

Olympia Planning Commission

October 7, 2024

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507

RE: Olympia Planning Commission Comment Letter, Preliminary Capital Facilities Plan, 2025-2030 Financial Plan

Dear Mayor Payne and City Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the 2025-2030 Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) for consistency with Olympia's Comprehensive Plan. The Olympia Planning Commission appointed a Finance Subcommittee to perform the review. Firstly, we would like to recognize the City of Olympia staff for consistently striving to improve the content, layout, and accuracy of the CFP. It is through their hard work that we are able to make an informed review of the CFP.

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

- **Progress on Bicycle and Pedestrian Investments:** The addition of new Transportation Benefit District (TBD) funding is a commendable step towards meeting the city's transportation goals. Targeted spot investments are already making a noticeable difference. We would even suggest that the city provide a pamphlet or brochure that highlights specific projects and their locations to help the public see the recent investments and successes, showcasing how funds are being utilized to improve the community.
- **Parks, Art, and Recreation:** The investment in maintenance should continue to reduce the backlog and improve access to Parks, Art, and Recreation facilities in Olympia.

However, there are some watch points to consider. In general, many of the same things that were mentioned in the 2022 comment letter remain pertinent. This year, we would caution extra attention be paid to the following items:

General topics

- **Clarifying Funding Priorities:** The city is working hard to deliver a wide range of services within funding limitations however it is not always clear what the priorities are for the various funding sources. More detailed explanations of how different projects are prioritized – and how that prioritization integrates the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan – would help clarify this process.
- **Project Description Links:** Including links to project pages within the CFP project descriptions, where possible, would enhance transparency and public engagement.

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- Project Maps: We are excited to have visual maps of projects included in the final CFP to enhance readability and give the public greater insight into what projects are being prioritized.

General Capital Facilities

- Unforeseen emergency projects: Staff comments noted that funding did not fully cover some emergencies. This should be monitored, and possibly raise this amount to adequately cover unforeseen events.

Transportation

- The transportation plan includes significant investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, however, transportation staff noted that staffing continues to be a challenge and has the potential to impact project delivery. We suggest Council set clear project priorities to guide decision-making should constrained staffing necessitate or other challenges delays in project schedules.
- Sidewalks and Bicycle Facilities:
 - The funding allocated to sidewalks and bicycle facilities is an excellent addition to the plan. However, it remains crucial that we continue to prioritize sidewalk gaps and bike lane connectivity when making transportation investments.
 - We would suggest guiding investments using the Street Safety Plan in conjunction with upcoming reports on sidewalk conditions and (road) pavement condition to best meet the system goals.
- Street Resurfacing and Maintenance:
 - Resurfacing and maintenance investments appear to be insufficient to maintain the road system at target conditions. While the updated report of pavement conditions will help provide a full accounting of the deficit, we would raise two items for consideration by the Council:
 - It may be possible to raise or reallocate funding to 'catch up' with maintenance. However, in a constrained budget, these maintenance funds will inevitably come from other priorities.
 - We would urge the city to make it policy to prioritize road maintenance not just based on the conditions of the road, but also taking into account the potential to improve sidewalk conditions and reallocate road space for bike and pedestrian use. This transformation, rather than simply rebuilding lanes for cars, would better align with our long-term transportation goals by meeting trip demand with more affordable, lower maintenance, and sustainable modes of transportation.

In addition, some tweaks would help the commission and public in its review, including:

- Reports on current conditions would be beneficial during our review
- The master plans should include how the projects are prioritized and how they are moved into the CFP to increase transparency and inform the public.

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- Consider moving to a two-year process and budget – which could save staff time to put toward the projects
- Encourage the development of an interactive online resource, where residents can track project timelines, view budget allocations, and see updates in real-time to strengthen transparency and public trust.

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



Zainab Nejati, Chair
Olympia Planning Commission