

# Olympia Planning Commission

---

September 21, 2023

Olympia City Council  
PO Box 1967  
Olympia, WA 98507

## **RE: Olympia Planning Commission Comment Letter, Preliminary Capital Facilities Plan, 2024-2029 Financial Plan**

Dear Mayor Selby and City Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the 2024-2029 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. We find that the CFP is generally in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan, and we are excited to see the progress around safe infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit, as these types of active transportation options are key to Olympia's future needs.

The Planning Commission recognizes City Staff for their efforts to accelerate active transportation infrastructure, but feel the focus and investment still falls far short of the community values and vision outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, we are concerned this investment gap will continue even with an increase in sales tax to fund transportation projects and believe the current staff proposal of where new revenue would be directed is reflective of the broader lack of sufficient support for walking, biking, and transit in the CFP. For example, the current proposal is to increase the sales tax within the City by .10%, which would generate an estimated \$3.1m in additional revenue. The originating intent for this revenue is to fund sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure, but the most recent publicly presented proposal<sup>1</sup> is to utilize \$1 million for pavement management, \$1.6 million for projects from the Transportation Management Plan, and only \$500k that would be guaranteed for sidewalk repairs/infrastructure.

This indicates that more than 80% of the funding would be redirected towards other work or major transportation projects that may or may not improve sidewalk or bike lane infrastructure<sup>2</sup>. This is contrary to what the public and the Planning Commission indicated was

---

<sup>1</sup> As presented to the City Council Financial Subcommittee on July 19, 2023 (File #23-0616)

<sup>2</sup> While sidewalks and bike lanes are a part of the Transportation Master Plan, the plan is expansive and covers a wide range of transportation projects such as resurfacing, major street reconstruction, and roundabouts.

needed through comments from last year (see the *Preliminary 2023-2028 CFP Recommendation* letter, included) as well as more generally put forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

**For Consideration by the City Council and City of Olympia staff:**

The Planning Commission supports increasing funding, such as an increase of .10% to the sales tax, to fund sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure. But recommends that any revenue generated by such an increase be directed at capital sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure improvements and repairs that are not associated with any other major roadway projects. New revenue should be wholly focused on expediting sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure and should be used only for sidewalks and bike lanes that do not currently have funding options associated with other projects.

The Planning Commission recognizes the need for funding a multitude of transportation priorities, but finds that sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure has been systemically underfunded. Without limiting potential increased revenue to independent sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure projects, the Planning Commission does not feel that the proposal to increase revenue will solve the underlying problems.

**Recommendations for future Capital Facility Plans:**

City staff continue to do an amazing job developing the CFP and making annual improvements. The Planning Commission applauds the City for its dedication to a transparent and effective capital facilities budget. The following recommendations are focused on how to continue to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the CFP.

- Performance Measures and Connections to Strategies and Goals:
  - The City of Olympia utilizes a multitude of strategic, operational, and management plans/goals to set direction and guide City efforts. Many of the projects listed in the CFP are integral to the success of those plans and goals, but it is not always clear what projects impact or support those plans/goals. The Planning Commission recommends that, at the project level, those connections are communicated within the CFP.
  - In addition, the CFP showcases the projects that will be accomplished, but does not indicate what impact those projects will have on the plans/goals. The Commission recommends that the City adopt performance measure standards and incorporate them into the CFP. The standards would allow for a qualitative or quantitative understanding on how close the plan or goal is to completion.
- Recommended additions to future CFP's:
  - That each project has an estimated total cost listed. Many projects extend beyond the timeframe of the current CFP. A total cost, from project inception through development and construction would be a helpful addition to the CFP.
  - A map indicating where all of the projects will be located.

- A summary of the past 5 years of budget history. Having a summary of past budgets, compared to the current budget, would allow for a more accurate review.
- Additional information about the funds used for CFP projects. To include previous years ending fund balance, projected end of year fund balance, any requirements on maintaining a fund balance, any limitations on fund uses, and other important information regarding the fund.

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,



**William Hannah, Chair  
Olympia Planning Commission  
Finance Subcommittee**



**Zainab Nejati, Chair  
Olympia Planning Commission**