

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

# Chapter 6

# Transportation



## **INTRODUCTION**

The function of Ruston's transportation system is to facilitate the movement of people and goods, from individuals on foot or bicycle to commuters using transit.

The Growth Management Act calls upon communities to rethink the traditional approach to transportation planning. It emphasizes that land use and transportation planning must be integrated, ensuring that these systems work together and not independently of each other.

Traditionally, communities have responded to traffic congestion and related issues by implementing transportation improvements in a reactive manner. This approach often leads to wider streets, which can encourage higher speeds, increased traffic volumes, and associated impacts such as noise and air pollution. While Ruston's physical location limits the extent of future growth over the next 20 years, it remains essential to anticipate the need to preserve and maintain existing transportation facilities as infill development occurs in and around the city.

Most importantly, the Transportation Element—along with its goals and policies—provides Ruston residents an opportunity to shape a transportation network that aligns with the city's unique character. Residents place a high priority on maintaining policies and services that ensure safe vehicular and pedestrian access while also maximizing comfort, well-being, and aesthetic enjoyment.

### **Growth Management Act Requirements**

As described previously, GMA requires comprehensive plans to establish a direct link between land use and transportation. This linkage is accomplished primarily through requirements ensuring transportation facility needs created by specific developments are met at the time permits are issued.

To assist in linking land use and transportation, the GMA requires this Transportation Element to address the following areas:

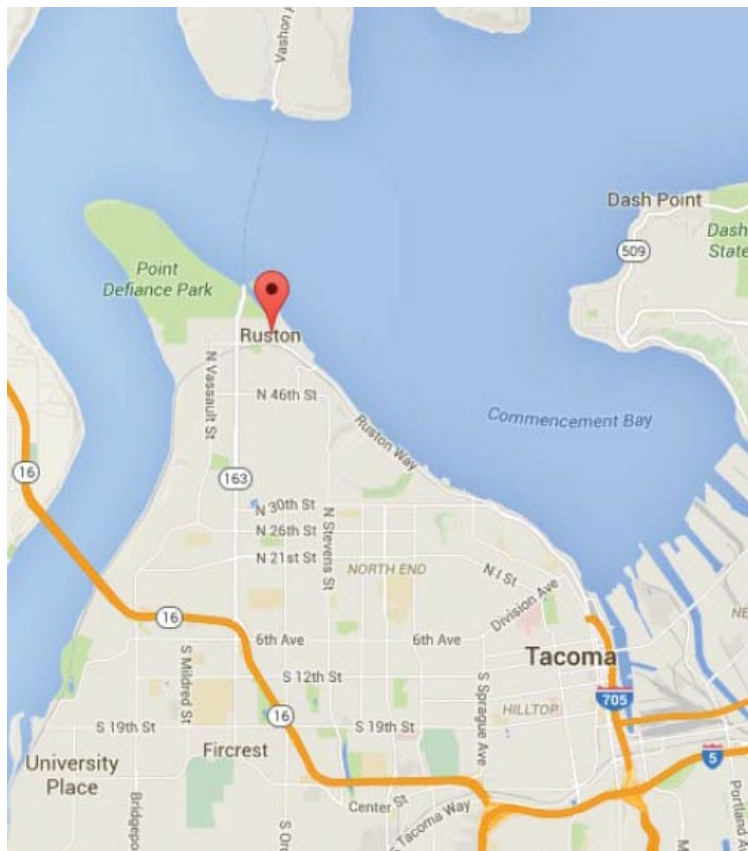
- A description of the land use assumptions used in estimating travel demand
- Estimated impacts to state-owned transportation facilities

- Identification of facility and service needs based on an inventory of existing facilities, travel forecasts and level of service standards
- A finance section that includes an analysis of funding capabilities, a multi-year financing plan, and a discussion of how additional funding will be raised or assumptions reassessed if funding falls short
- Intergovernmental coordination efforts
- Demand management strategies
- A pedestrian and bicycle component
- Consistency among the Transportation Element, the six-year plan required by RCW 35.77.010 and the ten-year state plan required by RCW 47.05.030

The GMA also requires counties to develop countywide planning policies that ensure consistency across all comprehensive plans within the county. Originally adopted in June 1992 and updated several times since, the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County include a section on “Transportation Facilities and Strategies.” This section identifies facilities that serve the countywide transportation network, such as the railroad, and all transit stops and shelters. The policies further describe the multimodal network, including roads, public transit facilities, non-motorized facilities, ferries, airports, parking facilities, and facilities related to transportation demand management.



**Figure 6.1 Locator Map**



Finally, the Countywide Planning Policies require coordination on transportation issues, ranging from level of service standards to funding sources. Consistency with both the Countywide Planning Policies and the requirements of the GMA must be demonstrated. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has been designated as both the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the area that includes Snohomish, King, Kitsap, and Pierce

Counties. The City of Ruston is a constituent member of the PSRC. MPOs are charged with developing regional transportation plans in compliance with federal law, while RTPOs are responsible for developing regional transportation plans under state law. PSRC has adopted a Metropolitan Transportation Plan, known as *Vision 2050*, for the Central Puget Sound area, which includes Ruston. The plan contains policies, goals and funding strategies to address regional transportation issues. Ruston's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with *Vision 2050*, although no regional transportation improvements are identified for Ruston in the regional plan.

Under RCW 36.70A.070, cities are required to inventory state-owned transportation facilities within their jurisdictional boundaries and assess the impact of land use assumptions on those state-owned facilities. Ruston has one state-owned facility within its borders: Pearl Street / SR 163 (see Figure 6.1, Locator Map).

## **Land Use Assumptions**

The Transportation Element is based on the assumption that Ruston's land use patterns will remain largely consistent over the next 20 years, as outlined in the Land Use Element. While significant changes are not anticipated, future development regulations incorporate flexible site development strategies including codes that will allow infill development and align with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. More detailed land use assumptions and population projections are provided in the Land Use and Housing elements.

Ruston's existing street network is expected to accommodate projected population growth and increased use over the next 20 years. As a result, no new roads are proposed. Instead, transportation investments will focus on maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure while enhancing efficiency and accessibility. Ruston is a fully platted and mostly built-out community with a well-connected, walkable street network. Its attractive and well-designed streetscapes include space for transit, bicyclists, pedestrians, and persons with mobility challenges whenever possible. Streets are laid out in a traditional neighborhood grid pattern with alleys. Residents highly value the street grid pattern, as well as the convenience and functionality of alley access to their homes.

Streets in Ruston, referred to as thoroughfares, are classified according to their function: parkways, boulevards, local streets, and alleys. Transportation planning prioritizes pedestrian, transit, and bicycle improvements, recognizing that a walkable environment benefits local business, encourages healthful lifestyles, and strengthens our community. Budgeting for future projects reflects this priority.

The scope of Ruston's traffic analysis is citywide—addressing major intersections and including evaluation of average and peak summer traffic volumes on road segments, an analysis of arterial level of service for Ruston Way corridor, and analysis of intersection operations during the average weekday PM peak hour. Selected intersections within Ruston near the Point Ruston Development were also analyzed for peak summer weekday level of service.

Projected land use and growth assumptions for adjacent areas and jurisdictions, including Pierce County and the City of Tacoma, are addressed in their respective Comprehensive Plans.

## EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

**Figure 6.2 Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities and Services**

| Facility or Service                          | Description                     |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Airports</b>                              | None                            |
| <b>Water:</b>                                |                                 |
| Port   | None                            |
| Ferries                                      | None                            |
| Marinas                                      | None                            |
| <b>Surface:</b>                              |                                 |
| Freeway                                      | None                            |
| State Highway                                | Pearl Street (SR 163)           |
| City Streets                                 | 6.78 miles of improved streets  |
| HOV  | None                            |
| <b>Rail:</b>                                 |                                 |
| Passenger                                    | None                            |
| Freight                                      | BNSF (corridor only; no stops)  |
| Other  | None                            |
| <b>Transit:</b>                              |                                 |
| Pierce Transit                               | Routes 10 and 11; Ruston Runner |
| Sound Transit                                | None                            |
| <b>Non-motorized Facilities:</b>             |                                 |
| Sidewalks                                    | 8.38 miles                      |
| <b>Facilities of Statewide Significance</b>  | None                            |
| <b>Facilities of Regionwide Significance</b> | None                            |

## **Historical Background**

Ruston's transportation system has remained largely unchanged since before its incorporation in 1906. The community established its grid street pattern and alleys in the mid-1800s, developing a company town centered around the smelting industry. Town planners and builders designed a transportation network that allowed residents to live, work, and enjoy recreation within Ruston, with shops, employment, services, and leisure activities all within walking or biking distance.

The Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Elements build upon these enduring principles. The original street grid and alley system remain well-suited for all forms of transportation. Ruston's development regulations align with Complete Streets principles, ensuring that future improvements support safe and efficient travel for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists alike while preserving the city's historic street system.

While major capacity improvements to transportation facilities have already been completed, this Element establishes functional design standards to support anticipated growth, enhance pedestrian and cyclist mobility, and promote safe multimodal travel throughout Ruston's street network.

## **Thoroughfare Network**

Thoroughfares (streets) are public spaces for many activities and functions that are important elements of our community. Driving, biking, walking, using mobility devices, navigating with strollers, chatting with neighbors, and parking all occur in streets.

The majority of Ruston's thoroughfare network consists of small residential streets that carry varying but generally low levels of traffic. Baltimore Street, a moderate-volume street, provides a north-south connection between Ruston and Tacoma's residential neighborhoods, ending at Ruston Way and the Point Ruston Development.

Higher-volume streets that serve the community and connect Ruston to the regional transportation system include:

- **Ruston Way** – A collector arterial that runs along the west side of Commencement Bay, linking Ruston to Tacoma’s central business district and I-705 via Schuster Parkway.
- **Pearl Street (SR 163)** – A principal north-south arterial serving as a primary connection from the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal to SR 16 and I-5, serving both Tacoma and Ruston in Pierce County.

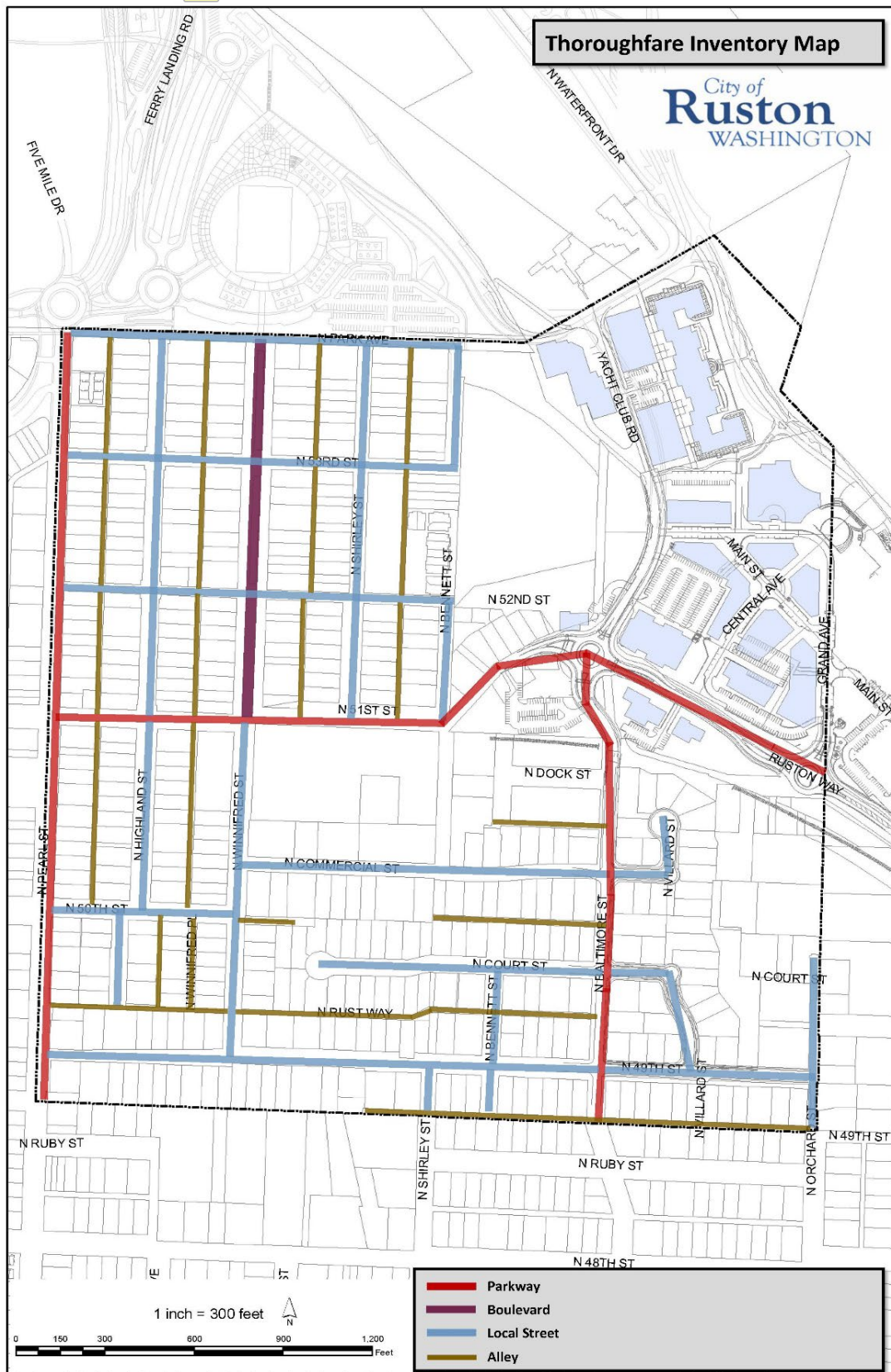
The majority of rights-of-way were dedicated in plats around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before Washington became a state. Ruston has approximately 6.78 miles of paved public streets, most with readily available parallel parking and sidewalks on both sides. Travel lanes and right-of-way widths are fairly generous. There are four major types of thoroughfares in Ruston: parkways, boulevards, local streets, and alleys.

- **Parkways** include Pearl Street, 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Ruston Way, and Baltimore Street; these are the busiest streets and range from 60 to 70 feet in right-of-way width.
- Winnifred Street, the sole **Boulevard**, is moderately busy with a landscaped median and about 100 feet of right-of-way.
- **Local Streets** include all other residential streets, including three dead-end streets serving a limited number of properties; these streets typically have low traffic volumes, with 50 to 60 feet in right-of-way width.
- **Alleys** are typically 16 to 18 feet in width and serve a primarily utilitarian function.

All street edges are vertical curb and gutter. The standard speed limit in Ruston is 25 mph. The speed limit for Ruston Way and Pearl Street is 30 mph.



**Figure 6.3 Thoroughfare Inventory Map**



**Figure 6.4 Thoroughfare Inventory Table**

| Thoroughfares             | Type                   | Roadway      | Sidewalks | Sidewalk Notes | Bike Routes                     | Parking | Trails                                      |         |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------|---|---------|
| North of 51 <sup>st</sup> |                        |              |           |                |                                 |         |   |         |
| Streets                   | 51st                   | Parkway      | 0.36 mi   | 0.6 mi         | North side only east of Bennett | 0 mi    | Yes (none on south side, east of Winnifred) | 0 mi    |
|                           | 52nd                   | Local Street | 0.25 mi   | 0.5 mi         |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes (north side only)                       | 0 mi    |
|                           | 53rd                   | Local Street | 0.25 mi   | 0.4 mi         |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes   | 0 mi    |
|                           | 54th/<br>Park Ave      | Local Street | 0.25 mi   | 0.25 mi        | South side only                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0 mi    |
|                           | Bennett                | Local Street | 0.15 mi   | 0.2 mi         | West side only north of 53rd    | 0 mi    | Yes   | 0 mi    |
|                           | Highland               | Local Street | 0.25 mi   | 0.5 mi         |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes   | 0 mi    |
|                           | Pearl/<br>SR 163       | Parkway      | 0.25 mi   | 0.5 mi         |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes   | 0 mi    |
|                           | Shirley                | Local Street | 0.25 mi   | 0.5 mi         |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes   | 0 mi    |
|                           | Water Walk Trail       | Trail        | 0 mi      | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0.36 mi |
|                           | Winnifred              | Boulevard    | 0.25 mi   | 0.5 mi         |                                 | 0.25 mi | Yes   | 0 mi    |
| Alleys                    | Highland/<br>Winnifred | Alley        | 0.25 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0 mi    |
|                           | Pearl/<br>Highland     | Alley        | 0.25 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0 mi    |
|                           | Shirley/<br>Bennett    | Alley        | 0.15 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0 mi    |
|                           | Winnifred/<br>Shirley  | Alley        | 0.25 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | No  | 0 mi    |

**Figure 6.4 Thoroughfare Inventory Table (continued)**

| Thoroughfares             | Type              | Roadway      | Sidewalks | Sidewalk Notes | Bike Routes                     | Parking | Trails                |      |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|------|
| South of 51 <sup>st</sup> |                   |              |           |                |                                 |         |                       |      |
| Streets                   | Pearl             | Parkway      | 0.25 mi   | 0.25           | West side of Pearl is in Tacoma | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | 49th              | Local Street | 0.49 mi   | 0.98           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes (south side only) | 0 mi |
|                           | 50th              | Local Street | 0.16 mi   | 0.32           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Baltimore         | Parkway      | 0.31 mi   | 0.62           |                                 | 0.62 mi | No                    | 0 mi |
|                           | Bennett           | Local Street | 0.10 mi   | 0.16           | No sidewalks south of 49th      | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Commercial        | Local Street | 0.28 mi   | 0.28           | No sidewalks on south side      | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Court             | Local Street | 0.23 mi   | 0.46           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Highland          | Local Street | 0.19 mi   | 0.38           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Orchard           | Local Street | 0.06 mi   | 0              |                                 | 0 mi    | No                    | 0 mi |
|                           | Ruston Way        | Parkway      | 0.16 mi   | 0.32           |                                 | 0.32 mi | No                    | 0 mi |
|                           | Villard           | Local Street | 0.11 mi   | 0.22           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Winnifred         | Local Street | 0.22 mi   | 0.44           |                                 | 0 mi    | Yes                   | 0 mi |
|                           | Winnifred Place   | Alley        | 0.19      | None           |                                 | 0 mi    | No                    | 0 mi |
| Alleys                    | 49th/ Tacoma      | Alley        | 0.25 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | 0                     | 0 mi |
|                           | Commercial/ Court | Alley        | 0.13 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | 0                     | 0 mi |
|                           | Pearl/ Highland   | Alley        | 0.13 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | 0                     | 0 mi |
|                           | Rust Way          | Alley        | 0.36 mi   | 0 mi           |                                 | 0 mi    | 0                     | 0 mi |
| Totals (miles)            |                   |              | 6.78      | 8.38           |                                 | 1.19    |                       | 0.36 |

### ***Existing Traffic Conditions***


Traffic volumes in Ruston have remained moderate over recent decades, with the highest congestion occurring along major arterials serving regional destinations such as Point Defiance Park and the Vashon Island ferry terminal. The majority of through traffic originates along Ruston Way, traveling up North 51st Street, Pearl Street, and Baltimore Street.

Ruston's roadway network is integrated into the greater Tacoma system, but due to its location at the northern edge of the city, it does not experience high regional traffic volumes. While congestion is not a widespread issue, growth projections indicate the city's population is anticipated to increase by about 42% over the next 20 years. This anticipated growth underscores the need for proactive transportation planning, particularly along key corridors. Plans to improve arterial transportation facilities have been put in place as described in the Transportation Element.

### **Transit Facilities and Services**

Pierce Transit provides bus service in Ruston. Route 11 connects the Vashon Ferry Landing to downtown Tacoma and the Tacoma Dome Station, traveling through Ruston along Pearl Street. The two stops on Pearl Street are within walking distance for many Ruston residents. Route 10 follows a similar path from the Vashon Ferry Landing but continues south along Pearl Street to the TCC Transit Center via North 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Vassault Street, and Highlands Parkway. A bus stop/shelter is planned on Ruston Way and Central Avenue, with construction concurrent with the Point Ruston Development.

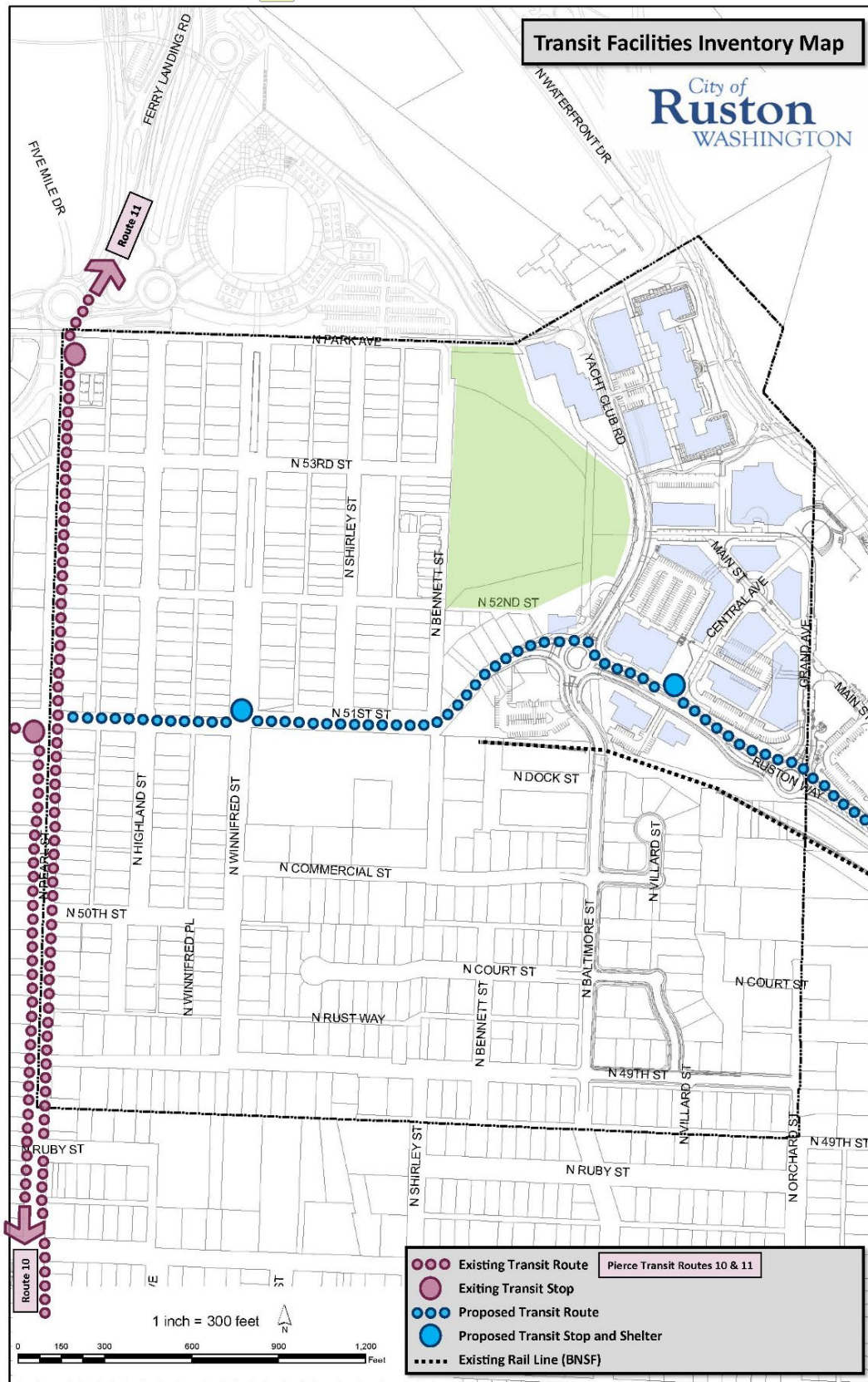
In addition to fixed-route bus service, Pierce Transit's Ruston Runner offers on-demand public transportation in the waterfront recreation zone along Ruston Way. This service allows riders to request point-to-point trips via a smartphone app at standard transit fares. Using vans instead of full-size buses, the Ruston Runner provides a connection between Point Ruston and downtown Tacoma, enhancing access to jobs, dining, shopping, and regional transit hubs.

Sound Transit has targeted the area in the vicinity of the Vashon Island ferry terminal for new fixed-route service. A potential route is identified in Sound Transit's Long Range Plan along Ruston Way (see  Figure 6.5, Transit Facilities).

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**Figure 6.5 Transit Facilities**



## **Railroad**

The railroad in Ruston began in the mid-1800s with the Tacoma Eastern Railroad's 3-foot narrow-gauge track, a two-mile logging route from a shallow-water wharf at Commencement Bay to a local sawmill. Today, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) owns and operates the rail corridor, a vital link to the global market. BNSF's main line runs roughly parallel to North 51st Street through the city, but Ruston has no railroad loading or maintenance facilities, and no passenger or freight trains stop within city limits (see Figure 6.5 – Transit Facilities).

## **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

Ruston prides itself on being a walkable and bike-friendly community where residents use sidewalks, trails, and bike routes for recreation, socializing, and daily travel. Walking and cycling can be very pleasant and enjoyable in Ruston, and most streets have sidewalks, although some could benefit from widening to 7–10 feet and additional buffering from traffic to improve safety and comfort.

The Waterwalk, a paved multiuse trail along the shores of Commencement Bay (0.36 miles of which is within city limits), provides a scenic route for pedestrians and cyclists. Planned connections through Promontory Hill Park, Park Avenue, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, and Yacht Club Road will further enhance pedestrian mobility throughout the city. Future improvements may also include a new connection across Rust Park to sidewalks on Baltimore Street (see Figure 6.6, Primary Pedestrian Connectivity Routes and Figure 6.7, Bike Routes Inventory Map).

This Comprehensive Plan prioritizes the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities as essential components of Ruston's transportation network. These facilities are not secondary considerations, but high-priority infrastructure for promoting active transportation and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Improving pedestrian and bicycle connections will not only strengthen mobility but also promote social interaction, increase neighborhood security, improve street aesthetics, and foster a greater sense of community. This plan encourages:

- Prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in all transportation projects;

- Preserving and enhancing the existing street grid for both pedestrian and bicycle access;
- Expanding and maintaining sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the city;
- Adding planting strips, bike lanes, and other buffers to separate non-motorized users from vehicular traffic; and
- Retaining on-street parking as a buffer between pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic.

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**Figure 6.6 Primary Pedestrian Connectivity Routes**





**Figure 6.7 Bicycle Facilities Map**





# RUSTON TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STANDARDS

Ruston's transportation network is designed to support safe and efficient travel for all users. This section outlines the city's different thoroughfare types and the standards for how they should be designed to ensure they accommodate a balance of vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit needs. By integrating Complete Streets principles, Ruston aims to create a connected and accessible transportation system that makes the city more livable and improves safety for all modes of travel. These guidelines provide a clear approach to designing and improving streets in a way that supports the city's goal of a vibrant and welcoming community.

## Thoroughfare Typologies and Standards

Ruston's thoroughfares fall into four primary categories, each serving a distinct purpose and prioritizing specific uses.

- **Parkways** are intended to connect Ruston to the region, featuring wider lanes and higher travel speeds.
- **Boulevards** integrate transportation and public space, balancing vehicle movement with scenic and recreational value.
- **Local Streets** balance all uses of the street, emphasizing pedestrian comfort and on-street parking while accommodating vehicle access.
- **Alleys** are more utilitarian in nature, providing access to garages, utilities, and waste collection.

To support these different functions, tailored design standards are necessary. The following sections outline minimum, maximum and preferred standards for each thoroughfare type.

## **Parkways**

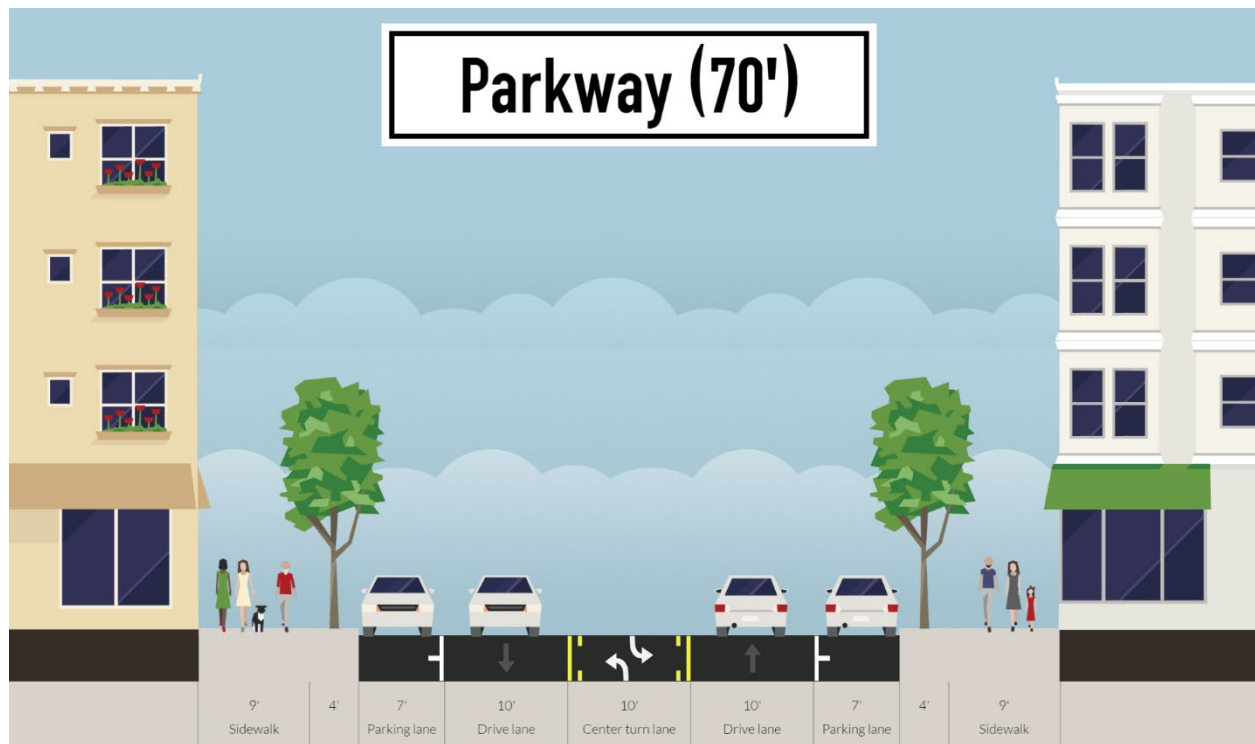
Ruston's Parkways range from 60 to 70 feet in width. The preferred design, as illustrated in the cross-sections on the following page, prioritizes maintaining as much on-street parking as possible to serve as a physical buffer between pedestrians and traffic. If space constraints arise, reducing or eliminating the center turn lane (or converting it to a landscaped median) is preferred over narrowing sidewalks or planting strips or removing on-street parking.

### **Parkway Standards**

|                          | <b>Minimum</b>  | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Preferred</b>                                    |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| <b>Design Speed</b>      | N/A   | 30 mph         | 25 mph  |
| <b>Travel Lane</b>       | 9'  | 10'            | 9' (with 5' bike lane)                              |
| <b>Bike Facilities</b>   | N/A*  | N/A            | 5' bike lane, bike storage racks near intersections |
| <b>On-Street Parking</b> | N/A   | 7' parallel    | 7' parallel   |
| <b>Street Trees</b>      | 4' in grates  | N/A            | 4' in grates  |
| <b>Street Lights</b>     | Yes   | N/A            | Yes   |
| <b>Sidewalk</b>          | 6' (for 60' right-of-way width) / 7' (for right-of-way widths 65'+) | N/A            | 12'–20'   |
| <b>Frontage Zone</b>     | N/A   | N/A            | 3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)   |

\*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A minimum 12' sharrows lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Parkway, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.

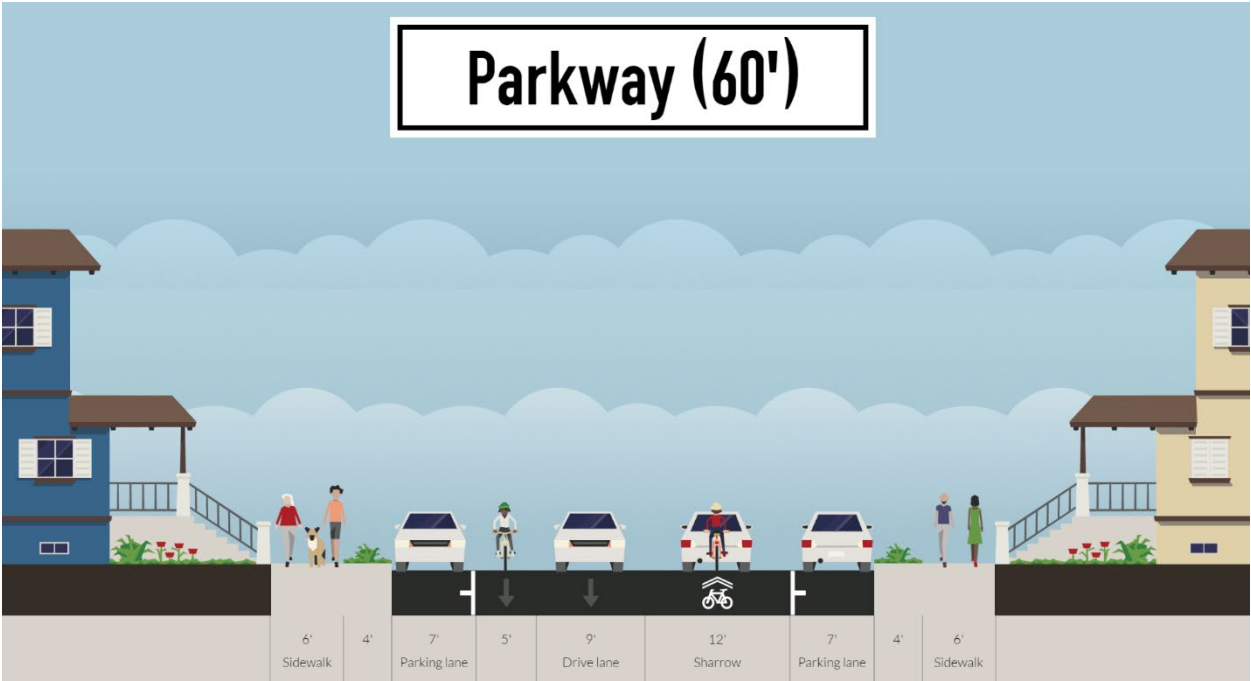
**Parkway Example Cross-Section – 70' Right-of-Way Width**



**Parkway Example Cross-Section – 65' Right-of-Way Width**



**Parkway Example Cross-Section – 60’ Right-of-Way Width**



## **Boulevards**

Ruston's sole Boulevard, Winnifred Street (between 51<sup>st</sup> Street and 54<sup>th</sup> Street/Park Avenue), features a 100-foot right-of-way with a large center island used as a park. Due to the wide right-of-way typical of a Boulevard, a potential future alternative could involve shifting all lanes to one side, freeing up space on the opposite side for the construction of a large plaza on the opposite side, as shown in the cross section labeled "Boulevard/Town Square" on the following page.

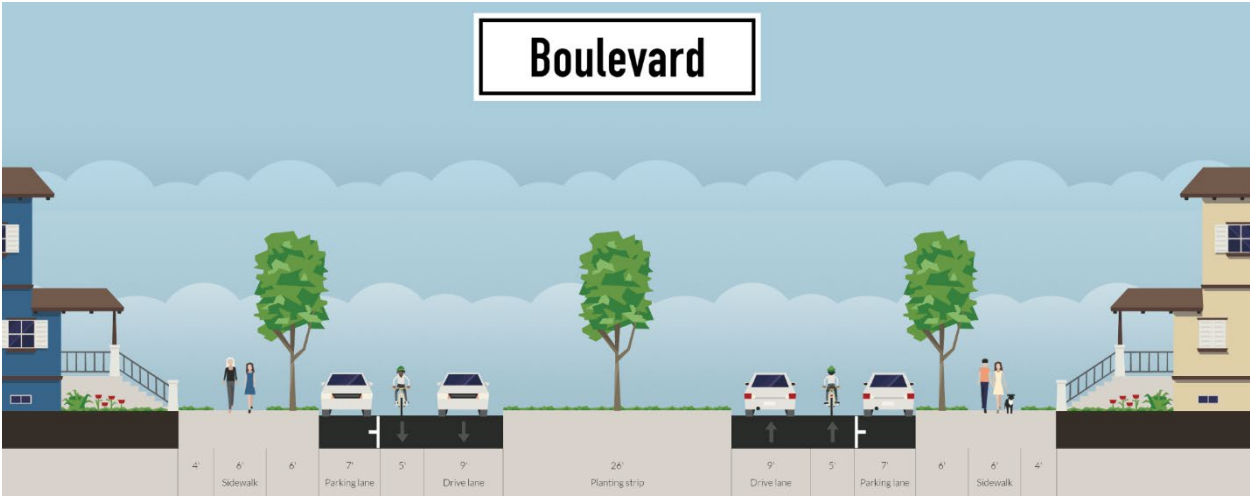
### **Boulevard Standards**

|                          | <b>Minimum</b>   | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Preferred</b>                                    |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>Design Speed</b>      | N/A  | 25 mph         | 20 mph  |
| <b>Travel Lane</b>       | 9'   | 10'            | 9' (with 5' bike lane)                              |
| <b>Bike Facilities</b>   | N/A*   | N/A            | 5' bike lane, bike storage racks near intersections |
| <b>On-Street Parking</b> | N/A  | 7' parallel    | 7' parallel   |
| <b>Street Trees</b>      | 4' in grates / 6' in planter strips                                  | N/A            | 4' in grates  |
| <b>Street Lights</b>     | Yes  | N/A            | Yes   |
| <b>Sidewalk</b>          | 6' (adjacent to residential uses) / 8' (adjacent to commercial uses) | N/A            | 6' (residential), 8' (commercial), 50' as plaza     |
| <b>Frontage Zone</b>     | N/A  | N/A            | 3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)   |

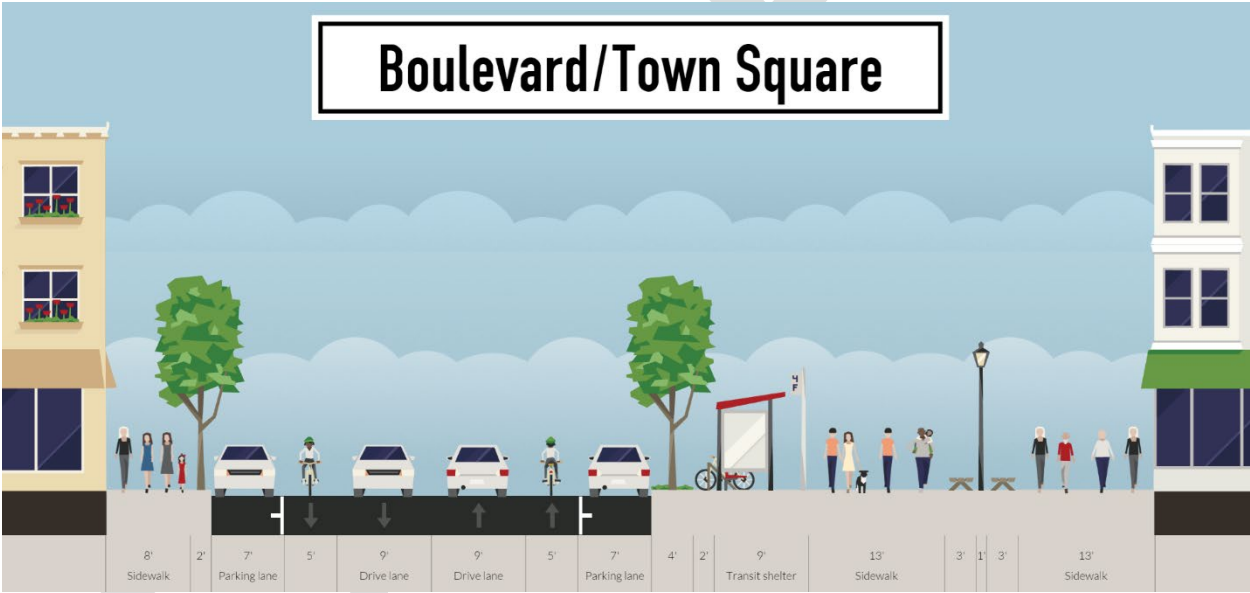
\*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A 12' sharrow lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Boulevard, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.



**Boulevard Example Cross-Section**



**Boulevard/Town Square Example Cross-Section**



## Local Streets

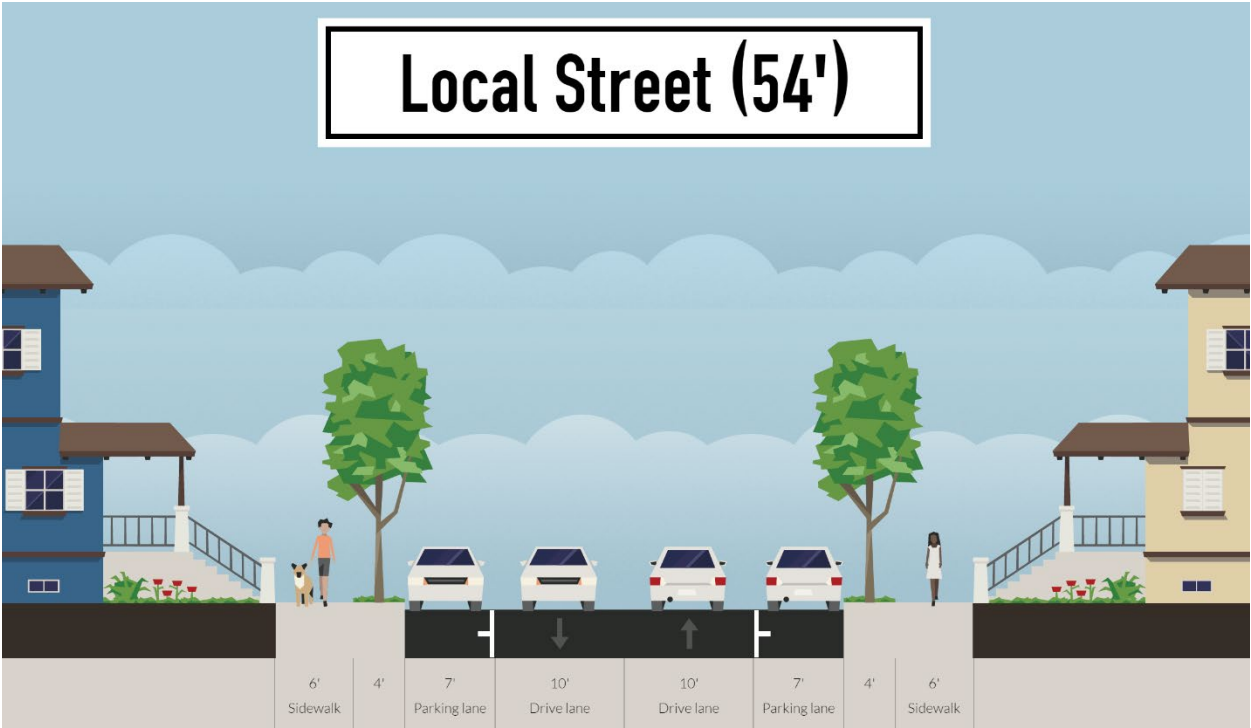
Ruston's Local Streets range from 50 to 70 feet in width. The preferred design, as illustrated in the cross-section on the following page, prioritizes maintaining as much on-street parking as possible to serve as a pedestrian buffer. Where narrower widths limit the design of the cross-section, reduction and/or combination of the landscape strip with the sidewalk by placing street trees in grates is preferred over elimination of on-street parking. When additional right-of-way is available, priority should be given to achieving the preferred standards described below and reverse angle parking or bike lanes should be considered.

### Local Street Standards

|                          | Minimum  | Maximum | Preferred  |
|--------------------------|--|---------|--|
| <b>Design Speed</b>      | N/A  | 25 mph  | 15 mph   |
| <b>Travel Lane</b>       | 9'   | 10'     | 9' (with 5' bike lane)   |
| <b>Bike Facilities</b>   | N/A*   | N/A     | 5' bike lane*  |
| <b>On-Street Parking</b> | 7' parallel on at least one side of the street | N/A     | 7' parallel on both sides of the street, reverse angle parking where right-of-way width allows |
| <b>Street Trees</b>      | 4' in grates                                   | N/A     | 4'–6' in planter strips  |
| <b>Street Lights</b>     | Yes  | N/A     | Yes  |
| <b>Sidewalk</b>          | 5'   | N/A     | 6'+  |
| <b>Frontage Zone</b>     | N/A  | N/A     | 3'–5' (along commercial/mixed-use frontages only)  |

\*See Bicycle Facilities Map (Figure 6.7) for designated bike routes. A 12' sharrows lane is required where future bike routes are designated on a Local Street, with a 5' bike lane preferred when space is available.

Local Street Example Cross-Section



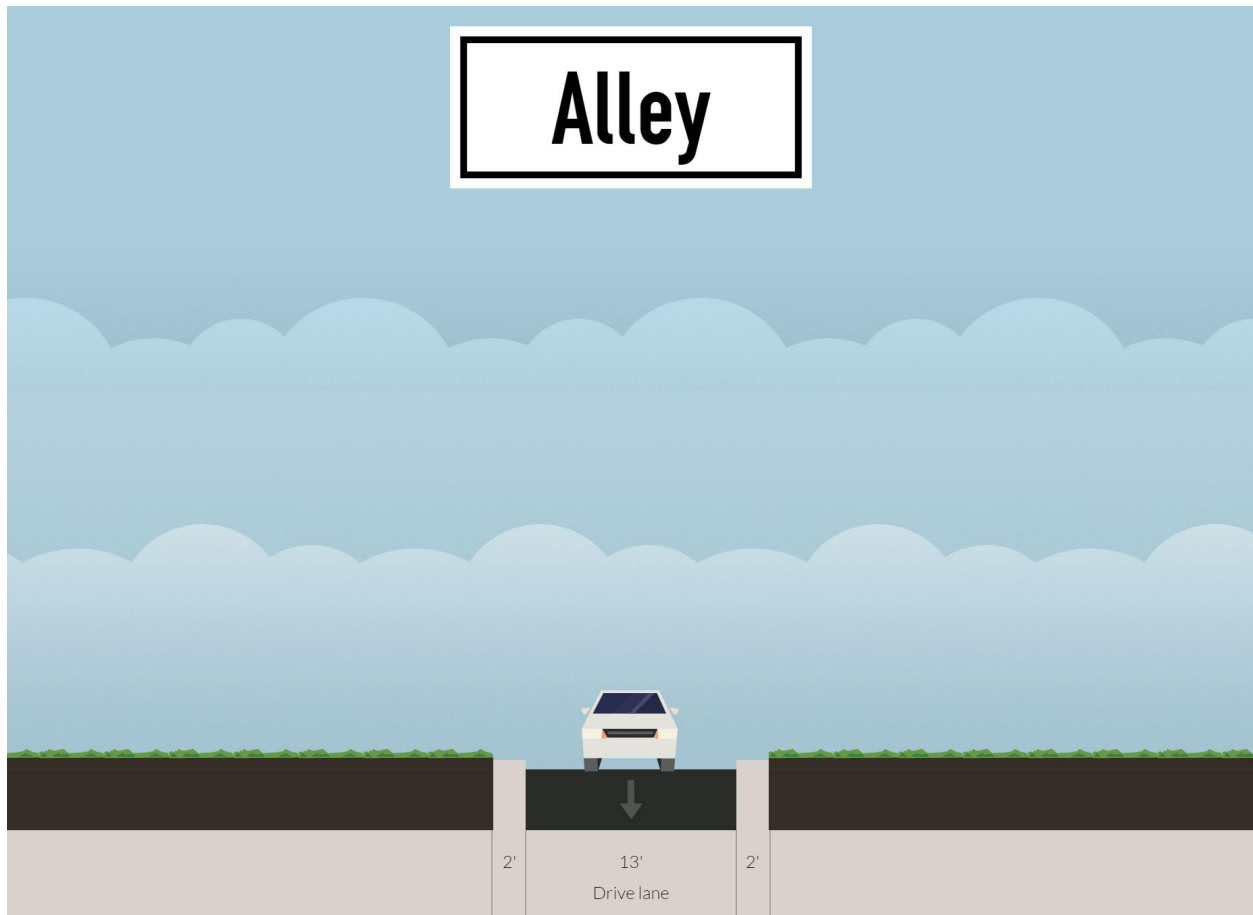
## ***Alleys***

Ruston's alleys typically range from 16 to 18 feet in width, with a minimum 10-foot paved driving surface. A wider paved driving surface is preferred to support utility and waste collection access. Where the driving surface is less than 12' wide, undergrounding utilities should be considered to eliminate pole obstructions in the drive aisle.

### **Alley Standards**

|                          | <b>Minimum</b> | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Preferred</b>             |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Design Speed</b>      | N/A            | 10 mph         | 5 mph                        |
| <b>Travel Lane</b>       | 10'            | N/A            | 13' with 2' gravel shoulders |
| <b>Bike Facilities</b>   | N/A            | N/A            | N/A                          |
| <b>On-Street Parking</b> | N/A            | N/A            | N/A                          |
| <b>Street Trees</b>      | N/A            | N/A            | N/A                          |
| <b>Street Lights</b>     | N/A            | N/A            | Yes                          |
| <b>Sidewalk</b>          | N/A            | N/A            | N/A                          |
| <b>Frontage Zone</b>     | N/A            | N/A            | N/A                          |

## Alley Example Cross-Section





## ***Multi-Use Trails***

Ruston's only Multi-Use Trail currently exists along the Ruston waterfront and is approximately 100 feet wide (including landscaping and shoreline access). Although the trail is owned by the City of Tacoma, it is subject to City of Ruston standards, including those found in the design standards for the Point Ruston Development. Other future trails and multi-use paths are proposed to connect Pearl Street to the waterfront via 54<sup>th</sup> Street (Park Avenue), and along the north side of Rust Park between Winnifred Street and Baltimore Street.

## **Multi-Use Trail Standards**

|                                    | <b>Minimum</b>                                    | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Preferred</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| <b>Design Speed</b>                | N/A   | N/A            | N/A   |
| <b>Travel Lane</b>                 | N/A   | N/A            | N/A   |
| <b>Bike Facilities</b>             | Yes   | Yes            | Yes, with adequate width for pedestrians and cyclists   |
| <b>On-Street Parking</b>           | N/A   | N/A            | N/A   |
| <b>Street Trees</b>                | Yes   | N/A            | 4' in grates / planting strips adjacent to trail, except where water views would be blocked (in which case low shrubs may be used in lieu of trees) |
| <b>Street Lights</b>               | Yes   | N/A            | Yes   |
| <b>All-Weather Walking Surface</b> | 20' within Shoreline Jurisdiction / 10' elsewhere | N/A            | 10'–20'+  |
| <b>Frontage Zone</b>               | N/A   | N/A            | N/A   |

## Multi-Use Trail Example Cross-Section



## Complete Streets Design

Ruston recognizes that streets and thoroughfares serve more than just vehicles—they are vital public spaces that should support the mobility of all residents. To achieve this, the city integrates Complete Streets design into its transportation planning (see Figure 6.8 – Benefits of Complete Streets for All Users). This approach prioritizes safe, multimodal transportation options, ensuring that everyone, regardless of how they travel, can access daily needs conveniently and safely. By designing streets that accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and vehicles, Ruston aims to reduce car dependency, foster walkable neighborhoods, and enhance overall community quality of life. Below are some of the key principles of Complete Streets design that Ruston strives to incorporate into its thoroughfares.

### ***Walkable Neighborhoods & Safe Streets***

Neighborhoods should be designed around a five-minute walking radius (about a quarter mile), ensuring residents can easily reach parks, stores, and civic spaces. This not only encourages active lifestyles but also reduces vehicle trips. Streets should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle routes, guiding future improvements and public investments.

**Figure 6.8 Benefits of Complete Streets for All Users**



Source: Washington State Department of Transportation Complete Streets Guidance

## ***Streets as Public Spaces***

Streets are more than just transportation corridors; they are vital public spaces that support movement, commerce, and social activity. Ruston's established street grid—with narrow lanes, sidewalks, and on-street parking—naturally promotes a balanced, multimodal transportation network.

## ***Expanding Mobility Options***

- **Public Transit Improvements:** As Ruston grows, transit will play a greater role in connecting neighborhoods. While current bus routes serve Pearl Street, future plans should include transit shelters at major intersections and expanded service along Ruston Way and 51st Street. Enhancing transit stops will improve the rider experience.
- **Bicycle-Friendly Infrastructure:** Ruston is a key link for cyclists traveling to Point Defiance and the Vashon Island Ferry. Safe, well-marked bike routes connecting Ruston, Tacoma, and Point Defiance are essential. Bike lanes should be prioritized over sharrows, with clear markings and green paint for visibility and safety. Sharrows may be used for downhill streets but should be avoided on uphill routes. Where possible, the position of bike lanes and parallel parking lanes can be swapped to create a buffer zone for bicyclists separated from the vehicular travel lanes.
- **On-Street Parking:** On-street parking supports local businesses, acts as a buffer between pedestrians and traffic, and reduces the need for off-street parking. Ruston will continue to preserve and expand on-street parking where feasible.

## ***Designing a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment***

- **Creating Comfortable Street Enclosures:** The relationship between street width and building height affects how enclosed and pedestrian-friendly a space feels. Narrower streets with taller buildings on either side tend to create a more inviting, human-scale environment that encourages walking. This kind of street enclosure helps define the space, making it feel safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, while reducing the dominance of car traffic in the area.

- **Enhancing the Pedestrian Experience:** A well-designed sidewalk consists of three key zones:
  - The Frontage Zone: Where storefronts, awnings, and outdoor seating interact with the street.
  - The Pedestrian Through Zone: A clear, accessible walking path.
  - The Street Furnishing Zone: A buffer between pedestrians and traffic with landscaping, benches, lighting, and bike racks.
- Other important elements include:
  - Mid-block crossings and alley access to improve pedestrian connectivity.
  - Weather protection features (awnings, canopies) to increase comfort.
  - Active facades with doors and windows to create visual interest and promote safety by encouraging "eyes on the street."

### ***Building a More Livable Ruston***

By prioritizing walkability, safe street design, multimodal transportation, and vibrant public spaces, Ruston can grow sustainably while maintaining its small-town charm. Thoughtful planning and investment in pedestrian-friendly infrastructure will ensure that Ruston remains a connected, accessible, and high-quality place to live. The general thoroughfare minimum standards provided in the following section provide a framework for implementing these complete streets principles in Ruston.

## **General Thoroughfare Streetscape Standards**

The following general thoroughfare streetscape standards complement the Complete Streets guidelines outlined above and apply regardless of thoroughfare type. These standards aim to create a safe, accessible, and multimodal transportation network that prioritizes pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users alongside vehicles.

### ***Roadway Dimensions and Specifications***

#### *Vehicle Travel Lanes*

All vehicle travel lanes should be limited to a maximum width of 10 feet, with 9-foot lanes preferred when combined with 5-foot bike lanes. This will help reduce vehicle speeds and prioritize safety for all users.

#### *Design Speed*

Except for parkways, all streets should have design speeds of 25 mph or less.

- Parkway may have design speeds up to 30 mph.
- In residential areas, design speeds between 15 and 20 mph are preferred.

#### *Bulb-Outs and Traffic Calming Features*

When installing bulb-outs (curb extensions), rain gardens, or other traffic calming features, the removal of on-street parking should be kept to a minimum. Priority for bulb-out placement should be given to street intersections, particularly at the ends of on-street parking aisles. Turning radii should be minimized at all intersections, with a maximum preferred radius of 10 feet.

#### *Crosswalk Widths and Locations*

Crosswalk widths should match the width of the travel lanes they are intended to cross.

- To improve pedestrian connectivity, the turning radii of vehicle travel



*Crosswalk bulb-outs and surface treatment, photo by nacto.org*



lanes should be minimized. A maximum turning radius of 10 feet is recommended.

- Crosswalks should be installed at all street intersections.
- For longer block faces, such as Pearl Street between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> or Commercial Street between Winnifred and Baltimore, mid-block crossings should also be provided.

### ***On-Street Parking***

On-street parking is the preferred method for buffering pedestrians from vehicle travel lanes and should be maintained on existing streets. If parking is removed, replacement spaces should be provided nearby.

- Parallel parking is most common in Ruston and should be provided on at least one side of every street, with parking on both sides preferred.
- Where street widths permit, reverse-angle parking should be constructed to enhance safety and convenience.
- 90-degree perpendicular parking is prohibited due to its “parking lot” feel and the safety risk it poses, as it requires motorists to back out into travel lanes.
- Where possible, consider swapping the positions of parallel parking and bike lanes, placing the bike lanes between parked vehicles and the sidewalk. This allows for the economical creation of protected bike lanes, improving cyclist safety while minimizing the need for additional space.

### ***Pedestrian Facilities***

#### ***Sidewalks***

The minimum sidewalk width is 5 ½ feet, with 6 feet preferred, regardless of the thoroughfare type.

- **Frontage Zone:** In locations where the minimum width is utilized adjacent to mixed use or commercial



*Sidewalk with frontage zone, pedestrian through zone, and street furnishing zone*



development, an additional sidewalk frontage zone of 3 to 5 feet should be included as part of development approval or incorporated into the zoning standards.

- **Pedestrian Through Zone:** The pedestrian through zone should be 5 ½ to 7 feet wide in residential areas, and 8 to 12 feet in mixed-use or commercial areas.
- **Street Furnishing Zone:** In residential areas, the street furnishing zone should be at least 3 feet wide (4 feet preferred) to accommodate street trees and lighting. In mixed-use or commercial areas, the furnishing zone should be at least 4 feet wide (8 feet preferred) to accommodate additional furnishings like café seating, bike racks, bus shelters, and trash receptacles.

### *Buffering from Travel Lanes*

All pedestrian areas should be buffered from vehicle travel lanes with:

- A minimum 4-foot landscape strip with street trees and lights, or
- Continuous parallel parking, or
- A combination of both to create a continuous buffer.

This buffer enhances pedestrian safety and comfort by creating a more walkable environment.

### *Weather Protection*

For mixed-use or commercial frontages, weather protection should be provided for at least 75% of the façade length, projecting at least 6 feet over the sidewalk.

- Awnings and canopies are the preferred method for providing weather protection.
- The city should work with property owners to allow colonnades to encroach over the public sidewalk, providing both weather protection and increased visual interest while allowing more efficient use of available space.

## *Paving Materials and Patterns*

All sidewalks should either be finished with the city's traditional 2' x 2' scoring pattern or paved with brick pavers.

- Stamped concrete is acceptable when using integral colors in gray or brown tones, with red prohibited as it typically fades to pink.
- Surface painting of asphalt to simulate brick or other paving materials is not acceptable.

Crosswalks should be visually distinct from the roadway surface.

- Pavers, or integral colored concrete in gray or brown tones, are preferred for greater aesthetic appeal in crosswalk paving.
- Thermo-plastic white striping is also acceptable.

## ***Bicycle Facilities***

Bicycle facilities should be provided as shown on the Bicycle Facilities Map (see Figure 6.7).

- Bike lanes should be prioritized over sharrows, with clear markings and green paint for visibility and safety. However, sharrows may be used in situations where space is limited.
  - If there is only room for a sharrow/bike lane combination on a particular street, place the sharrows on the downhill side and the bike lane on the uphill side.
- Whenever possible, bike lanes should be physically separated from vehicle travel lanes.
  - Where feasible, consider swapping the positions of



*Sharrow, photo by BikeHub.ca*



*Protected bike lane, photo by City of Missoula, MT*

the bike lane and parallel parking lane to create a protected buffer for bicyclists, separating them from vehicular traffic.

- Preferred dimensions:
  - Sharrow lanes should have a minimum width of 12 feet and a maximum width of 14 feet.
  - Bike lanes should have a minimum width of 5 feet.
- Bike racks should be provided near street intersections along mixed-use or commercial frontages.



*Protected bike lane, photo by Oregon Transportation Research and Education Consortium*



*Separated bike lane, photo by City of Austin, TX*

### ***Transit Facilities***

Installation and modification of transit stops and shelters should be coordinated with local and regional transit authorities. When warranted, the SEPA Environmental Review process may be used to require transit facilities as mitigation for development impacts on the transportation network.

- When necessary due to development-related impacts or increasing demand, place new transit shelters as specified on the city's transit facilities map (see Figure 6.5). Incorporate distinct architectural design for the proposed transit facility located at the Central Avenue/Ruston Way intersection, as this is a prominent location within the city.
- Co-location of transit shelters with other uses is encouraged in order to help justify a larger structure that can serve multiple functions, such as tourist information kiosks, small food service, minor retail, viewing platforms, or weather-protected outdoor dining/seating areas. Doing so will help to provide other uses within the structure that could be activated prior to transit authority needs.

## ***Streetscape Design***

### *Visual Interest and Façade Fenestration – Commercial and Mixed Uses*

- Storefronts with traditional designs that enhance pedestrian engagement should be required along all commercial and non-



*Storefronts with windows and doors to enhance pedestrian engagement*

- residential street frontages. This includes awnings, large ground-level windows, sign bands, transom windows, and doors oriented toward the sidewalk.
- Active frontages with courtyards, outdoor sidewalk seating for cafés, and grand building entries are encouraged.

### *Visual Interest and Façade Fenestration - Residential Uses*

- Residential designs that prioritize street-facing front doors, porches, or stoops located near the sidewalk are encouraged.
- Garage doors and driveways within front yards or facing the street are discouraged in order to maintain a pedestrian-friendly landscape.

### *Sense of Spatial Enclosure*

- Ensure zoning allows building heights that create a well-proportioned streetscape relative to street width. A preferred height-to-street width ratio of 1:1 to 1:3 should guide development. For example, a 20-foot to 60-foot building height would be preferred along a 60 foot wide street, with 40 to 60 feet allowed along busy commercial and mixed use streets like Parkways, and lower heights in the range of 25-35 feet along residential streets like Local Streets and Boulevards.
- Strive for a 1:2 or 1:1 ratio in commercial areas where taller buildings reinforce a stronger sense of place. Redeveloping surface parking lots along Pearl Street into active storefronts will further enhance this spatial enclosure and streetscape vibrancy.

# LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

## Level of Service Requirement

The Washington State Department of Commerce requires transportation elements to include Level of Service (LOS) standards. Transportation LOS standards have traditionally been used to gauge performance based on automobile capacity. These standards typically require developments to fund improvements if their automobile traffic impact exceeds predetermined thresholds.

The Complete Streets model offers a modern approach to LOS, emphasizing a holistic, multimodal transportation system. The Washington State Department of Transportation defines Complete Streets as “planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining the transportation system that enables comfortable and convenient access to destinations for all people, and includes specific requirements for the pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit rider experience.”

Ruston’s incorporation of Complete Streets principles into its LOS standards results in a Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) approach. This approach moves beyond traditional measures of automobile capacity, prioritizing infrastructure that serves pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users to create an integrated transportation network. It is particularly valuable for communities like Ruston, where congestion is not expected to be a primary concern, but accessibility, safety, and a well-balanced transportation system are essential for sustainable and inclusive growth. It also aligns seamlessly with the 15-minute city and five-minute walk planning concepts, ensuring that all residents can conveniently access daily needs through safe, multimodal transportation options.

The MMLOS Standards developed with a Complete Streets approach ensures that transportation infrastructure is designed to accommodate all modes of travel, supporting the safe movement of people and goods. Key elements of this approach include:

- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian safety, and connectivity between key areas of the city.

- **Bicycle Facilities:** Bike lanes, bike racks, and safe routes that encourage cycling as a viable transportation option.
- **Transit Accessibility:** Bus stops, transit schedules, and routes designed to make public transportation efficient and accessible.
- **Vehicle Travel:** Maintaining adequate vehicle access while ensuring that it does not dominate the design of the transportation network.

## Why This Approach Matters

The MMLOS – Complete Streets Approach provides several key benefits for Ruston:

- **Encouraging Alternative Transportation:** Ruston can reduce car use and promote walking, biking, and transit, offering more travel options.
- **Improving Safety:** Streets designed for all users reduce conflicts and ensure safety for pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers.
- **Enhancing Sustainability:** Less cars use lowers emissions and improve air quality, reducing the city's environmental impact.
- **Supporting Livable Communities:** A balanced transportation network creates connected neighborhoods that attract residents, businesses, and visitors.
- **Achieving Transportation Goals:** By adopting the MMLOS – Complete Streets Approach, Ruston can develop a safe, sustainable, and inclusive transportation system that grows with the city.

## Thoroughfare Performance Measures

How do we measure performance when using MMLOS Standards? Since the LOS is determined by the quality of the street rather than by its vehicle movement capacity, it is more appropriate to rate individual elements of the street using a Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index, (see [Appendix X](#) – Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index Data Sheet). The Non-Motorized User Accessibility Index used by the City of Ruston scores streets on a scale of 0 to 100 by evaluating the following design elements:

- 1) Non-Peak Hour Free Flow Speed



- 2) Pavement Width (curb face to curb face)
- 3) Presence of On-Street Parking
- 4) Sidewalk and Bicycle Facility Width
- 5) Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity (distance between intersections and bikeway continuity)
- 6) Presence and Quality of Pedestrian and Bicycle Features
- 7) Street Enclosure Ratio
- 8) Land Use Mix
- 9) Street Façade/Frontage Design
- 10) Transit/Bicycle Facilities

Each of the above design elements receives a score of between 0 and 10 points. The points are then added up and the street segment is rated according to the following table:

| <b>Accessibility Score</b> | <b>Rating</b>                                       |
|----------------------------|---|
| 90– 100 Points             | (A)-Highly Accessible for Non-Motorized Users       |
| 75 – 89 Points             | (B)-Very Accessible for Non-Motorized Users         |
| 50 – 74 Points             | (C)-Moderately Accessible for Non-Motorized Users   |
| 30 – 49 Points             | (D)-Basic Accessible for Non-Motorized Users        |
| 20 – 29 Points             | (E)-Minimal Accessible for Non-Motorized Users      |
| 19 Points or Less          | (F)-Uncomfortable/Hazardous for Non-Motorized Users |

Streets that do not rate as “Very Accessible for Non-Motorized Users” (that is, those that score fewer than 75 points) are considered to have scored below Ruston’s LOS “B” and would require improvement according to the following prioritization of street modifications as appropriate for the specific thoroughfare type:

- 1) Travel Lane Width Reduction
- 2) Pedestrian and Bicycle Buffering
  - a. Construction of on-street reverse angle parking
  - b. Construction of on-street parallel parking
  - c. Construction of dedicated or protected bike lanes
  - d. Installation of shared lane markings (sharrows) where appropriate

- e. Construction of pedestrian-scale street lighting
  - f. Construction of landscape planters or other buffering elements
  - g. Installation of bollards or other physical separation for pedestrian and bicycle safety (with chain at intersections to guide pedestrians to crosswalk)
- 3) Increased Sidewalk and Bicycle Facility Width
- a. Install missing sidewalk and bike lane segments
  - b. Replace broken sidewalk segments
  - c. Widen sidewalks toward property line
  - d. Widen sidewalk toward right-of-way centerline
  - e. Expand bike lanes where feasible
  - f. Widen sidewalk by converting landscape strips to sidewalk/shared-use path and placing tree grates around trees
- 4) Emphasize Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings
- a. Decrease pedestrian crossing width by installing bulb-outs (curb extensions)
  - b. Provide visual emphasis to unmarked crosswalks and bike crossings
  - c. Install bicycle-specific crossing treatments such as bike boxes and advance stop lines
- 5) Distinct Paving
- a. Replace painted crosswalks with special paving or brick
  - b. Improve bike lane markings and surfacing for visibility
  - c. Use textured or colored pavement to distinguish pedestrian and bicycle areas
  - d. Replace sidewalk sections using traditional scoring pattern
  - e. Replace sidewalk sections with special paving or brick
- 6) Construction of Street Furnishings and Bicycle Amenities
- a. Benches or other public outdoor seating
  - b. Public art and wayfinding signage
  - c. Bicycle racks and repair stations
  - d. Bike parking areas integrated into streetscapes

- 7) Any other method which would enhance the quality of the city's thoroughfare network as described in this chapter, subject to city approval

### **Level of Service Standards for State and Regional Facilities**

RCW 36.70A.070 requires the city to include in its inventory of transportation facilities those facilities owned by the State. As mentioned above, the only state facility is SR 163 (Pearl Street). This Comprehensive Plan assumes LOS standards for Pearl Street concurrent with the City of Tacoma.

## **FUTURE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS**

### **Traffic Forecast**

Over the next 20 years, the City of Ruston anticipates significant growth, driven largely by the ongoing development of Point Ruston. As the primary source of future population and employment growth, the Point Ruston Development is expected to significantly impact the city's traffic patterns, particularly along key corridors such as Pearl Street and North 46th Street. Traffic forecasts based on data from the updated Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for Point Ruston indicate that both weekday and weekend traffic volumes will increase, with a notable rise in weekend traffic due to the destination attraction of Point Defiance Park. This anticipated growth will place additional demands on the existing transportation infrastructure, particularly during peak periods.

Traffic volumes on Pearl Street, just south of North 51st Street, are expected to grow, with peak weekday and weekend traffic likely to surpass current levels. Additionally, traffic along North 46th Street will likely increase, particularly near Orchard Street, as the alternative route continues to serve both residential and commercial traffic. Future traffic needs will include the optimization of the transportation network to accommodate the influx of vehicles, improved intersection performance, and enhanced multimodal infrastructure, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements. The Point Ruston Development will be central to shaping these future needs, and traffic management strategies must be aligned with the city's overall

growth strategy, as reflected in the FSEIS traffic projections (see **Appendix X** – Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS).

### ***Traffic Impacts to State-Owned Facilities***

Ruston contains one state-owned and WSDOT-maintained facility—SR 163 (Pearl Street). SR 163 is a 3.7-mile-long state highway serving the Cities of Tacoma and Ruston in Pierce County before continuing via ferry to the community of Tahlequah on Vashon Island in King County. Beginning at its interchange with SR 16 in Tacoma, SR 163 travels north as Pearl Street through Ruston for 0.25 miles before reaching Point Defiance, where the route continues onto the MV Chetzemoka ferry to Tahlequah.

Pearl Street experiences significant traffic congestion during special events at Point Defiance Park and when the Vashon Island Ferry unloads. During these peak periods, some motorists divert onto Ruston's residential streets to bypass congestion. Additionally, high traffic volumes occur in spring and summer along Pearl Street and North 51st Street due to increased use of Point Defiance Park and traffic entering the city from Ruston Way.

Although only 15% of Pearl Street lies within Ruston city limits, it plays an important role in the city's commercial base and pedestrian network. Pearl Street hosts one of the main commercial/mixed use districts within the city and functions more as an urban boulevard than a highway. This transition begins at 46th Street, where Pearl Street narrows from four to two travel lanes with on-street parallel parking. At 38th Street, the speed limit is lowered from 35 mph to 30 mph, providing additional safety and comfort for pedestrians.

Traffic volumes on Pearl Street just south of North 51st Street are significantly lower during weekday and peak hour periods compared to volumes further south near North 37th Street. However, weekend traffic volumes—both daily and peak hour—on this stretch of Pearl Street are almost double those observed on weekdays. This increase in weekend traffic can likely be attributed to the attraction of Point Defiance Park.

North 46th Street offers an alternative route, linking Ruston Way (via Alder Street and North Stevens Street) with Pearl Street. It also serves as a key access point for

residential areas situated between Pearl Street and Ruston Way. Traffic volumes on North 46th Street during weekday hours, including the PM peak period, are slightly higher near Orchard Street compared to those at Pearl Street. In contrast, weekend traffic volumes on this corridor are somewhat lower than weekday volumes.

A more detailed analysis of summer traffic on North Pearl Street, just south of North 51st Street, indicates that July weekend traffic volumes peak around midday. This peak reflects the significant draw of Point Defiance Park as a popular weekend destination, representing the highest traffic volumes of the year. Summer weekday volumes are also slightly elevated compared to average volumes in September.

All signalized intersections and controlled approaches to two-way stop-controlled intersections along these corridors continue to operate at LOS D or better during the PM peak hour.

Future traffic impacts to Pearl Street have been mitigated as recommended in **Appendix X** – Point Ruston Final Supplemental EIS. With these facility improvements, there will be no adverse impacts to the traffic circulation system.

## **Future Demand**

On a large scale, it is assumed that population growth in Ruston will place further demand on SR 163, SR 16, I-705, I-5, and other state facilities in the region, but no larger a proportionate demand than city residents currently place on the system. The current Washington Transportation Plan, produced by the Washington State Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation pursuant to RCW.47.05.010, does not identify any state transportation needs or projects in the Ruston area.

The GMA requires that growth targets be consistent across the land use, housing and traffic elements of the comprehensive plan. Accordingly, this section outlines how Ruston plans to accommodate additional trips generated by projected population growth and addresses potential impacts on the transportation system.

1. Additional population will produce increased traffic volumes but their effect on local streets and regional connectors will be minor.

2. Parkways and boulevards will be improved as shown in the Transportation Element and will adequately absorb additional trips generated by the increase in population.
3. There is room for modest infill in residential areas, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and multifamily housing in commercial mixed-use districts, especially live-work units.
4. New residents are likely to be located near or in commercial mixed-use districts, creating an increased need for transportation facilities to accommodate their trips. Facilities include improved pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities that create a pleasant experience rather than increasing car lane capacity.
5. This approach to traffic forecasting balances the needs of all users—motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders—promoting a multimodal transportation network.
6. Traffic impacts that exceed the city's expectations would be addressed through development impact mitigation using the SEPA process, ensuring that development remains in line with the city's capacity and goals.

### **Transportation System Expansion Needs**

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council, the region's population of more than 4 million generated more than 88 million miles of vehicle travel every day in 2018, or 21.4 miles per person. *Vision 2050* projects the region's population will increase to 5.8 million by 2050, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is projected to increase to over 105 million daily VMT by 2050. Total daily person trips in the region are projected to increase 47 percent by 2050.

Ruston is targeted to increase its population by about 42% over the next 20 years. Improvements to the city's transportation facilities have already been constructed to accommodate impacts to its transportation facilities as required mitigation for the Point Ruston Development. That means transportation expansion projects will concentrate on non-motorized improvements for the near future.



## **Mobility for All**

The City of Ruston is committed to ensuring equitable access to transportation for all residents, recognizing that not everyone has the same ability to drive or afford a private vehicle. Older adults, individuals with disabilities, youth, and lower-income households may face mobility challenges that limit their access to essential services, employment, and recreational opportunities—particularly if travel is required outside of the city. Since there are limited options for goods and services with Ruston, connections to Tacoma are especially important.

While Ruston has a growing network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and walking paths, gaps in infrastructure and limited public transit options can create barriers for those who depend on alternative modes of transportation. Expanding and improving these connections is a priority to ensure all residents can move safely and independently.

Ruston is dedicated to creating an inclusive transportation system by:

- Ensuring all new sidewalks and pedestrian facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including appropriate width, curb ramps, and tactile warnings for visually impaired individuals.
- Advocating for enhanced public transit options, recognizing that Ruston's limited retail and service options require strong connections to Tacoma.
- Supporting affordable and shared mobility solutions, such as vanpools, paratransit services, and on-demand transit options.
- Collaborating with regional partners including Pierce Transit, Pierce County, and the Puget Sound Regional Council to expand transit accessibility and explore innovative mobility solutions.

Pierce County's specialized transportation services provide options for residents with disabilities and seniors who require mobility assistance. Pierce Transit provides fixed-route bus service and vanpool options, offering cost-effective alternatives to driving. Additionally, the Ruston Runner shuttle service provides a convenient local transportation option, helping residents and visitors travel within Ruston and connect to nearby destinations. The city will continue working with regional partners to improve transportation options in the Central Sound Area to ensure that everyone—

regardless of age, income, or ability—has reliable and accessible ways to get where they need to go.

## **FUNDING NEEDS AND SOURCES**

The GMA requires the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to include a multi-year financing plan that aligns with the city's land use plan and identified transportation system needs. This financing plan provides a basis for the city's annual Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); see Appendix X – Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program. As required by the GMA, the financing program also includes a discussion of how additional funding will be raised and/or how level of service standards will be reassessed and adjusted to ensure the Transportation Element can adequately support the land use plan. Alternatively, the city may reassess its land use plan to maintain consistency with available transportation funding.

The transportation financing program becomes a subset of the city's Capital Facilities Plan Element, which must include at least a six-year capital facilities plan identifying funding sources for planned improvements.

The city's long-range transportation plan consists of defined projects for the Six-Year TIP and a long term maintenance plan covering the remaining 14 years of the planning period. The city evaluated existing and forecast traffic volumes, traffic operations, public safety, and street conditions to create a recommended list of transportation projects. The improvements address safety and roadway preservation, upgrades to existing roads, and multimodal enhancements, including new non-motorized infrastructure, to support forecasted economic growth and development. Funding for these projects comes from a combination of local, regional, and state sources, including grants, in addition to funds expected to be raised through the implementation of traffic impact fees and parking/pedestrian improvement fund fees. The city seeks to leverage available grant opportunities to maximize local investments.

## **Specific Actions for Facilities below MMLOS Standards**

Streets that do not meet the city's MMLOS standards are prioritized and scheduled for remedying along with other street projects in the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Capital Facilities Plan.

Transit level of service standards are outside the city's ability to unilaterally remedy. The city is committed to discussions with Pierce County and Pierce Transit to ensure reasonable levels of service for buses and future light rail.

## **FUTURE VISION**

Ruston's transportation network is safe, connected, and multimodal, supporting a walkable community while preserving the city's small-town character. Pedestrians and bicyclists enjoy seamless connections throughout the City, along the shores of Commencement Bay, and to parks, including nearby Point Defiance. Thoughtful planning has created balanced streets that accommodate all travel modes, enhance mobility, and prioritize pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares. Pearl Street, 51st Street, and Ruston Way serve as gateways to the city, supporting a mix of residential and commercial uses. Mass transit provides regional connections, supporting sustainable growth and transit-oriented development.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

Transportation policies guide the development and maintenance of a multimodal network that aligns with Ruston's land use vision. These goals and policies ensure investments in streets, sidewalks, and transit infrastructure support mobility, safety, and accessibility while maintaining the community's unique character.

**Transportation Goal 1:** To incorporate principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design into Ruston's transportation plans to maintain Ruston's small-town character, improve multimodal connections, increase walkability within the city and to nearby destinations, and improve pedestrian experience and quality of life.


- TR Policy 1.1** Prioritize policies and regulations that support Traditional Neighborhood Design, ensuring they take precedence over existing policies and regulations if a conflict exists.
- TR Policy 1.2** Prohibit vehicular access from street frontages where alley or side street access is available, ensuring new development is accessed via alleys or rear lanes only.
- TR Policy 1.3** Prohibit new curb cuts and the expansion of existing curb cuts for driveways on lots with alley access, ensuring vehicle access is maintained from the alley.
- TR Policy 1.4** Prioritize funding for improvements in Neighborhood Centers, including Prominent Parcels, to support Ruston's sustainability and vitality.


**TR Policy 1.5** Require new development and redevelopment to align with the existing street grid pattern, maintaining a walkable and enjoyable small-town environment while supporting safe and efficient vehicle circulation. Where alignment is not physically possible, require dedication of right-of-way or easements. All projects should incorporate alleys where feasible.

**TR Policy 1.6** Expand mobility choices and promote healthy lifestyles by investing in projects and programs that encourage a walkable community.

**TR Policy 1.7** Develop Pearl Street, 51st Street, and Ruston Way as parkways or “gateways” to Ruston, and provide multimodal thoroughfares connecting the parkways to commercial areas.

**Transportation Goal 2:** To maintain an efficient, safe, and well-designed street system that promotes desired development patterns.

**TR Policy 2.1**  Adopt street performance measures that incorporate assessment of enjoyable walkability, adequacy of bicycle facilities such as bike lanes and parking, and other factors to evaluate the overall quality of service for Ruston’s streets.

**TR Policy 2.2**  Utilize Thoroughfare Typologies as a set of best practices to support and guide the coordinated enhancement of Ruston’s streets, including key pedestrian, bicycle, and on-street parking improvements by both the City of Ruston and private development.

**TR Policy 2.3** Allow parking requirements to be waived when developers contribute in-lieu fees or transportation impact fees to fund city transportation facilities and improvements. Direct such investments toward improvements including parking development in targeted underutilized areas, as identified in the city's parking inventory analysis.

**Transportation Goal 3:** To coordinate with the City of Tacoma and the Washington State Department of Transportation to ensure that adequate transportation facilities in the region are available concurrent with new development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use.

**TR Policy 3.1** Secure adequate thoroughfare width to accommodate future pedestrian facilities and roadways by using the development approval process to acquire or require right-of-way dedication, sidewalk/utility easements and dooryards (e.g., through zoning, subdivision, and building permits). Apply sustainable and environmentally responsible design principles in road construction.

**TR Policy 3.2** Pursue funding for multimodal right-of-way improvements through a variety of sources including grants and government matching programs.

**TR Policy 3.3** Ensure that transportation modes, both non-motorized and motorized, are integrated as a unified system. Design all streets as "complete streets," where non-motorized improvements are considered essential, not amenities. Incorporate funding for multimodal improvements into mainstream transportation programs.



**TR Policy 3.4** Enhance and implement Ruston's Emergency Preparedness Plan to protect the transportation system against disaster and develop prevention and recovery strategies. Coordinate planning efforts with Pierce County and the City of Tacoma.

**TR Policy 3.5** Coordinate with local and regional transit authorities at least annually to align future planning efforts with Ruston's evolving transportation needs.

**Transportation Goal 4:** To recognize the role waterborne commerce has played in the city's past and will continue to play in its future due to Ruston's unique proximity to deep, navigable water.

**TR Policy 4.1** Support the development of a passenger dock or terminal along Ruston's shoreline to accommodate cruise ships and other waterborne transportation, enhancing the city's role as a waterfront destination.

**TR Policy 4.2** Ensure that any new passenger dock or terminal is well-integrated with Ruston's pedestrian and bicycle network, providing safe, convenient, and accessible connections to the city's existing trails, sidewalks, and transit options.

**TR Policy 4.3** Collaborate with regional and private partners to secure funding and investment opportunities for waterborne transportation infrastructure that enhances economic development and tourism.

**Transportation Goal 5:** To promote increased public transit services, including light rail, to serve residents of Ruston as warranted by population and demand.

**TR Policy 5.1** Work with Pierce County Transit to improve bus service in Ruston and from Ruston to the Tacoma Dome transit station. Also work with Sound Transit to provide a light rail station in Ruston.

**TR Policy 5.2** Coordinate with Metro Parks Tacoma to develop optimum multimodal thoroughfares to the City of Ruston's commercial amenities, open spaces, and neighborhoods.

**TR Policy 5.3** Engage Ruston's elected officials and staff in advocating for the extension of light rail service to Ruston and the Destination Point Defiance area. Support inclusion of this connection in Sound Transit's Long Range Plan.

**Transportation Goal 6:** To maintain adequate traffic flow while recognizing that eliminating all peak-hour vehicular congestion may not be economically feasible. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should not be neglected in order to maintain or facilitate vehicle-oriented development.

**TR Policy 6.1** Work with the City of Tacoma, Metro Parks Tacoma, and the Washington State Department of Transportation to address traffic issues associated with Point Defiance Park and the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal.

**TR Policy 6.2** Pursue a partnership with Metro Tacoma Parks, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit to establish a shuttle bus service between the Tacoma Dome transit station and Destination Point Defiance.

**TR Policy 6.3** Provide multimodal thoroughfares between Destination Point Defiance (where the City of Ruston, City of Tacoma, and Point Defiance Park converge) and the Tacoma Dome transit station. Prioritize improvements that support tourism and accessibility.

**Transportation Goal 7:** To encourage the development of safe sidewalks, bikeways, and paths as part of a non-motorized circulation system that enhances transportation, public enjoyment of natural areas, and access to scenic views.

**TR Policy 7.1** Develop and maintain a comprehensive non-motorized circulation system, including sidewalks, bikeways and paths that supports transportation, enhances public enjoyment of natural areas, and maximizes access to scenic views.

**TR Policy 7.2** Ensure the development of accessible, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation thoroughfares that enhance the movement of people, goods, and services.

**TR Policy 7.3** Incorporate Complete Streets principles in the design, construction, and redevelopment of all transportation corridors to ensure streets are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all users, regardless of mode of travel, age, or ability.

**TR Policy 7.4** Integrate Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) standards into the planning and evaluation of transportation projects to ensure that all street users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and motorists, experience high-quality, equitable access to transportation options.

**TR Policy 7.5** Encourage the reconfiguration of parallel parking and bike lanes by placing bike lanes between parked vehicles and the sidewalk where feasible. This approach facilitates the creation of protected bike lanes, improving cyclist safety while reducing the need for additional space.

## POLICY CONNECTIONS

Ruston's transportation network must be planned to accommodate future growth while ensuring safety, accessibility, and mobility for all users. The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** include policies that guide development patterns, shaping transportation demand and infrastructure needs.

The **Capital Facilities Element** outlines funding strategies and planning frameworks for infrastructure improvements, including transportation facilities that fall under the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The **Utilities Element** includes policies addressing coordination between transportation projects and utility infrastructure to ensure efficient service delivery.

The **Community Character Element** provides guidance on maintaining Ruston's unique identity through streetscape design, pedestrian-friendly environments, and context-sensitive transportation improvements.

The **Shoreline Element** includes policies for transportation infrastructure within the shoreline jurisdiction, ensuring compatibility with environmental and recreational priorities.