# Olympia Planning Commission

October 6, 2025

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507

**RE: Olympia Planning Commission Comment Letter, Preliminary Capital Facilities Plan, 2026-2031 Financial Plan**

Dear Mayor Payne and City Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the 2026-2031 Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) for consistency with Olympia's Comprehensive Plan. The Olympia Planning Commission appointed a Finance Subcommittee to perform the review.

Generally, we find that the CFP aligns with the Comprehensive Plan, and there are many items to celebrate, including:

- Yelm Highway Park Phase I
- Sidewalk Condition Report
- Grass Lake Trail
- Parks – providing status on progress towards goals/project completion; accessible data
- OFD – upkeep of safety infrastructure
- City Staff – service delivery from responders, acknowledge budget limitations and staff
- Public Works Water ReSources – clearly defined LOS and tracking thereof

However, there are some watch points to consider. We caution that extra attention should be paid to the following items:

<u>General topics</u>

- Maintenance costs – use of dedicated/ongoing staff vs. RFP bids/commercial costs
- Inconsistency of defining level of service
    - Although each chapter is drafted separately, common elements such as Level of Service (LOS) should be standardized for public understanding

- Projects appear largely siloed; would like to see information on cross-funding and how departments work together
    - Examples: potential for road work to have impervious surface & Critical Area requirements met by the expansion/development of a park that additionally serves to help onsite stormwater management (e.g. relocation of the Japanese Garden to the future Westbay park connection at Parcel 91011401001) could see

CFP budgetary benefits by sharing the cost burden between while meeting mutually beneficial Level of Service standards
    - Yauger Park and Yelm HWY – stormwater infrastructure that supports parks as well

- Pg. 5 – Budget prioritization
    - Continues to be largely opaque. We acknowledge that this is difficult but still believe that a policy or framework around between program prioritization – even if it was retrospective in terms of resources applied to different programs – would go a long way in making the process more transparent.
    - The goal would be to communicate the city's priorities as well as make it clearer when there are benefits to multiple programs that might increase the priority of one project over a different project that only benefits one program (e.g. old pipes under an old road, or critical sidewalks and a street nearing a significant repair).

- Cable tax
    - Previous CFP letters have highlighted this as an issue
    - Find solutions to declining cable tax revenue

<u>Parks, Arts & Recreation</u>

- Progress tracker
    - Provide publicly available tracker, or regular updates, to keep community engaged on what stage a project is in its development
    - Ex: Yelm Highway Phase 1
- Level of Service (LOS)
    - Explore additional metrics such as how many people are within the ½ mile goal of a park.
    - Consider how many people utilize a park, and which are overcrowded or underutilized due to safety concerns.
- Difficult to develop land
    - Acquire land that would otherwise be difficult to develop, especially for affordable housing, or parks use.
    - Balance acquiring land for parks with keeping land available for housing.

<u>Transportation</u>

- Level of Service (LOS)
    - In light of budget constraints, the lack of measurable outcomes for transportation projects is extremely concerning
    - Transportation levels of service were often undefined

    - Connect projects with defined LOS goals such as increasing bike rides, reducing car trips, or other metrics
    - Identify how projects will be cost-effective, e.g. bike lanes will reduce car trips and wear and tear on roads, saving in maintenance costs
- Add "vision zero" goals – example: Transportation is measured as completeness of network without metrics for/goals for increasing safety, traffic flow, reduced emissions, reduction in traffic/pedestrian incidents
- Deferred Maintenance
    - We recommend tracking deferred maintenance as part of, or as a companion to, the CFP, and an integrated policy analysis/discussion of how maintenance funding will be prioritized and the consequences of our maintenance shortfalls for the functionality of the whole system.
    - Street repair is not the only place that we are falling behind in maintaining the infrastructure that we already have but the recent Pavement Inspection and Management Service Update highlights the scope of the predicament.
    - The information contained in both the Pavement Inspection and Management Service Update and the Sidewalk Condition Assessment are critical positive steps towards better maintained infrastructure and can help inform maintenance decisions.
    - Deferred maintenance is a bigger issue than this one CFP and can be linked to decades of land use and maintenance decisions. It appears that we have inherited more infrastructure than we can afford to maintain and it is urgent that we prioritize financially sustainable, valuable, and successful infrastructure, and invest in its maintenance.
- Street repair
    - LOS for street repair has a goal of 75 but is currently only at 66. Current funding will not reach the goal of 75, and modeling predicts PCI dropping to 60 by the year 2029. This is very concerning.
    - Identify stable funding and maintenance timelines to keep streets and sidewalks safe and accessible

<u>Storm & Surface Water</u>

- Additional infrastructure and community investment
    - When replacing/repairing roads, add or improve upon utilities/pedestrian infrastructure that would support additional or new housing opportunities
    - Prioritize projects that bolster housing, not just deteriorating infrastructure
- Prioritize surface life and maintenance upkeep cost of new infrastructure projects

<u>Fire Department</u>

- Plan for increased density
    - Explore options for meeting minimum safety standards that reduce EDDS requirements
    - Ex: smaller fire trucks + smaller roads = reduced building costs

- Funding to explore modern equipment options
    - Ex: LOS time response not meeting national standard, would new equipment address this?

We again commend the City of Olympia staff for the detailed CFP and their continued efforts in making it accessible to the public as well as their hard work in balancing many competing priorities maintaining and constructing the critical infrastructure the community depends on.

Sincerely,

**Daniel Garcia, Chair**
**Olympia Planning Commission**
**Finance Subcommittee**

**Greg Quetin, Chair**
**Olympia Planning Commission**