



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Report on King County 2006 and 2007 Concurrency Modeling Review, May 2007

King County

This follow-up to the 2006 Roads Concurrency study was conducted to assess the accuracy and transparency of the traffic modeling conducted by the Road Services Division in support of the 2007 concurrency ordinance. Also, the follow-up assessed the status of implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 study. The follow-up found that the accuracy and transparency of traffic modeling has improved, and that some of the recommendations of the 2006 study have been implemented. However, many of the most significant recommendations from the 2006 study have not yet been addressed. In response to council provisos in the 2007 budget, the Road Services Division has created a working group to develop a proposal for significant changes to the concurrency program, and we anticipate that the executive will propose changes to the program in conjunction with the 2008 update to the county's Comprehensive Plan.

2006 Concurrency Study

A transportation concurrency program is required by the state Growth Management Act. It requires local jurisdictions to have adequate infrastructure in place concurrent with new development, or the development must be denied. The Road Services Division models the impact of new development on the transportation network, and if the new development causes congestion on the network to exceed level of service (LOS) standards adopted by the council, development is denied.

In 2005, the council requested the auditor's office to conduct a study to identify the impacts of changes to the LOS standards that the council adopted in 2004. The auditor's office contracted with Mirai Transportation Planning and Engineering, who conducted both the 2006 study and this follow-up report.

The 2006 study concluded that the changes to the LOS standards adopted by the council would allow for greater development countywide, but not in all areas of the county. The study also found that the concurrency model was overly complex, used questionable modeling practices, lacked transparency and quality control. The 2006 study made 11 recommendations that were intended to simplify the system, improve modeling practices and transparency.

2007 Council Budget Provisos

In response to the issues raised in the 2006 concurrency study, the council included provisos in the 2007 budget directing the Road Services Division to submit an ordinance creating an expert review panel to review the concurrency modeling in support of the annual concurrency ordinance, and to create a working group to develop changes to the concurrency program. The executive has submitted the ordinance creating the expert review panel, and

the Road Services Division has created the working group, which has begun to explore options for changing the concurrency program. We anticipate that the executive will propose changes to the concurrency program in conjunction with the 2008 update to the county's Comprehensive Plan.

2007 Follow-up

Because the 2006 study found errors with the traffic modeling conducted for previous concurrency ordinances, we conducted this study to assess the accuracy and transparency of the modeling conducted for the 2007 concurrency ordinance. The follow-up study also assessed the status of the implementation of the recommendations from the 2006 report.

The follow-up study found that the accuracy and transparency of the modeling in support of the 2007 concurrency ordinance had improved. The Road Services Division provided much better documentation of changes to the model, and no modeling errors were found. The study also found that some of the recommendations of the 2006 report had been implemented, but some of the most significant recommendations of the 2006 report have yet to be addressed.

A new issue was raised in the 2007 report concerning the way in which concurrency is applied to proposed development in the rural areas of the county. The study found that due to certain modeling practices, development in the rural area may be denied not due to traffic congestion exceeding the rural LOS standard in the rural area, but due to traffic congestion exceeding the rural LOS standard in the urban area.

Recommendations and Executive Response

The follow-up study includes 10 recommendations to further improve modeling practices. The executive concurred with all of the recommendations.