

Planning Law Conference
Puget Sound Section • APA

GMA: Can we afford it?

April 26, 2011

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Company

The Bad Old Days

What was the problem?

Rapid growth and depletion of resources:

- Land: sprawl
- Energy: single occupancy vehicles
- Time: congestion
- Infrastructure: insufficient investment
- Environment: case-by-case SEPA

A Better Idea

What could be done to make things better?

- **Growth forecasts and allocation**
- **Urban growth areas, boundaries**
- **Comprehensive plans**
- **Levels of service**
- **Concurrency**
- **Growth-based revenues**

High Hopes

What did we expect?

- **Targeted growth**
- **Adequate public facilities**
- **Increased density**
- **Focused public investments**
- **Increased multi-modal travel**

Reality Check

What actually happened?

Some examples of how things worked out:

Reality Check #1

What actually happened?

We started with a big backlog of infrastructure and made it bigger by adopting higher levels of service.

Reality Check #2

What actually happened?

We only gave ourselves 6 years to solve the problem:

6-year capital facilities plans

6 years for concurrency

6 years to spend impact fees

Reality Check #3

What actually happened?

We only gave ourselves 2 new sources of revenue: impact fees and 0.5% real estate excise tax (REET).

Reality Check #4

What actually happened?

The 2 new sources of revenue helped a bit with growth, but didn't help with the backlog.

Reality Check #5

What actually happened?

Impact fees did not make “growth pay for growth” –

- **Law prohibits 100% fees**
- **Race to the bottom (or middle): everyone wants to be “below average”**

Reality Check #6

What actually happened?

Other revenues were taken away –

- **Motor vehicle excise tax** (1999: I-695)
- **Cap on property taxes** (2001: I-747)
- **Vehicle license fee cap** (2002: I-776)
- **Street utility**

Reality Check #7

What actually happened?

Underfunding and the 6-year deadline led to concurrency “exemptions” (despite no legal authority for them)

Reality Check #8

What actually happened?

Highways of “statewide” significance are not included in concurrency, yet they carry large portions of “local” traffic in urban areas.

Is the glass half empty?

Did we do any good?

Things might have been worse if we didn't have GMA, but GMA did not cure most of the problems.

- Land: not much market for high density
- Energy: not much use of transit or bikes
- Time: congestion just as bad, maybe worse
- Infrastructure: falling farther behind
- Environment: more laws, still lots of pollution

Can we afford GMA?

Can we make GMA workable?

Possibly, but we need ...

1. More local control over revenues
2. More realistic level of service standards
3. Real enforcement of concurrency (if #1 & #2 are enacted)

Then, maybe, we can afford GMA.

GMA: can we afford it?

End of Randy Young's Presentation

Questions? Contact:

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