



Memo

Date: May 8, 2019

To: Melanie Whitehead, Coordinator of Campus Planning & Development (SPU)
Dave Church, Assistant Vice President for Facility Management (SPU)

From: Ann Sutphin, Transportation Options Program Manager (SDOT)

Subject: SDOT recommendation for required student SOV goal; from
Seattle Pacific University's response to MIMP annual report (01-31-2019)

Background

In 2000, a new Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) was adopted for Seattle Pacific University (SPU). It contained a Transportation Management Program (TMP) section that described the goals, program elements, and benefits SPU offers to employees and students to disincentivize single-occupant vehicle (SOV) driving and encourage commuting using other modes of transportation. The adopted MIMP contained an employee SOV goal of 50% and directed SPU to work with the City of Seattle to establish a separate "reasonable and fair percentage goal" for commuter student SOV trips. As of March 2019, this goal has not yet been established.

As part of its obligations as a MIMP, SPU reports annually to the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON), the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) about its progress and fulfillment of the MIMP conditions. Following the submission of the 2017-2018 annual report, SDOT brought up the absence of a student SOV goal. SPU agreed it was necessary to establish a goal and expressed the desire to work with SDOT on setting a goal for commuter students. SPU also raised concerns about which students would be affected by the SOV goal. In the University's view, all students should be counted because increasing the number of on-campus student housing units is a mitigation strategy to prevent SOV commutes.

In an effort to set a reasonable and fair student SOV rate goal SDOT examined the MIMP, Council Decision, and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for background information. The MIMP only contained the directive, given by the City Council's decision, to establish a goal but did not suggest an SOV rate or define who the commuter students were. In addressing SOV rates, the Council decision amended the MIMP to establish that a student goal would exist at the same level of importance as the employee goal, eliminating references to the student goal as being "secondary". Like the MIMP, it did not establish a goal or define who the commuter students were. The *Transportation, Circulation and Parking* section of the FEIS (p.71-113) reported SOV performance for employees and for commuter students, who were defined as those students who are living "off-campus", based on a March 1998 intercept survey. In that survey, the commuter students had a SOV rate of 63%. The FEIS also indicated that modifications to the TMP

were anticipated and that the goal would be to reduce “the SOV rate for commuter students and faculty and staff to 50%” (p. 87).

Response to SPU

The spirit of the FEIS, City Council decision, and MIMP suggest that a student SOV goal would apply to commuter students and exclude those students who reside in residence halls on-campus. However, SDOT acknowledges that on-campus residences are themselves trip mitigation measures. SDOT agrees with SPU that increasing the number of on-campus residences available to students constitutes an important and significant mitigation strategy to prevent SOV trips. Furthermore, based on SDOT’s experience with other higher education institutions with on-campus housing, it is also probable that some portion of the students who live on-campus still choose to drive on-campus. This would negatively impact SOV rates, which further justifies the need to consider them in the campus’ overall performance. Therefore, students who reside on-campus should be included in the population affected by any SOV goal applied to students.

It is SPU’s responsibility to survey all students on a regular basis to evaluate their established SOV rate performance and report to the City as part of its MIMP annual reports. SDOT recommends aligning this survey with the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) survey employees complete in fall of odd-numbered years (ie, 2019). SDOT would also like SPU to survey students at least as frequently as employees (one every two years). In order to properly understand how students’ place of residence impacts their travel behavior, the student survey should ask whether students live on- or off-campus. The trip results should be reported for the student body as a whole and be broken down based on where students live.

While the student SOV goal will apply to all students, SPU should not rely on lower on-campus student SOV rate to balance out high SOV rates among off-campus students. Student commuters share many characteristics with the employee group which is constrained by a more aggressive SOV rate goal. To make progress on further reducing overall SOV trips goals, SPU could consider additional TMP measures and incentives for commuter students such as expanding the subsidy for a monthly ORCA pass for off-campus students.

Recommendation

SDOT proposes the following model for the student SOV goal. The overall SOV target for all students would be set to be no higher than what students are currently achieving, based on 2016 data, when the performance of off-campus commuter students is properly weighed with the assumed SOV rate for on-campus students. We estimate that commuter students are achieving a 61.5% SOV rate based on the 2016 SPU Student Commute Survey Summary which you share with us (see Table 1 below). For simplicity, we assume that 54% of all students live on campus (not just undergraduates as you mentioned in your letter) and they have a 0% SOV rate goal. The combined, achieved SOV rate would be estimated at 28.3% (see Table 2), which we would set as your SOV rate goal for all students to meet or improve upon going forward. SDOT would also agree to a more aggressive goal should SPU want to commit to one.

Table 1: SOV Rate for Off-Campus Students

	Students	SOV (visual estimate based on 2016 summary)
Undergrad	1,522	50.0%
Grad	947	80.0%
Combined	2,469	61.5%

Table 2: SOV Rate for All Students

	SOV rate	Proportion of students
Campus rate	0% (assumed)	54%
Off-campus rate	61.5%	46%
Combined	28.3%	100%

SDOT recommends 28.3% as a maximum SOV goal for all students to serve as the current student performance metric. SPU is encouraged but not required to set a more aggressive goal for commuting students. For future updates to the master plan, more aggressive trip reduction goals will likely be recommended by SDOT staff.