

Section 1 Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

The City of St. Helens, in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), initiated an update of the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP) in 2010. The TSP update will guide the management and implementation of the transportation facilities, policies, and programs, within St. Helens over the next 20 years. This plan is reflective of the community's vision, while remaining consistent with state and other local plans and policies. The plan also provides the necessary elements for adoption as the transportation element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the plan provides ODOT and Columbia County with recommendations that can be incorporated into their respective planning efforts.

State of Oregon planning rules require that the TSP be based on the current comprehensive plan land use map and must provide a transportation system that accommodates the expected 20-year growth in population and employment that will result from implementation of the land use plan. The contents of this TSP update are guided by Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 197.712 and the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) administrative rule known as the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR). These laws and rules require that jurisdictions develop the following:

- a road plan for a network of arterial and collector streets;
- a bicycle and pedestrian plan;
- an air, rail, water, and pipeline plan;
- a transportation financing plan; and
- policies and ordinances for implementing the TSP.

The TPR requires that the transportation system plan incorporates the needs of all users and abilities. In addition, the TPR requires that local jurisdictions adopt land use and subdivision ordinance amendments to protect transportation facilities and to provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities between residential, commercial, and employment/institutional areas. It is further required that local communities coordinate their respective plans with the applicable county, regional, and state transportation plans.

TSP Process

The St. Helens TSP was updated through a process that identified transportation needs, analyzed potential options for addressing those needs over the next 20 years, and provided an implementation plan and financing plan. The following steps were involved in this process:

- Review of state, regional, and local transportation plans and policies that the St. Helens TSP must either comply with or be consistent with.
- Gathering community input through public workshops at key points in the project.
- Working with technical and citizen advisory committees to establish goals and objectives, identify and assess alternatives, and prioritize future needs.
- Using a detailed inventory of existing transportation facilities and services as a foundation to establish needs near and long-term.
- Identifying and evaluating future transportation needs to support the land use vision and economic vitality of the city.
- Prioritizing improvements and strategies that are reflective of the community's vision and fiscal realities.
- Preparing for review and adoption by the St. Helens Planning Commission and City Council and subsequently by Columbia County as appropriate.

Public involvement

The TSP planning process provided the citizens of St. Helens with the opportunity to identify their vision and priorities for the future transportation system within the city. Expressing this vision into TSP goals and policies was a central element of the public involvement process. These goals and policies were used as a guide in identifying future system needs and priorities.

The planning process was guided by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The TAC was comprised of key stakeholder agencies, including the St. Helens Planning, Public Works, and Engineering Departments, the Columbia County Transit and Roads departments, Columbia River Fire & Rescue, and the Oregon Department of Transportation Planning and Rail Divisions. The CAC was comprised of community leaders, local business owners and residents.

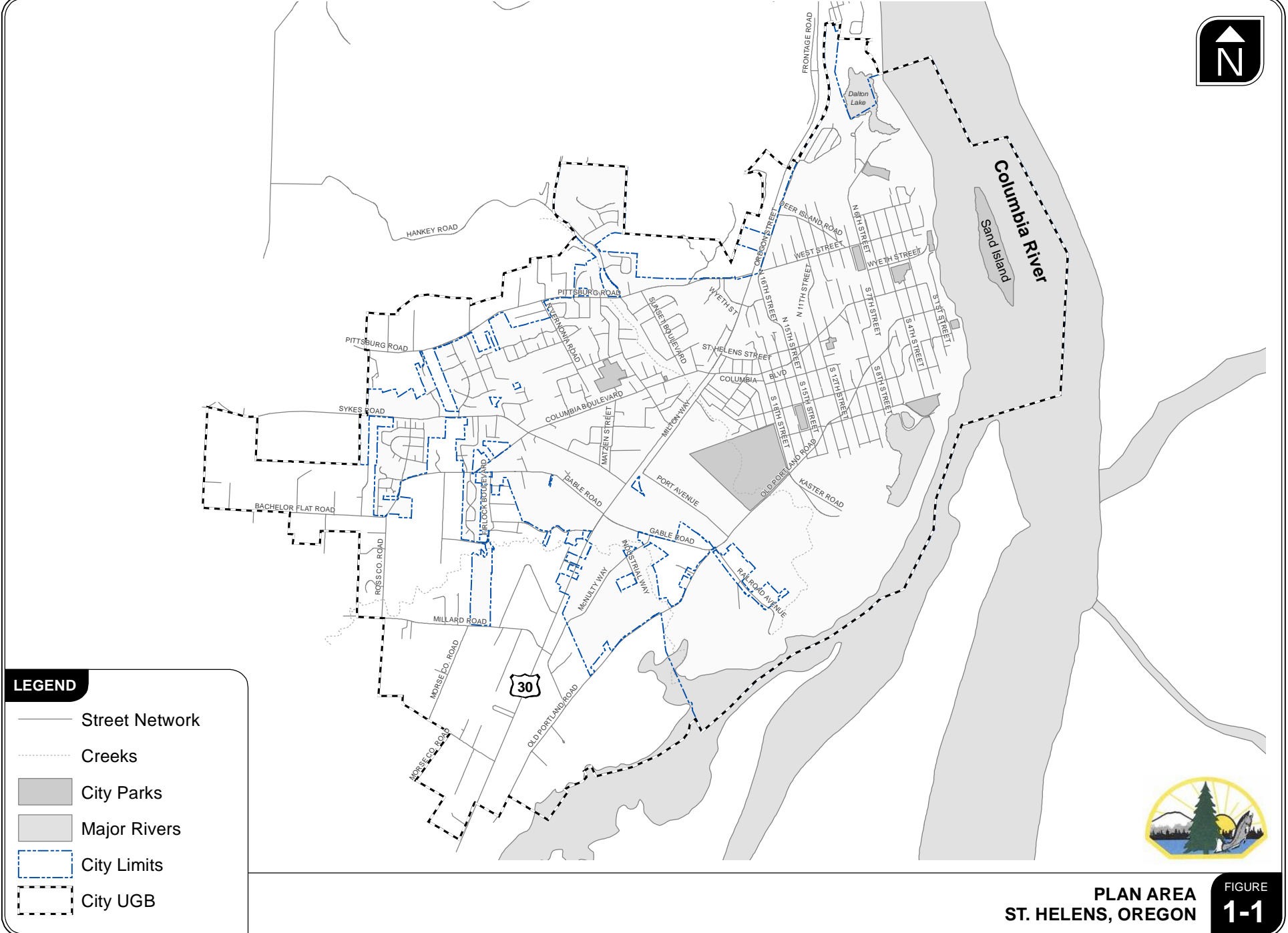
Members of the TAC and CAC reviewed the technical aspects of the TSP. They held four joint meetings that focused on all aspects of the TSP development, including the evaluation of existing deficiencies and forecast needs; the selection of transportation options; the presentation of the draft TSP and funding plan; and, the presentation of recommended ordinance amendments.

In addition to the established advisory committees, two community workshops were held at key junctures in the process to gather public input regarding transportation needs and priorities. This input was incorporated in the options analysis and final plan development. Finally, the draft plans were discussed with the Planning Commission and City Council at work sessions and at public hearings. Details of the public involvement process are provided in Volume 1, Appendix “A”.

Plan Area

This TSP covers publicly owned facilities within the existing urban growth boundary (UGB) as reflected in Figure 1-1. Based on TPR, the plan focuses on arterial and collector streets and their intersections, pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the arterial and collector streets and at other off-street locations, public transportation, and other transport facilities and services, including rail service, air service, pipelines and water service.

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TSP Organization and Methodology

Development of the TSP began with a review of the city's goals and policies that guide land use and transportation planning in the city. This review is presented in Section 2 of this plan. Section 3 summarizes an inventory of the existing transportation system within the UGB.

The transportation system inventory allowed for an objective assessment of the current system's operational performance, safety, and general function, which is summarized in Section 4. Development of long-term (year 2031) transportation system forecasts relied heavily on the Columbia County's population and employment growth projections. Based on these projections, and with input from the TAC, the potential for and location of future development activities was identified. Section 5 of this report details the development of anticipated long-term future transportation needs within the UGB.

Section 6 documents the development and prioritization of transportation options identified to meet the multimodal needs of the community. The impact of each of the identified options was considered relative to the goals and policies, potential costs and benefits, and conformance with and potential for conflicts within the land use, environmental and regulatory environment. Ultimately, based on comments received from the TAC and CAC, elected officials, and community, a long range implementation plan was developed that reflected a consensus on which elements should be incorporated into the city's long-term transportation system. The recommendations identified in Section 7, Transportation System Plan, include a Street Plan and a Pedestrian and Bicycle System Plan, as well as plans for other transportation modes serving St. Helens.

Section 8, Transportation Funding Plan, provides an analysis and summary of funding sources to finance the identified transportation system improvements. The recommended Ordinance Modifications presented in Section 9 include specific changes in local zoning policies to implement the TSP and to achieve compliance with the Oregon TPR (OAR 660 Division 12).

Sections 1 through 10, in combination with Appendices A through F, comprise Volume 1 of the TSP and provide the main substance of the plan. These are supplemented by Technical Appendices in Volume 2 that contain the technical memoranda documenting the existing conditions analysis, forecast needs, and alternatives analysis.