

Improving Transportation in Downtown Olympia

A review of the last 25 years

1992 City Council passes a resolution to reduce the growth in traffic volumes into the downtown. The Transportation Demand Management resolution focuses on commute trip reduction efforts.

1993 Intercity Transit builds the new Olympia Transit Center on State Avenue.

1994 Olympia Comprehensive Plan establishes policy direction related to reduced dependence on the auto and improved urban design.

1997 The Parking Management Strategy Update outlines techniques to manage parking supply. It supports short-term visitor access and initiates a charge for all-day commuter parking.

1997 On Legion Way, bike lanes are added by removing one travel lane. This “road diet” also allows additional on-street parking to be added.

1998 Fourth Avenue and State Avenues leading in and out of downtown are reconfigured to add bike lanes from Pear Street to Fairview and Wilson. On 4th Avenue, the three-lane cross section is reduced to two lanes in order to add bike lanes. The lane reduction also improves pedestrian crossing safety.

2001 North Capitol Way undergoes a road diet. A travel lane is removed and bike lanes are added from State Avenue to the Farmers Market.

2002 Following the Nisqually Earthquake, the State of Washington rebuilds Deschutes Parkway with bike lanes.

2003 Fifth Avenue is rebuilt as part of Heritage Park reconstruction. The City and the State collaborate to add bike lanes and improve pedestrian crossings on 5th Avenue.

2003 The Downtown Streetscape report is drafted, providing a design template for streetscape improvement in the downtown core.

2004 Capitol Way pedestrian crossings are improved at 7th and 9th Avenues with bulb-outs.

2004 After extensive planning and public process spanning back to 1991, the Gateway Corridor project is complete. These are improvements to the 4th Avenue bridge and surrounding streets, including roundabouts, pedestrian bulb-outs, landscaping, bike lanes, and wider sidewalks.

2005 The City’s Street Standards, which guide the construction of City streets, are updated. One significant change is to require bulb-outs on all downtown streets. Bulb-outs shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians and slow traffic.

2006 The East Downtown Streetscape Plan defines a more walkable district east of Adams Street. Designs are incorporated into the City's standards, to guide publicly- and privately- funded improvements.

2007 A "Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center" is established downtown by the City Council. The goals are to reduce drive-alone commute trips by the 20,000 employees who work in the downtown and support the growth of a dense and vibrant downtown.

2008 A Bike and Pedestrian Education and Encouragement program helps residents learn more about walking and biking. Urban Cycling workshops educate 140 adults about bicycling on City streets. The grant program also provides residents with a Walking Map, and free bike lights and helmets.

2008 Legion Way is improved for pedestrians by adding bulb-outs at Adams, Franklin and Cherry.

2008 The Bicycle Friendly Community Award is presented to Olympia from the League of American Bicyclists.

2009 Transportation Mobility Strategy is complete, placing emphasis on street connectivity, bus corridors, complete streets, transportation demand management, and multi-modal concurrency.

2009 All City traffic signals are converted to LED (Light Emitting Diodes), to save energy and costs.

2009-2011 The Downtown Commuter Program helps downtown employees walk, bike and ride the bus. With grant funds, over 1,900 free bus passes are distributed to employees of 125 small downtown businesses. During the 2-year program, an estimated average of 75 fewer employee cars entered the downtown on any given day.

2010 The Governor's Commute Smart Award is presented to the City of Olympia for commute-trip reduction efforts.

2011 The new City Hall is built. Street improvements include bulb-outs at the surrounding intersections, and a bike lane on 4th Avenue from Jefferson to Plum Streets. Bulb-outs are also added on State Avenue at Cherry and Chestnut Streets.

2012 Free bus passes are provided to all City of Olympia employees to encourage riding the bus to work. The program is similar to the STAR pass offered to all State employees.

2012 Sidewalk grinding removes 480 trip hazards on downtown sidewalks. In 2014, the effort is followed with a \$30,000 grant to repair 63 sites on downtown sidewalks.

2014 The City completes the conversion of all streetlights to LED for energy and cost savings.

2014 The "Greening Capitol Way" project is complete with federal grant funds. The project re-envision Capitol Way, from the Farmer's Market to the State Capitol campus, as a greener and more vibrant streetscape.