criterion is discussed below.

Is the amendment appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan?

The connection between land use, transportation and air quality has long been a subject of rational comprehensive planning. This connection is expressly acknowledged in the Comprehensive Plan discussion of the environmental core value. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan observes:

This Comprehensive Plan tries to address some of the Seattle area's broad environmental problems. For example, the Plan's urban villages concept addresses a number of environmental concerns. The urban village concept promotes compact, more pedestrian-oriented development and alternative (nonauto) transportation choices such as transit, as well as incentive and disincentive programs to encourage getting around without a car. The emphasis on compact development is intended to mitigate air and stormwater discharge pollution from automobiles, loss of green space, and increases in impervious surfaces that results from non-compact development.²

Achieving meaningful GHG emissions reductions will require significant regulatory and programmatic changes across a variety of sectors such as transportation, buildings, and solid waste generation and disposal. Reduced vehicle miles traveled, reduced energy use, and increased solid waste conversion are readily available metrics by sector that link goals to actions. Additionally, GHG reduction goals are easily understood desired outcomes, for which progress can be measured across all sectors.

Does the amendment meet existing state and local laws?

The proposed amendment does not contravene any requirements of the Growth Management Act or compel action that would be illegal under the laws of the City of Seattle, State of Washington, or the United States.

² City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, p. v-vi.

Is it practical to consider the amendment?

The technical feasibility analyses and baseline report by the Stockholm Environmental Institute, which sets out a variety of strategies for achieving GHG reductions, is largely complete. Sufficient information is now available or will be available for the Council to make a decision on GHG reduction goals and targets by spring of 2012.

Has there been a neighborhood review process to develop any proposed change to a neighborhood plan?

The Council was briefed on the Carbon Neutral Seattle project on May 23rd. The Office of Sustainability and the Environment will convene industry focus groups this summer and initiate a soft launch of a community engagement process. That community engagement process will continue throughout 2011 and 2012 and will provide a forum for feedback on the proposed amendment.