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# **DRAFT GROWTH AND TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY CENTER PROGRAM**

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**Agency: City of Olympia**  
**Date: September 2007**



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## GROWTH AND TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY CENTER PROGRAM

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The City of Olympia's GTEC program will combine adopted City goals and policies, facility and service improvements, marketing strategies and incentives to reduce drive-alone trips in downtown Olympia and the Capitol Campus area. The program specifies a financial plan and organizational structure for implementing the program strategies and services. Building upon the success of the existing commute trip reduction (CTR) program, Olympia strives to meet the goals of the plan for the future by working in partnership with other agencies and organizations.

The GTEC program has been developed through extensive involvement by employers, organizations, and individuals from throughout Olympia and the Capitol Campus who helped identify strategies and ways for successful achievement of the goals. This plan helps to support the achievement of Olympia's overall CTR plan.

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### A. Vision of the GTEC and how it relates to the base CTR program:

The question this program addresses comes down to “Where do we get the biggest bang for the trip reduction buck?” The answer is in Downtown Olympia and the Capitol Campus, where trip reduction can benefit the State highway system, the City street system and the vitality of downtown Olympia. A downtown/campus GTEC will help meet City goals related to land use, transportation, and sustainable economic development. This program will work towards a 10% reduction in drive-alone commuting by ALL employees in the GTEC area through creative marketing and new trip reduction services and incentives. The GTEC program goes far beyond the CTR site proposal since it reaches all employees in the downtown/campus area regardless of when they come to work.

The proposed GTEC area includes 35 of the 53 current CTR sites in the City of Olympia. The GTEC area has the highest concentration of CTR worksites in urban Thurston County (35 of 83 Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater total worksites). The GTEC area also has the best opportunity to support alternative mode use. The urban form, concentration of employment, and transportation services can support further trip reduction with an aggressive, focused program. The area has design, density and diversity – the critical land use elements needed to create a lively activity center – where alternative mode use is most attractive and possible.

The fact that so many elements needed for successful commute trip reduction already exist in downtown is no accident. Olympia has focused on infrastructure and amenity investment downtown, and worked at preservation of historic character as well as encouraging infill and redevelopment projects. This focus has come from the expectation that downtown would continue to be the heart of the City and the soul of Thurston County and would become the vibrant live, work, shop and play activity center envisioned in its plans since the late 1970’s.

The City of Olympia has demonstrated vision and commitment to Transportation Demand Management exhibited by:

- Extensive policy that supports commute trip reduction rather than widening streets, allowing free and excessive parking, or making additions to State highways;
- Aggressive employment and residential density goals;
- TDM goals and polices for the downtown that underscore the connection between trip reduction and downtown vitality;
- The City’s decision to build three rather than four lanes on the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge and the use of TDM measure to reduce the growth of traffic volumes;
- Refined multi-modal street design standards;
- Extensive streetscape planning for downtown, including a downtown-wide design template and sub area plans;
- Pedestrian scale street lighting and awning standards, and a long-standing investment in street tree planting;
- Aggressive downtown parking management that charges for parking and discourages employees from using core area parking essential for business patrons;
- On-going investments in ADA compliant street features;
- New design standards requiring bulb-outs on all downtown streets with on-street parking to increase pedestrian safety and slow vehicle speeds;
- Pedestrian scale street lighting;

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- A wayfinding signage program in downtown that encourages walking to activity areas and points of interest;
- Progressive downtown parking codes that have eliminated parking standards for uses such as housing, and eliminated or reduced standards in areas of the downtown;
- A bike parking code requirement for lockers and racks;
- Parking code reductions for shared parking and trip reduction features (such as showers and bike lockers);
- Continued commitment to adding density in downtown. Increased housing density is acknowledged to be the remaining "piece of the 18 hour city center puzzle." Housing will enhance vitality and safety and make downtown the full service area it can be;
- Encouraging proposals for infill and redevelopment downtown with: 1) a recent approval for downtown City property sale for a 130 unit housing project and, 2) a new City Hall closer to the downtown core and transit services, 3) working with a commercial building property owner to convert the building to condominiums;
- A voter-approved funding measure to build sidewalks on major streets. This measure resulted in a five-fold increase in funding for sidewalk construction;
- Progress completing projects in the City's Bicycle Facilities Plan, evidenced by bike lanes on 70% of the City's Arterial streets;
- Establishing a Pedestrian Crossing Improvement Program which constructs crossing improvements on major streets, thereby eliminating barriers to walking;
- The Racks on Demand Program which adds bike racks to downtown sidewalks near businesses at the request of the public;
- Partnership with other local organizations to produce walking and biking safety information including the *Thurston County Bike Map* and the *Walk Olympia* brochure;

This GTEC program proposes going beyond the existing CTR program in the scope of the services and the population reached. All Downtown and Capitol Campus employees regardless of time of arrival to work will be the target population. Because there is broad breadth in the types of employees included in this program and the community-based approach to trip reduction, a broad range of partners have been asked to participate. GTEC partners include:

- City of Olympia
- State Government
- Intercity Transit
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Thurston Regional Planning Council

Partners will work together in new ways to:

- Develop new services;
- Advise on outreach and marketing messages;
- Show leadership within their organizations and to the community.

The GTEC program will be administered by a full time staff person. Along with partners, GTEC staff will develop new services, reach out to employees and employers, and implement a marketing campaign. The GTEC program will be integrated with the existing CTR program at affected work sites and the downtown Parking Management Program.

This GTEC program builds on TDM work done in the downtown, specifically:

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- From 1997-2002, the City expanded downtown parking management to more directly affect commute trip reduction by installing parking meters in areas where parking was free;
- From 2001 to 2004, the City implemented a marketing campaign to reduce commute trips into the downtown during the major re-construction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge.

This GTEC program will help achieve the Olympia Comprehensive Plan vision for a vital, 18-hour live, work, shop and play activity center. City-commissioned studies show that the downtown has capacity for infill and redevelopment and that this downtown densification is needed to help meet City land use, transportation, environment, and economic goals. As the densities increase, successful trip reduction programs will be needed to maintain an effective transportation network. .

### B. GTEC program goals and targets:

The goal of the Olympia Downtown/Capitol Campus GTEC is to expand CTR efforts beyond the 7400 affected employees to **include all approximately 20,000 downtown employees**. A partnership of City, State, Olympia Downtown Association, Intercity Transit, Thurston Regional Planning Council, and County Health Department STEPS program will work to focus outreach programs, services, and infrastructure to reach the aggressive **10% reduction in drive-alone trips for all employees in the downtown between 2008 and 2011**.

### C. GTEC target population:

All employees working in Downtown Olympia and the Capitol Campus are the target GTEC population (**See Appendix A GTEC area map**). Downtown residents and other City residents will benefit from outreach efforts through partnership with the Olympia Neighborhood Associations but these will not be surveyed and included in the GTEC targets. The City and TRPC staff working on this plan met with all of the stakeholders to identify ideas, participation, and strategies that are part of the GTEC plan program.

### D. Proposed GTEC program strategies:

- Full time staff to coordinate all elements of the GTEC program and work with the Partnership Advisory Committee (State, City, Intercity Transit, Olympia Downtown Association, County Health STEPS program, TRPC) on program implementation
- Marketing the program to downtown and Capitol Campus employees with additional outreach to downtown residents and through the Olympia neighborhood associations;
- Carpool and vanpool match services, promotion and incentives for all employees;
- New employee packets for all public and private employers and employees (including information geared to small business employers and employees);
- A transit pass program for any GTEC area employee to complement the STAR pass program offered to State employees in Thurston County;
- Restaurant and merchant discount program for participating employees;
- Incentives and rewards through drawings, events and challenges;
- Parking cash out education and promotion to employers who are currently paying for employee parking;

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- Sample employee guidelines for small businesses about commute options, benefits, and parking;
- Identification of existing walk and bike “end of trip” facilities such as showers, lockers, bike parking;
- Programs to access gyms in downtown for showers and locker use;
- Explore a retrofit assistance programs for buildings owners to provide end of trip facilities;

GTEC programs related to development code review and infrastructure improvements include:

- Parking code review with the goal of reducing parking excesses while supporting downtown redevelopment;
- Review the zoning code for improvements or additions (opportunities to expand the awning requirement and other transit supportive infrastructure);
- Focused placement of bike parking;
- Street beautification efforts that encourage walking;
- Additions to and prioritization of the Olympia Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) to enhance multi-modal access to the downtown;
- Coordinate with Intercity Transit service improvements in the downtown and along the main north south and east west corridors into the downtown. These could include bus stops improvements, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, bike racks, as well as increased service frequency, and an extended green program;
- Work with the State on improvements to State buildings (such as bike parking) and State rights-of-ways including sidewalks, bike lanes and crossing improvements.

### E. Key funding and service partnerships:

The City and its partners will commit to implementing the GTEC program and look for opportunities to focus existing and new resources on the GTEC area.

- City funds will be used for oversight, policy and regulation review, CFP additions and prioritization, and collaborating with partners.
- Intercity Transit (IT) will support focused carpool and vanpool outreach in the area, provide vanpool program services to the area, support the development of a new transit pass program, and partner with the City on focused transit infrastructure and service improvements.
- City, IT and TRPC may use CMAQ funds to implement an extended green program for transit on key corridors.
- Olympia Downtown Association will be a liaison with GTEC staff and parking management staff for outreach to small employers in the downtown, and to businesses willing to participate in incentive programs.
- The State, and TRPC as CTR lead agency, will be the liaison with GTEC staff for outreach to all state employees in the downtown and on the Capitol Campus.
- The State will coordinate with the city on facility improvements both to buildings and state properties.

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- State CTR staff, TRPC (CTR lead agency staff) will encourage State leadership to support the GTEC program.
- State CTR staff, and TRPC (CTR lead agency staff) will continue to coordinate the State agency CTR programs.

The GTEC plan assumes that the WSDOT CTR program will fund the GTEC efforts (2007-2009 legislative funding.) Other state supportive strategies include:

- 1) Establish a statewide marketing program template – to save duplication of effort by participating jurisdictions;
- 2) Establish a statewide recognition program for GTEC efforts;
- 3) Provide support for surveying GTEC employees.

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