

Cespedes, Christopher

From: Cespedes, Christopher
Sent: Friday, December 9, 2022 2:40 PM
To: Cespedes, Christopher
Subject: RE: please eliminate "level of service" metric

From: Kirk XXXXXXXXX <XXXXXXXXXXXX>
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2022 10:48 PM
To: City of Ann Arbor Transportation Commission <XXXXXXXXXXXX >
Subject: please eliminate "level of service" metric

This message was sent from outside of the City of Ann Arbor. Please do not click links, open attachments, or follow directions unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioners:

As you pursue Vision Zero implementation measures, please consider a small but meaningful policy change: recommending to City Council that staff no longer use an automobile "level of service" (LOS) metric when analyzing road projects.

As one writer stated, "Because of the ubiquity of LOS, this largely misunderstood measurement has profound influence on the design of our communities. Level of service is a system by which road engineers measure how well a road is performing based on the number of cars and the delay that vehicles experience on that roadway. Letters designate each level, from A to F. A, B and C represent free-flowing conditions and F is stop-and-go traffic. The score is assessed based on the highest level of congestion on that roadway, even if it only occurs a few minutes a day... The 1965 federal Transportation Research Board Highway Capacity Manual introduced the LOS metric and it quickly became accepted as the standard measure of roadway performance. One reason that states adopted the LOS so quickly was that it suited our country's transportation goals in the 1960's of building out a network of interstates and prioritizing automobiles to travel quickly. Although LOS quickly became the standard, **transportation agencies at any level are not explicitly required to use it: there are no planning or project design requirements that mandate the use of either LOS or travel modeling.** FHWA recently issued a memo clarifying that level-of-service was never a federal requirement." (<https://t4america.org/2016/06/08/california-officially-dumped-the-outdated-level-of-service-metric-your-state-should-too/>)

Many cities are now using or considering more inclusive or alternative philosophies around what "service" means (quality of pedestrian and cyclist service, trip generation, accessibility of destinations/walk score, % of vehicles exceeding the speed limit, crash modeling, etc.), while the State of California simply passed legislation that prohibits almost all urban areas from using LOS. (<https://la.streetsblog.org/2014/08/07/california-has-officially-ditched-car-centric-level-of-service/>)

After all, why should any segment of an in-town road network be designed to move cars faster?

I believe this was a city staff response to a question about a development proposal in the past year or so.

33 Can it be determined if there are practical limits for the number of cars that can be allowed into new developments in this area before the streets basically become unusable?

Keep in mind that we are still working our way through the existing condition modeling. Then we will be forecasting traffic for future conditions based on planned developments. The modeling we will then undertake will be a form of a stress test for the roadway network. When completed will be brought to the City Council. They will have to consider fundamental policy issues of development (tax base, private property rights, etc.) and the social issues of what the built environment is or becomes. Hopefully our report will illuminate these concerns and then it rests with the City Planning Commission and City Council to decide.

As Ann Arbor is trying to shift to a denser and more walkable and bikeable future, we need a completely different transportation and safety philosophy if we seriously plan to eliminate serious injuries on our roadways. I think eliminating the use of LOS—and focusing on crash elimination—would be an important step.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
XXXXXXXXXXXX

PS: Is there a state requirement that we use level of service? Or are there future congestion mitigation grants that we would not qualify for if we no longer used it? (If so, could we make an exception for the pursuit of CMAQ grants for the installation of roundabouts or other proven safety countermeasures?)