

Policy Statement: Transportation

Any successful attempt to promote design and quality of life initiatives in the built environment must include transportation as an integral part of the whole. Our streets, waterways and mass transit are where we most often rub shoulders with each other. They inform our sense of "us" as a community beyond serving day to day utilitarian purposes.

Due to our region's unique topographical constraints, Seattle and the greater Puget Sound region face special challenges in establishing efficient, equitable and sustainable transportation networks. Many of our transportation systems are at capacity during peak periods. Our region's struggles with mobility, when combined with predicted growth of almost 2 million more residents within the next 30 years, make thoughtful, long-range transportation policies and plans critical to a viable and sustainable future.

Abundant hydroelectric power in Washington means that transportation represents a disproportionate percentage of greenhouse gas emissions in the Puget Sound region. In addition, high housing costs in the central city have shifted lower-income households further and further away from the region's core, making access to transportation an urgent social equity issue.

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, largely from privately owned motor vehicles, contribute greatly to global warming. Inefficient, high carbon footprint land use patterns are enabled by a transportation system that for at least 70 years has focused on providing mobility for low-occupancy motor vehicles at the expense of all other modes of transportation. Other environmental impacts stemming from a system that optimizes low-occupancy motor vehicles include pollution of water, air and soils¹ and increasing amounts of impervious pavement.

Regional transportation solutions that address these equity, sustainability and quality of life issues while providing a range of transportation options are at the heart of AIA Seattle's transportation agenda.

Impact on Architects and the Built Environment

The work of architects is deeply and directly impacted by transportation. Roadways, transit, parking and other aspects of our transportation system are strong determinants of locations and costs for all building types, and particularly housing. Many core values of the AIA—equity, environment, community, design quality and life/safety—are inextricably affected by transportation choices and built infrastructure. Architects have the planning, urban design,

¹[Car Exhaust, Runoff Increasingly Polluting Puget Sound](#), Environmental Protection

project management and visioning skills to contribute as both experts and advocates to the evolution of transportation systems for the benefit of all.

Key Messages

- Twenty-six percent of Seattle's overall land area and 40 percent of greater downtown is devoted to transportation-related rights of way. In an urban area with constrained opportunities for new open space and development, transportation solutions which support the multitasking of spaces and efficient use of existing spaces are needed.
- In Seattle, 66 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from road transportation² compared to about 28 percent nationally³. In our region, the built environment component with the greatest room for carbon footprint reduction is transportation.
- Existing car-centric roadways should be redesigned for greater multi-modal safety and new facilities should be designed to safely accommodate all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrian and bicyclist deaths have doubled statewide over the last four years.⁴ Pedestrian protections and crossing distances, average vehicle speeds, lines of sight and many other important variables are largely determined through design.
- Transit and the social and environmental benefits that come with it do not work without density, and vice versa. Investments in transit systems such as light rail should leverage transit-oriented development and adjacent mixed-use development opportunities to the maximum extent possible.
- Transportation issues in Puget Sound are regional in nature and our response must be regional as well. A strategic response will require advocacy beyond the City of Seattle to include other cities, King County and multi-county transit agencies. As a professional organization with membership in ten northwest Washington counties, AIA Seattle's participation in crafting regional solutions is especially appropriate

AIA Seattle Action

Advocacy Goals

- ⇒ Reduce single occupancy vehicle trips throughout our region.
- ⇒ Target the negative environmental impacts of our region's transportation systems; emphasize lower-emission transportation options.

²2013 [Climate Action Plan](#), City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment

³[The Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere](#)

⁴[Pedestrian and bicyclist deaths double statewide in recent years](#), Seattle Times, 6/13/18

- ⇒ Promote equitable access to transportation options for our region's diverse peoples and communities, including all ages and abilities.
- ⇒ Contribute as planners and designers to compact, walkable, transit-oriented communities that will curb sprawl and worsening environmental conditions.
- ⇒ Foster connections between communities by building linkages across the city and the region.
- ⇒ Promote community wellness and safety through appropriate design solutions for new and existing transportation facilities.
- ⇒ Maintain currency with the growing spectrum of new mobility devices and systems. Apply this informed understanding along with design skills to assure that emerging technologies solve transportation problems equitably and without creating new ones.
- ⇒ Support the flow of goods and services throughout our region, including the use of alleys in our cities, and the planning and design of networks for these services to maintain the economic vibrancy of our region.

Proposed Actions

- Support:
 - The sustainable movement of people and goods over single occupancy vehicles.
 - Equitable transportation solutions for all.
 - Transit-oriented development that underpins compact, livable communities based on transit networks.
 - Transportation choices that increase community health, safety and wellness.
 - Walking and cycling as safe and viable means of transportation.
 - Resilient transportation networks that will serve citizens during a natural disaster.
- Lead:
 - By implementing sustainable transportation choices and designs that support them.
 - By promoting wise stewardship and cost efficiencies of transportation systems and designs.
 - By demanding systems that serve all categories of users well.
 - By supporting initiatives that maximize the movement of people over specific modes or systems.
 - By promoting the creative use of transportation rights of way and infrastructure to provide additional benefits such as public space and green infrastructure that enhance livability and healthy communities.

- By championing new mobility innovations that support our region's sustainability, equity and community-building goals.
- Engage:
 - Elected officials and the community on the connection between dense, mixed-use neighborhoods and sustainable mobility options.
 - AIA Seattle membership on the merits of transportation choices that support the Chapter's values and goals.
- Develop:
 - Positions on new transportation technologies commensurate with AIA Seattle's values and goals.
 - Partnerships with county, state and national agencies and allies to influence non-local impacts to transportation policy.
 - Alliances with other advocacy organizations when values align and greater political leverage can be gained from coordinated action.