# Mobile GR & Parking Services

Organizational Assessment

February 2020

Sam
Schwartz

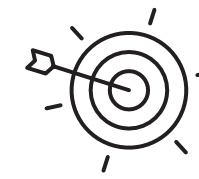# Table of Contents

# Executive Summary

Residents, employers, elected officials, and city staff have high expectations for transportation in Grand Rapids. These expectations are reflected in the City of Grand Rapids' Strategic Plan and the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan (EEDMP), both of which lay out ambitious goals for improving mobility throughout the City. In order to support the implementation of both plans, Mobile GR and Parking Services (referred to as Mobile GR throughout this report) worked with Sam Schwartz to review organizational roles and responsibilities related to transportation, identify opportunities to deliver transportation projects and programs more efficiently and effectively, and find new ways to organize and optimize City resources.

Over the course of six months, Sam Schwartz:

- Reviewed planning, policy, and budget documents;
- Led focus groups with staff throughout the department;
- Interviewed leaders from other city departments and external agencies;
- Developed an anonymous diagnostic survey for Mobile GR staff;
- Documented key workflows within Mobile GR and processes that span multiple departments;
- Identified innovative practices from transportation agencies throughout North America and benchmarked staffing and funding levels; and
- Organized workshops with staff to test and refine recommendations.

Through this process, our team identified a set of key issues and related actions Mobile GR should undertake. These key actions do not require any changes to Mobile GR's organizational structure— although in the medium- and long-term there are organizational changes Mobile GR should pursue. Together, these actions will enable Mobile GR to achieve its goals while continuing to deliver outstanding service to its customers.

The issues and actions identified throughout the assessment process have been organized into five key categories.

Organizational Alignment

Roles and Responsibilities

Processes and Systems

Staffing and Funding

External Communications and Partnerships

**Issues** • • • • • • • • • • ▷ **Actions**

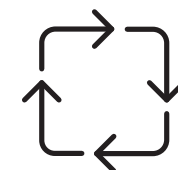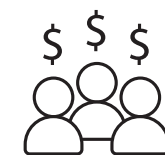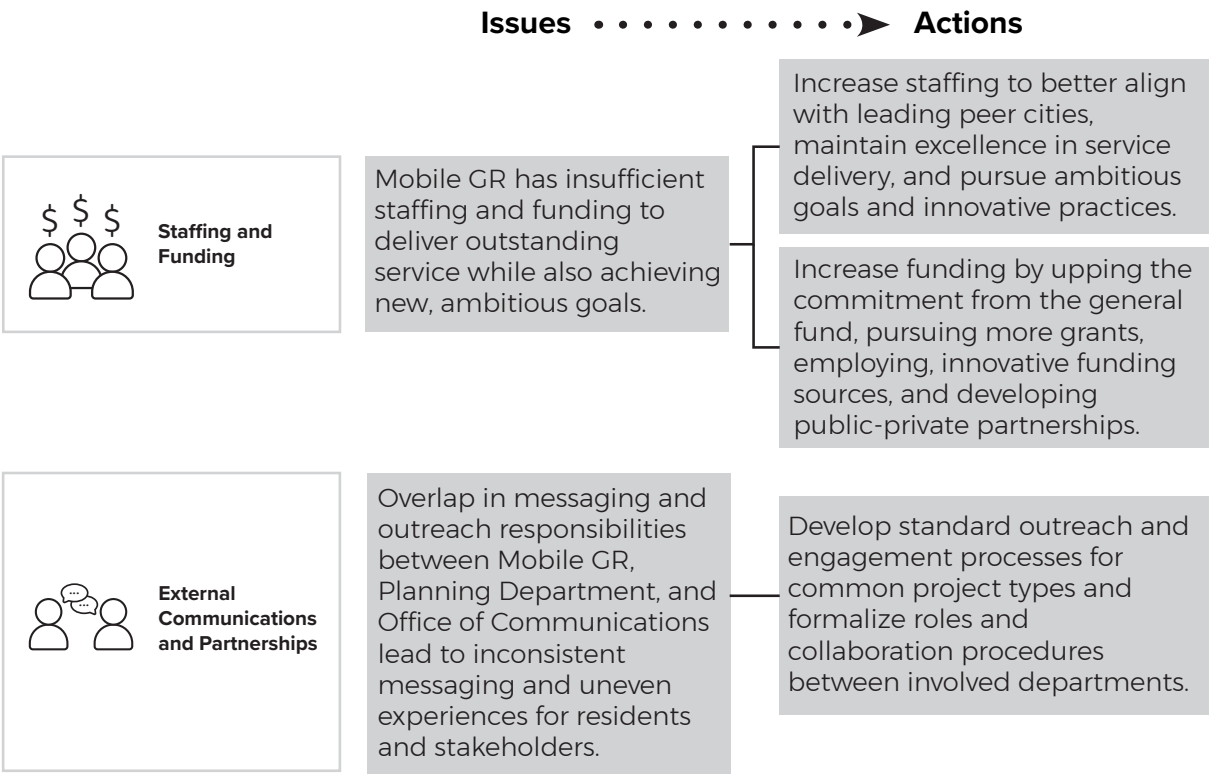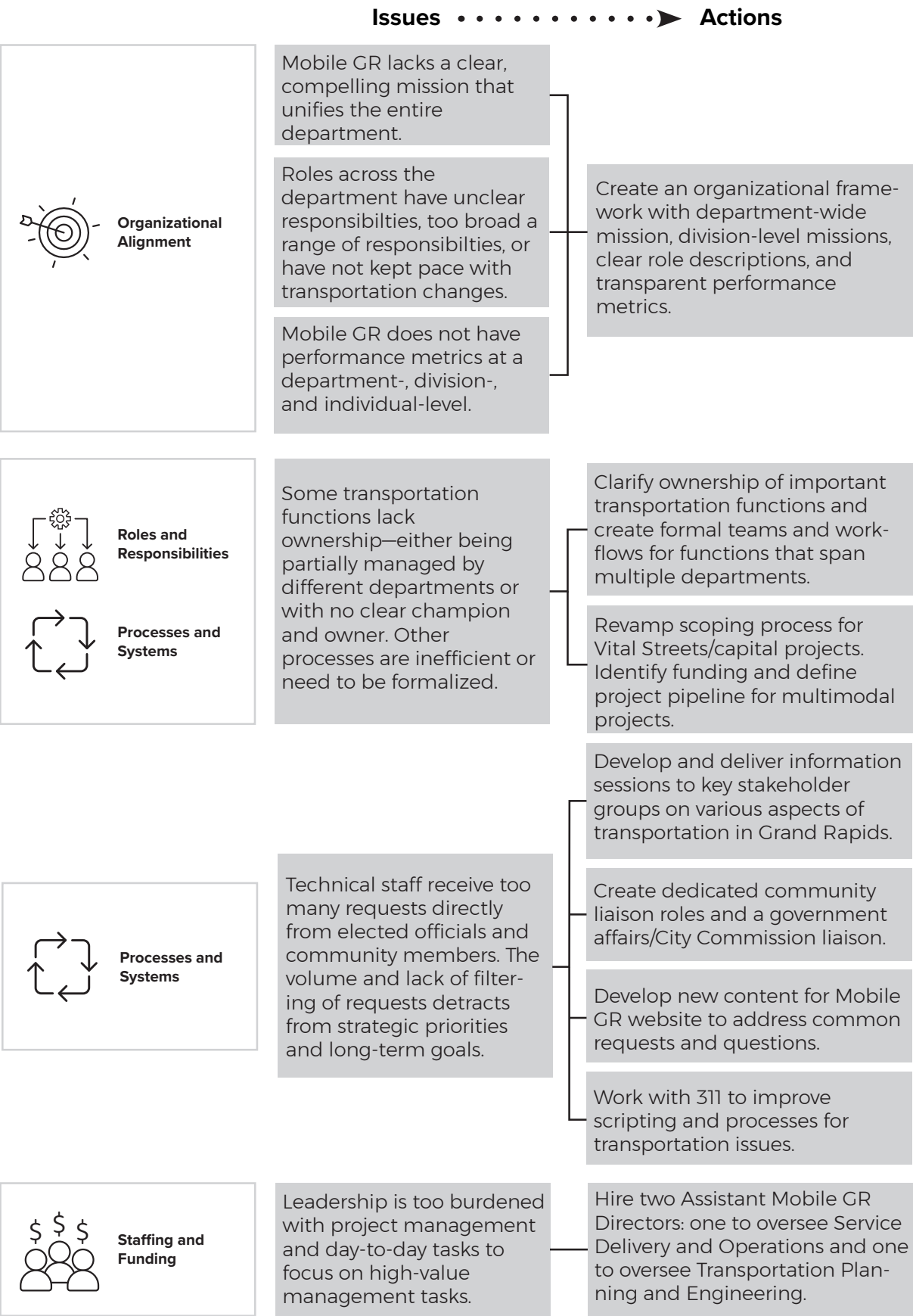### Organizational Alignment

Mobile GR lacks a clear, compelling mission that unifies the entire department.

Roles across the department have unclear responsibilties, too broad a range of responsibilties, or have not kept pace with transportation changes.

Mobile GR does not have performance metrics at a department-, division-, and individual-level.

→ Create an organizational framework with department-wide mission, division-level missions, clear role descriptions, and transparent performance metrics.

### Roles and Responsibilities
### Processes and Systems

Some transportation functions lack ownership—either being partially managed by different departments or with no clear champion and owner. Other processes are inefficient or need to be formalized.

→ Clarify ownership of important transportation functions and create formal teams and workflows for functions that span multiple departments.

→ Revamp scoping process for Vital Streets/capital projects. Identify funding and define project pipeline for multimodal projects.

### Processes and Systems

Technical staff receive too many requests directly from elected officials and community members. The volume and lack of filtering of requests detracts from strategic priorities and long-term goals.

→ Develop and deliver information sessions to key stakeholder groups on various aspects of transportation in Grand Rapids.

→ Create dedicated community liaison roles and a government affairs/City Commission liaison.

→ Develop new content for Mobile GR website to address common requests and questions.

→ Work with 311 to improve scripting and processes for transportation issues.

### Staffing and Funding

Leadership is too burdened with project management and day-to-day tasks to focus on high-value management tasks.

→ Hire two Assistant Mobile GR Directors: one to oversee Service Delivery and Operations and one to oversee Transportation Planning and Engineering.

**Issues** • • • • • • • • • • ▷ **Actions**

### Staffing and Funding

Mobile GR has insufficient staffing and funding to deliver outstanding service while also achieving new, ambitious goals.

→ Increase staffing to better align with leading peer cities, maintain excellence in service delivery, and pursue ambitious goals and innovative practices.

→ Increase funding by upping the commitment from the general fund, pursuing more grants, employing, innovative funding sources, and developing public-private partnerships.

### External Communications and Partnerships

Overlap in messaging and outreach responsibilities between Mobile GR, Planning Department, and Office of Communications lead to inconsistent messaging and uneven experiences for residents and stakeholders.

→ Develop standard outreach and engagement processes for common project types and formalize roles and collaboration procedures between involved departments.

In addition to the key actions above, it is recommended that in the medium-term Mobile GR adopt a functional organizational model with two main business lines (each led by an Assistant Mobile GR Director): Service Delivery and Operations, and Transportation Planning and Engineering.

The functional model will enable Mobile GR staff to develop in-depth expertise in their technical areas, balance resources and workloads within their functions, clearly understand decision-making responsibilities, and standardize processes for consistent service delivery.

The department would also benefit from having a centralized support services group consisting of business services (finance/accounting/customer service), information technology (IT), and communications and outreach.

In support of the EEDMP, Mobile GR should contract with an organization to develop a transportation demand management (TDM) program for Grand Rapids and lead outreach to employers and potential partners, with plans to scale the program in the future and hire an internal TDM coordinator.

In the long-term, Mobile GR should incorporate and develop two new functions: right-of-way permitting and multimodal design. The department should also establish specific customer service roles (to enable business services staff to focus on their accounting/finance responsibilities), a performance management role, and government/community liaisons within the central support services group. Mobile GR should also develop a Vision Zero program (per the EEDMP), which will require dedicated staff.

# 2

# Assessment Process & Environment

## Assessment Process & Environment

Cities plan, build, operate, and maintain the assets, programs and policies that move people, goods, services, and ideas around and through their borders. Traditionally, the goal of local agencies has been to maximize mobility (often primarily for automobiles) as an end in and of itself, without respect to the resulting community outcomes.

While mobility by private auto is still a critical priority for transportation agencies, many cities and agencies are broadening their view of transportation, realizing the critical role transportation systems play in fostering economic opportunity and creating vibrant, sustainable places.

At the same time, transportation agencies are being forced to adapt to disruptive technologies, changing ownership models, and increasing amounts of data and to incorporate these new realities into how they do business.

The combination of changing goals for transportation and an increasingly dynamic external environment are compelling many cities to reexamine how they organize their transportation functions. A well-functioning organizational structure – one that defines clear roles and reporting relationships and enables effective communication, coordination, and integration of work – is essential for the efficient delivery of transportation services and for enabling innovation and adaptability.

Mobile GR's Organizational Assessment examined the department's existing structure, as well as the overall transportation management structure in Grand Rapids.

The Organizational Assessment aimed to support the implementation of the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan (EEDMP) and the City of Grand Rapids' Strategic Plan by clarifying organizational roles and responsibilities related to transportation, identifying opportunities to deliver transportation projects and programs more efficiently and effectively, and finding new ways to organize and optimize City resources.
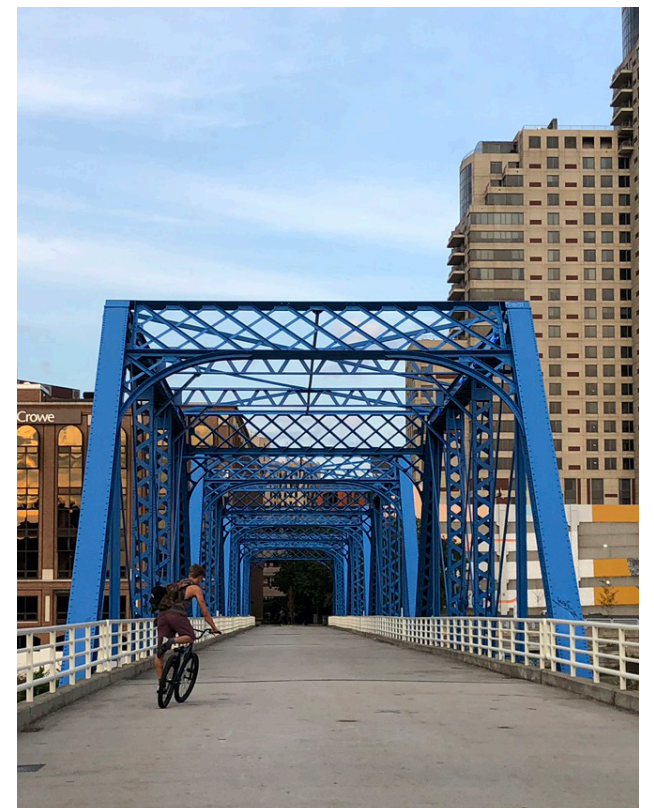
# Transportation Management Structure in Grand Rapids

Transportation infrastructure and management play a crucial role in Grand Rapids. As a testament, two of the six priorities in the City's Strategic Plan are mobility and traffic safety. Prior to that plan, voters showed their commitment to enhancing mobility in Grand Rapids by renewing dedicated funding to transportation network improvements, through the 2014 Vital Streets Fund ballot measure. Public agencies, on their end, echoed that support with actions such as building 85 miles of on-street bike lanes and 120 bus shelters, and making parking information and payment options more accessible.

Over the years, the City also took meaningful organizational measures to improve mobility and its management. Following the adoption of GR Forward, Downtown Grand Rapids' 2015 community plan and investment strategy, the City began consolidating responsibility for its transportation functions into the newly-created Mobile GR and Parking Services department. In 2018, the signals and signs functions of the Lighting, Signals, and Signs department were moved under Mobile GR. In 2019, Mobile GR was moved from under the Economic Development Director and the Mobile GR Director now reports directly to the Deputy City Manager.

Mobile GR's current structure includes seven divisions headed by the Mobile GR and Parking Services Director. The planning, policy and communications functions are in one division, together with the Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH) – a bus service Mobile GR oversees alongside transit services provided by The Rapid.

Parking functions are distributed across three divisions: Off-Street Parking and Events, On-Street Parking Enforcement, and Parking Facilities. Finally, traffic signal operations are housed in an independent division, separate from other engineering-related functions which are part of the Signs and Traffic Safety Division. Outside of Mobile GR, several other city departments manage important transportation functions:

- **Engineering Department:** Manages street, trail and public utility construction projects, maintains sidewalks, and manages the Vital Streets Program.

- **Public Works Department:** Maintains Grand Rapids' streets, including street resurfacing and snow removal.

- **Planning Department:** Runs the community engagement process for street, trail, public utility construction, and Vital Streets projects. The Planning Department also manages area specific plans, corridor plans, and other community planning activities which often include significant transportation elements.

- **Parks and Recreation Department:** Plans and maintains the City's trail system, transportation access to parks initiative and manages street trees.

- **Office of Communications:** Assists with communications and public relations related to transportation projects.

External agencies like The Rapid, Michigan Department of Transportation, and Grand Valley Metropolitan Council haWve critical roles in operating, maintaining, and funding Grand Rapids' transportation system.

**Figure 1. Mobile GR Stakeholder Map**
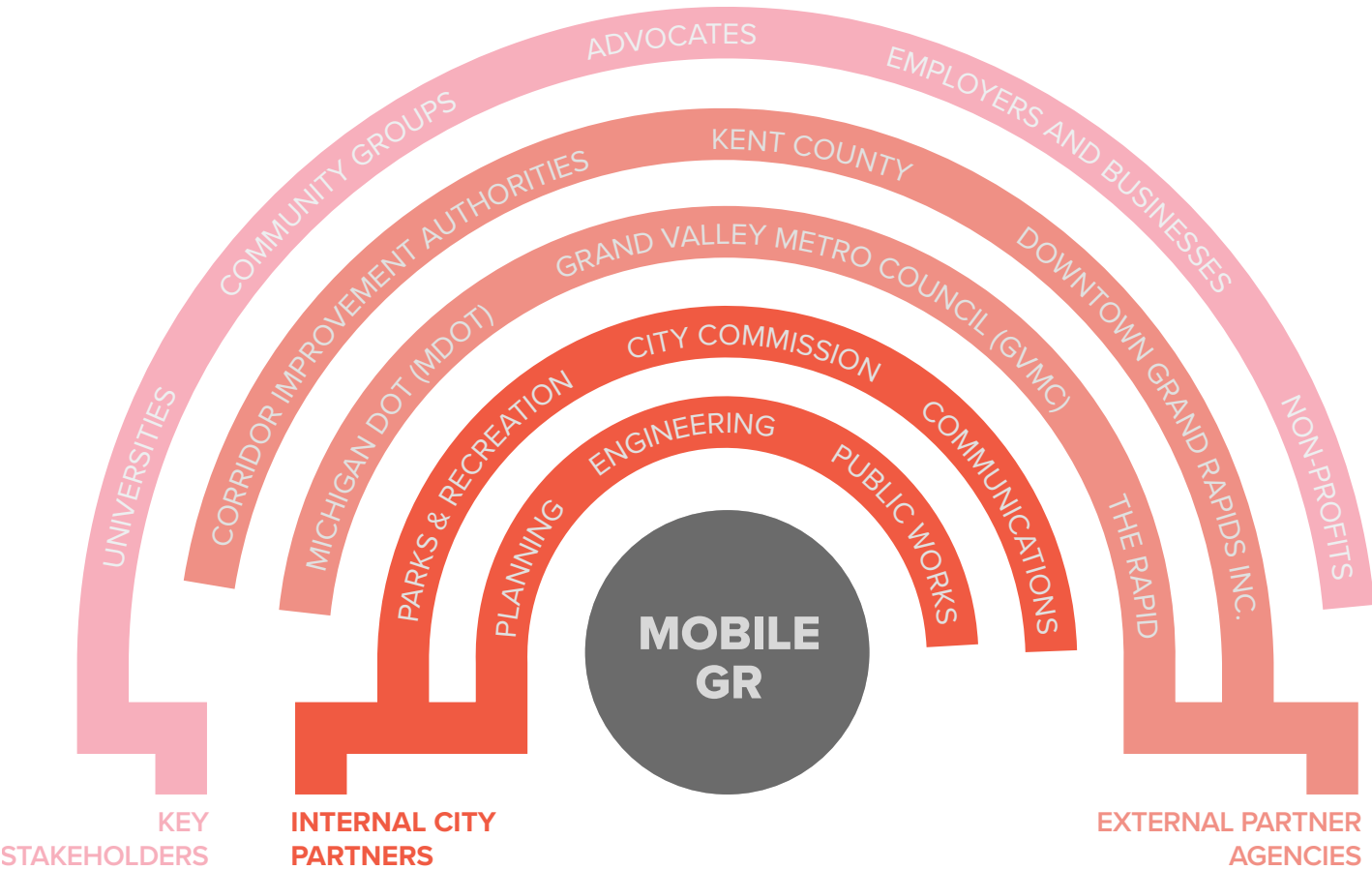


*Mobile GR collaborates with a diverse group of internal city partners, external partner agencies, and other stakeholder groups. Ensuring clear processes and consistent contacts across Mobile GR's many partners will help deliver more projects and programs that improve transportation outcomes in Grand Rapids.*

## Goals for Transportation in Grand Rapids

As part of its mission to develop mobility opportunities, Mobile GR participated in the development of the City's Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Plan.

The EEDMP lays out three overarching goals:

1. Enhance citywide mobility and safety.
2. Promote inclusive growth and access to City services.
3. Support Grand Rapids' economic competitiveness.

To realize these aspirations, the plan sets tangible objectives to be pursued by the City. The plan's mobility strategies are organized around seven objectives:

1. Alignment: Align planning and capital investments to support economic development and promote equitable growth.
2. Transportation DemandManagement: Manage transportation demand by making programs, policies, and incentives more effective.
3. Curb Management: Establish curb management practices that promote City goals.
4. Capacity: Invest in staff and system capacity to meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids residents.
5. Asset Management: Develop an asset management approach that will support the long-term health of the City's mobility networks.
6. Communication: Establish comprehensive communications, engagement, and education programs.

7. Strategic Partnerships: Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships to achieve the City's equitable mobility goals.

Grand Rapids' and Mobile GR's efforts to provide residents with the best mobility services is manifested in its ongoing examination and refinement of organizational procedures and structures. Streamlining operations and decision-making and fostering collaboration can help improve service delivery and the day-to-day experience of getting around Grand Rapids. These improvements will, in turn, enable the City to meet the objectives identified in the Strategic Plan and EEDMP.

## Organizational Assessment Process

Over the course of six months our team carried out a targeted assessment of Mobile GR, consisting of the following elements:

### Plan, Policy, and Budget Review

- **Goal:** Understand the values and initiatives being undertaken by the Mayor, City Commission, and City Manager and how transportation aligns with key priorities. Evaluate the budget and policy environment for transportation and review past plans to understand the trajectory of transportation in Grand Rapids.
- **What we did:** Our team reviewed the City Strategic Plan and Sustainability Plan, recent budgets and fiscal plans, and citywide and departmental organizational charts. For transportation specifically, we reviewed GR Forward, the Vital Streets plan, the Bicycle Action Plan, the Rapid's Align Study, and other information on Mobile GR's assets.

### Integration with EEDMP

- **Goal:** The Mobile GR Organizational Assessment was conducted in tandem with the EEDMP, with the goal of using the Organizational Assessment to prepare Mobile GR to deliver on the goals and strategies in the EEDMP.
- **What we did:** Our team attended the EEDMP Steering Committee Meeting where initial strategies were developed and opportunities and threats were identified. We reviewed key milestone deliverables from the EEDMP to stay informed on evolving goals and strategies and coordinate our analysis with the EEDMP's outputs.

### Workshop 1

- **Goal:** Clarify organizational roles and responsibilities within Mobile GR and other departments involved in transportation

functions. Hear perspectives throughout Mobile GR, from different departments and City leadership, and from key partners outside city government.
- **What we did:** Facilitated workshops with each division in Mobile GR. Led small group meetings with leaders from other City departments and key partners.

### Diagnostic Survey

- **Goal:** Ensure everyone within the department could provide anonymous input on their role, how their role fits with Mobile GR's mission, and the systems and resources within the department.
- **What we did:** Designed a 15-question survey that staff could complete online or in-person. We received more than 30 responses and analyzed the results.

### Peer Benchmarking and Research

- **Goal:** Identify examples of effective and innovative practices from transportation agencies throughout North America that relate to the opportunities and challenges faced by Mobile GR. Compare staffing and funding levels in peer cities.
- **What we did:** Developed case studies and analyzed transportation staffing and funding in Des Moines, IA; Minneapolis, MN; Madison, WI; and Cambridge, MA.

### Workshop 2

- **Goal:** Test initial recommendations related to Mobile GR's organization, systems, and processes. Share case studies and benchmarks to determine applicability in Grand Rapids.
- **What we did:** Led workshops with Mobile GR leadership and staff from Parking and Traffic Safety. Met one-on-one or in small groups with staff to diagram key workflows.

# 3

# Key Issues & Actions

# Key Issues

**Mobile GR lacks a clear, compelling mission that unifies the entire department.**

As new functions have been added to the department over the last several years, Mobile GR has not updated and articulated an overall mission that unifies the entire department. Because of the lack of an overall mission, the disparate groups that have been brought together as Mobile GR have remained siloed.

There is a diverse range of roles within the department; and, without a clear mission, it can be challenging to understand how it all fits together. For example, staff who maintain traffic signals may not readily see how their jobs relate to staff who manage the bus stop improvement program or the staff who approves requests for neighborhood traffic calming. All these elements are related—creating a 21st century transportation system entails a diverse array of functions—and Mobile GR's mission statement should emphasize how each staff member's role fits into the overall picture. A compelling, inclusive mission will not only align staff internally, but will also help stakeholders outside the department—community members, staff in other City departments, partners in the private, non-profit, and educational sectors—understand Mobile GR's functions and priorities and identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

The City's Strategic Plan, the EEDMP, and conversations with City leaders all emphasized the importance of collaborations and partnerships in moving projects forward in Grand Rapids. The need for partnerships only underscores Mobile GR's need for a clear, exciting mission that garners interest and builds buy-in among a diverse group of stakeholders.

**Roles across the department have unclear responsibilities, too broad a range of responsibilities, or have not been updated to reflect changes in the transportation landscape.**

Across Mobile GR, there is a need to delineate the responsibilities of each role (and to be clear about what are not their responsibilities). While some roles will always entail a certain degree of ambiguity and require flexibility, the current lack of clarity prevents staff from focusing on their core responsibilities and allows for inefficient duplication of work.

During interviews and workshops, staff identified multiple instances where there was a perception of duplication of work occurring that needed clarification. For example, there was confusion between staff over the staging of special events and street closures. Both services are needed, but staff could work to identify efficiencies as two different systems are used for assigning and tracking these tasks. The process for coordination and the expectations for these services needs to be more clearly defined.

Additionally, some staff within the department have broad portfolios of responsibilities spanning multiple disciplines. While staff are knowledgeable and passionate about their roles, having such disparate responsibilities limits opportunities for specialized skill development and leads to unmanageable workloads that leave important functions without the proper attention.

**Mobile GR does not have performance metrics at a department, division, and individual level.**

Performance metrics help an organization better understand its most important functions and focus people and resources on what matters the most. Mobile GR does not have performance metrics for the department as a whole, for its divisions, or for individual roles. The lack of metrics makes it difficult for Mobile GR to easily measure how the department is doing, identify areas for improvement or in need of more resources, and succinctly communicate the department's performance to elected officials and the public.

**Mobile GR has insufficient staffing and funding to continue delivering outstanding service while also achieving new, ambitious goals.**

Throughout the organizational assessment, there was consistent feedback that Mobile GR's current staffing and funding resources are insufficient to deliver on the ambitious goals laid out for the department – or even, in some cases, to simply keep up with baseline maintenance and operations functions.

Residents, employers, and elected officials have high expectations for transportation in Grand Rapids. Mobile GR must continue to deliver outstanding service to its parking customers and others while expanding residents' options for getting around the city, addressing critical transportation safety issues, and testing new transportation technologies to understand their potential value in Grand Rapids.

As part of the Organizational Assessment, we compared staffing (which focused on full-time, city staff only) and budgetary resources allocated to Mobile GR to four peer cities: Des Moines, IA; Madison, WI; Minneapolis, MI; and Cambridge, MA. Compared to its peers, Grand Rapids falls in the middle in terms of parking staff per 10,000 residents (Des Moines, though, does not offer a similar comparison, as the City only enforces on-street parking in a small area). Focusing on the leading cities within the peer group, Grand Rapids has considerably less parking staff. Mobile GR only has 67% as many parking staff per 10,000 residents as Madison and only 29% of Cambridge's staffing level (see chart on the following page).

Compared to its peers, only Des Moines has a lower ratio of traffic and transportation staff per 10,000 residents than Mobile GR (see chart on the following page). Mobile GR has 79% as many traffic and transportation staff as Minneapolis and only 63% of Madison's ratio of staff to residents. Two staff within Mobile GR are primarily responsible for providing design input on bicycle, pedestrian, and safety projects. In Minneapolis, 7 full-time planners and engineers handle preliminary design and then pass projects onto a team of 82 engineers and project managers for detailed design and implementation (these staff were not included in the comparison since they are more similar to functions conducted within the Engineering Department in Grand Rapids). Minneapolis also has 23 full-time staff dedicated to transportation planning and programming compared to 4 planners within Mobile GR.
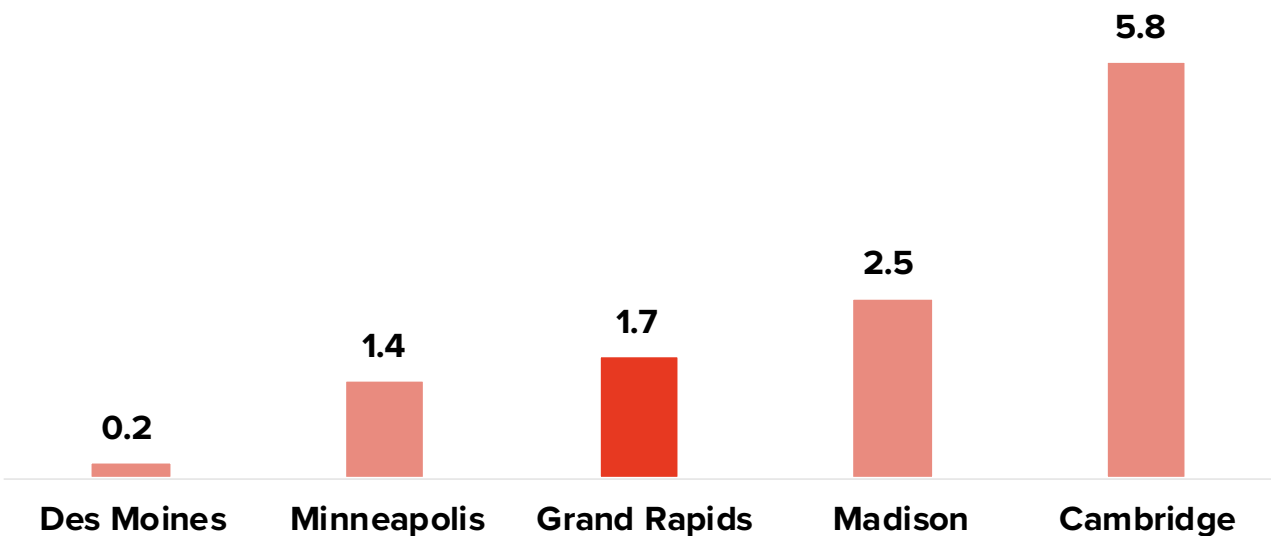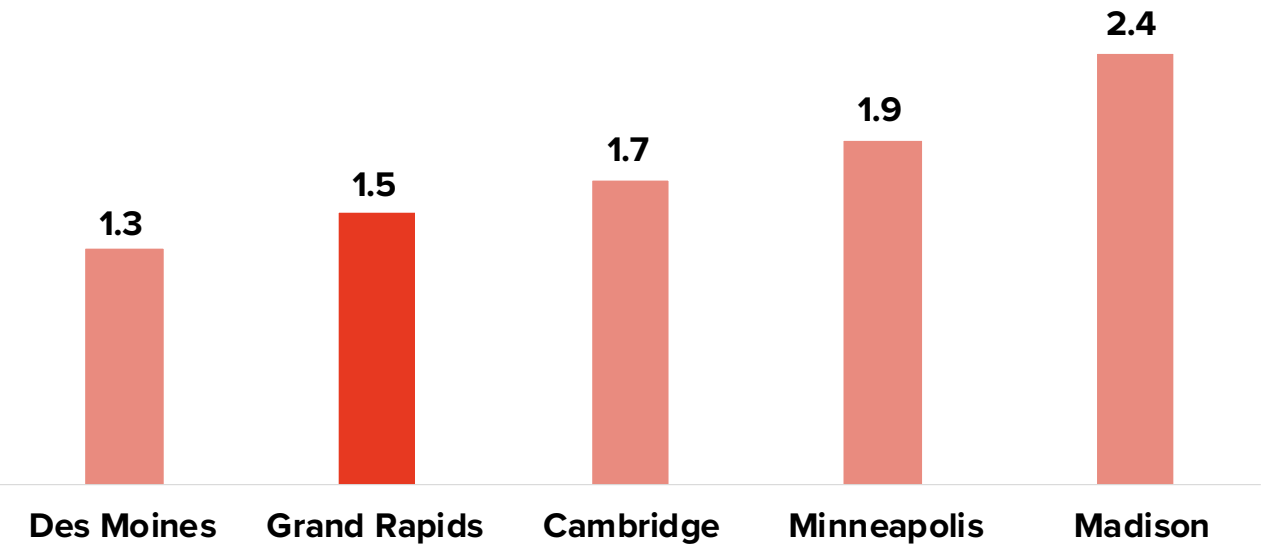
**Figure 2. Parking Staffing Levels** (FTE/10,000 Residents)



| Des Moines | Minneapolis | Grand Rapids | Madison | Cambridge |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.2 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 5.8 |

**Figure 3. Transportation & Traffic Staffing Levels** (FTE/10,000 Residents)



| Des Moines | Grand Rapids | Cambridge | Minneapolis | Madison |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.9 | 2.4 |

Traffic signals stand out as another area where Mobile GR's staffing needs to be improved. Mobile GR has 12 full-time staff within the Signals division that maintain 672 signals in Grand Rapids, Kent County, and a portion of Ottawa County. Mobile GR staff maintain signals owned by eight other cities, two counties, and the Michigan Department of Transportation. Grand Rapids staffing for traffic signal maintenance is similar to Madison, which also has 12 staff for traffic signals, and Des Moines, which has eight staff; however, Mobile GR staff maintain signals across 1,030 square miles (see chart on the following page).

Mobile GR stands out for the small portion of its budget allocated from Grand Rapids' general fund. Less than 1% of the department's budget comes from the general fund, even though the department contributes the majority of fines collected from on-street parking tickets into the fund. Madison and Minneapolis report their budgets by source of funds. In both cities, the general fund constitutes a significant portion of the equivalent department's budget (see chart on the following page).

Additionally, Mobile GR's primary funding sources face uncertain futures and have restrictions on how the department can use those funds. 83% of Mobile GR's 2019 operating budget came from the Parking Fund, 16% came from the Major Street Fund, and less than 1% came from additional sources. Mobile GR's parking revenue is forecasted to decline over the next five years and faces an uncertain future with the increasing use of shared mobility services and eventual introduction of driverless cars possibly decreasing demand for parking.

Mobile GR is also limited by in how it can spend money from the Parking Fund; those funds can onl be used on projects and programs that directly impact the City's parking system.

The Major Streets Fund— Mobile GR's other major funding source— mainly consists of statewide motor fuel tax and vehicle registration fee revenue allocated to Grand Rapids by the state. While both the motor fuel tax and vehicle registration revenue have grown steadily for the past five years, the long-term future of these funds could be impacted by the adoption of electric vehicles and decrease in vehicle ownership due to increasing use of shared mobility services.

In the near future Grand Rapids will also no longer be eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding, which has been a signification funding source for traffic signal and intersection optimization projects.

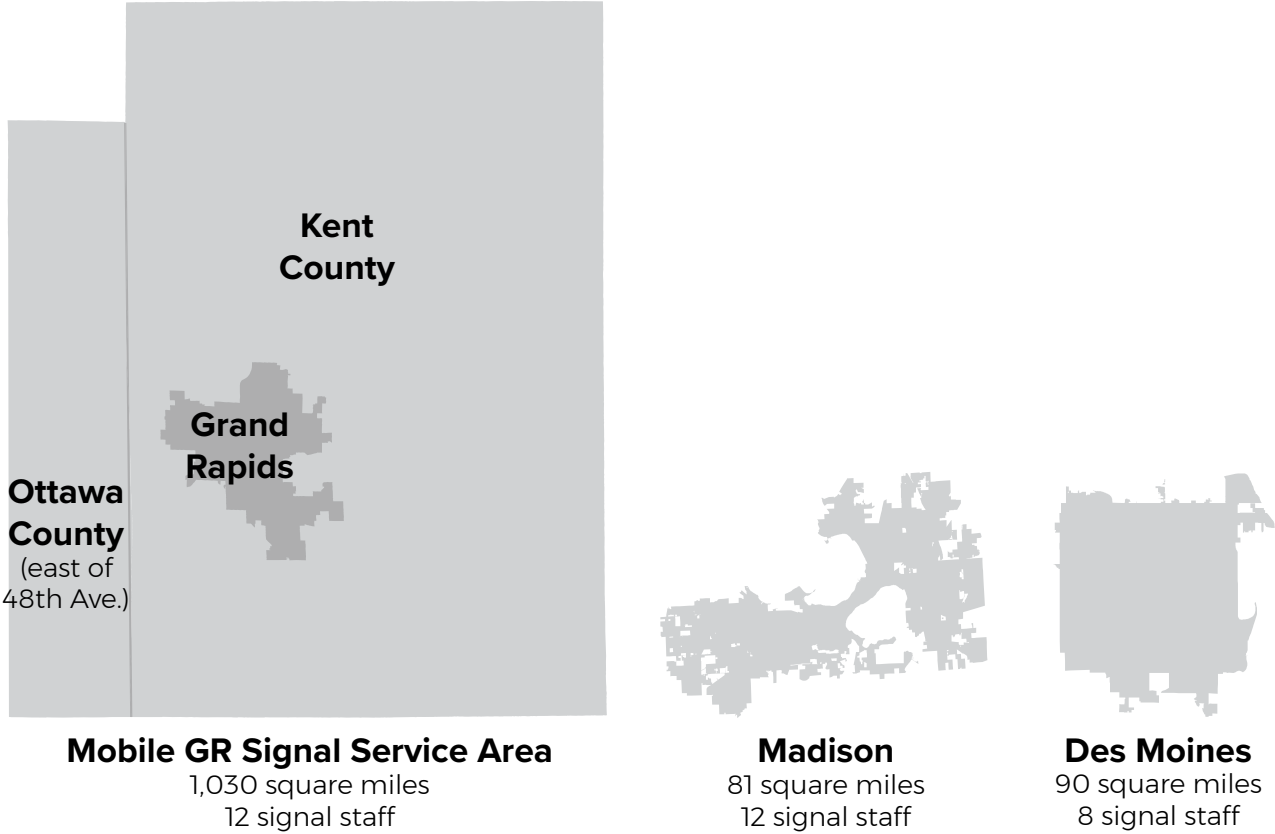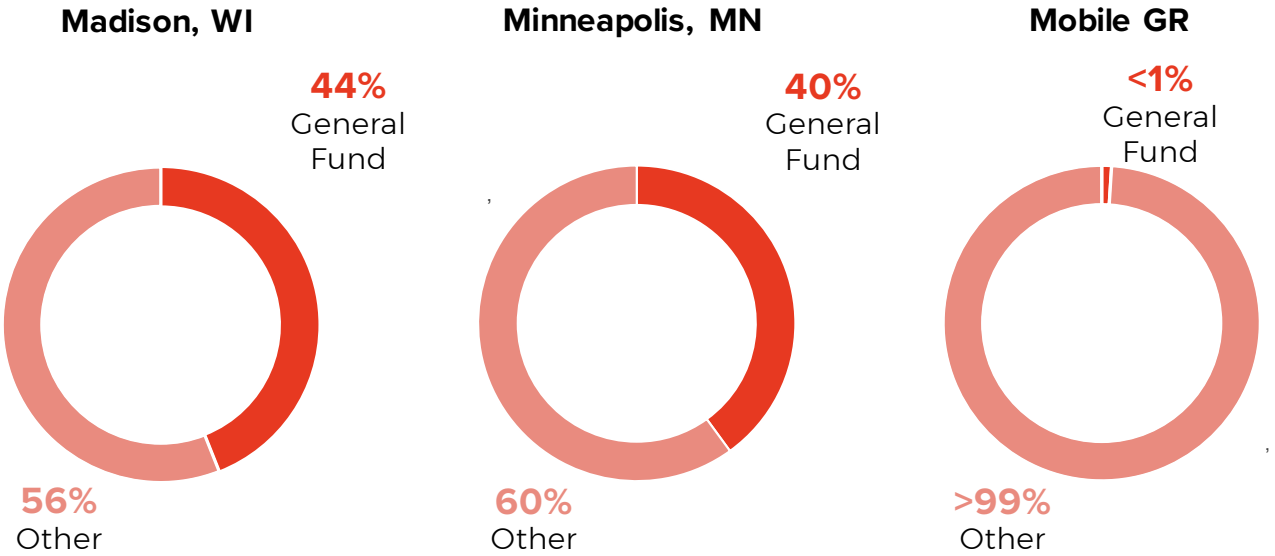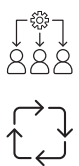## Figure 4. Comparison of Traffic Signal Service Area



**Mobile GR Signal Service Area**
1,030 square miles
12 signal staff

**Madison**
81 square miles
12 signal staff

**Des Moines**
90 square miles
8 signal staff

## Figure 5. Comparison of Operating Budget Funding



**Madison, WI**

**44%** General Fund

**56%** Other

**Minneapolis, MN**

**40%** General Fund

**60%** Other

**Mobile GR**

**<1%** General Fund

**>99%** Other

**Some important transportation functions in Grand Rapids lack ownership—either being partially managed by staff in different departments or with no clear champion and owner. Other important processes that are critical for maximizing resources and delivering projects are inefficient or need to be formalized.**

Cities have numerous responsibilities related to transportation: they must plan, design, and build the infrastructure people using different modes of transportation require; maintain that infrastructure in a state of good repair; develop policies and regulations that move people and goods safely and efficiently; and ensure the orderly, efficient, and safe operation of city streets. In Grand Rapids, some of these and other important transportation functions lack a clear owner, lack the necessary resources; or suffer from inefficient processes that require complicated collaboration across multiple departments.



**BICYCLE ACTION PLAN**

*July 2019*

**City of Grand Rapids**
http://grandrapids.mi.gov/BicycleActionPlan

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning, Design and Project Delivery

Grand Rapids has placed significant emphasis on becoming a more walkable, bikeable community; however, there is only one staff person within Mobile GR who acts as the primary resource for walking and bicycling issues and reviews projects for bicycle and pedestrian impacts and needs. Additionally, developing projects and policies to improve conditions for people walking and bicycling requires collaboration with other City departments (e.g., Engineering, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Planning, etc.). Currently, though, the City lacks the formal mechanisms needed to institutionalize and standardize collaboration and the dedicated funding sources needed to deliver projects and programs (especially for smaller needs that fall outside of the Vital Streets program).

### Right-of-Way Permitting

Right-of-way (ROW) permitting, which includes utility permits and temporary occupancy permits, is critical to ensuring Grand Rapids' streets operate smoothly—especially as more development and construction occurs across the city. ROW permitting can also be a tool to reinforce the City's transportation priorities, for example prioritizing safe mobility for people walking and bicycling around construction zones.

One individual in Engineering is responsible for reviewing, issuing, inspecting, and enforcing all permits, and the volume of permits has greatly increased in recent years (the number of utility and temporary occupancy permits increased 58% from 2016 to 2018). While Engineering oversees the permitting process, staff in Mobile GR play a significant role reviewing permit applications (e.g., reviewing traffic plans and any detour/route planning) and executing logistics like barricading streets and hooding parking meters.

### Transportation Demand Management

Grand Rapids has experienced a major influx of jobs over the past decade. The city's strong economic growth is leading to new and increasing demands on the transportation system. While there are a smattering of programs and incentives that encourage employers and employees to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, there is not a coordinated, citywide approach to transportation demand management (TDM).

## Figure 6. Utility and Temporary Occupancy Permits (2016-2018)
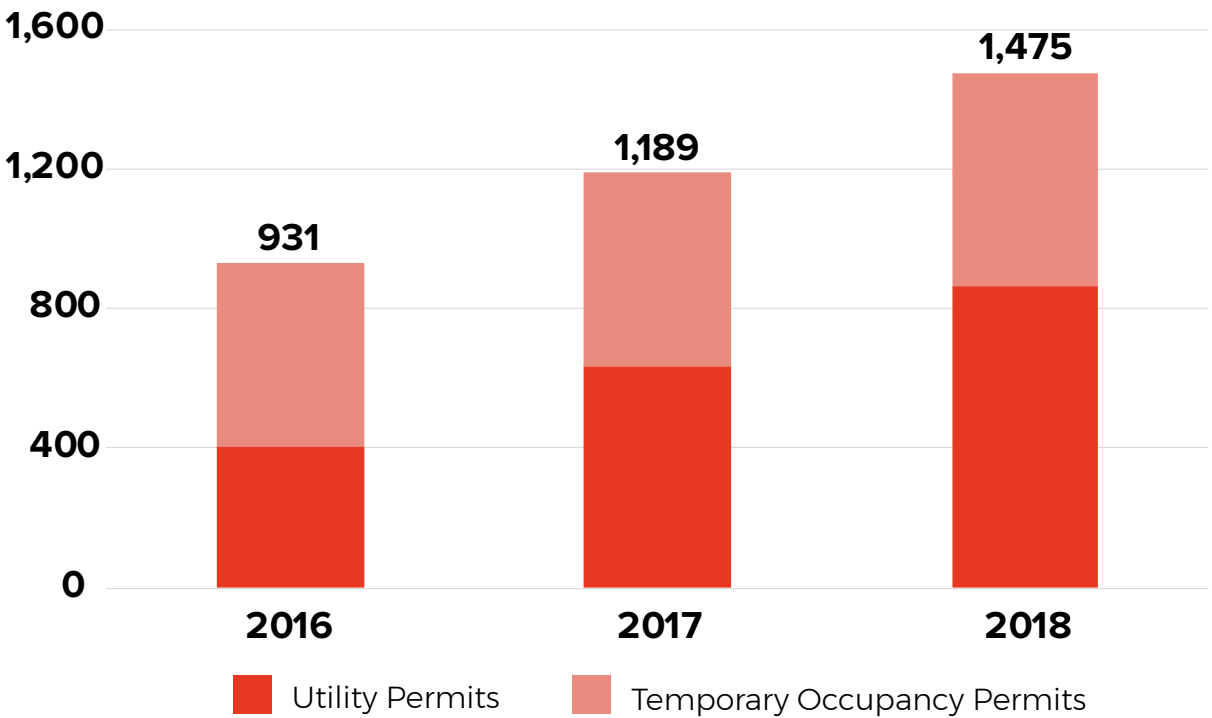


*Utility and Temporary Occupancy Permits issued between 2016 and 2018.*

*Multimodal Project Development and Design*

Across City departments, there is a need for more training and staff capacity to do preliminary and detailed design on complex multimodal projects in-house. As a result, most of these projects require the use of outside consultants.

There are also gaps within the existing project development and scoping process. The main avenue for major street projects is the Vital Streets program, which focuses its revenues on getting 70% of streets and sidewalks across the city to a state of good or fair pavement condition. Currently, Mobile GR staff are not involved in the scoping process for Vital Streets projects and are not involved until the project kickoff meeting and subsequent Design Team reviews (Design Team is a multidisciplinary team that brings together leaders from various City departments to review major projects). By the time Mobile GR staff are brought into the fold on Vital Streets projects and other capital street, sidewalk, public utility and trail projects, there scope is already set and there is limited opportunity to add additional elements— even if doing so would be the most cost-effective method for constructing needed improvements. Outside of Vital Streets, there is not a clear project pipeline or funding mechanism for moving other multimodal projects forward.

*Street Resurfacing/Restripting Coordination*

Coordinating striping and marking changes with street resurfacing projects is a low-cost way to deliver small but meaningful safety improvements and improvements for people walking and bicycling. Engineering, Public Works, Mobile GR, and Planning are all involved in different phases of the street resurfacing/restriping coordination process.

Each year, Engineering delivers a list of streets eligible for repaving (based on pavement condition) to Public Works. Public Works then reviews, prioritizes, and schedules projects and shares a final list with Mobile GR in April or May. Resurfacing work begins in June and lasts through September or October.

Once Mobile GR receives the final list of from Public Works, staff then review the list of streets and determine whether changes to the existing striping and markings are needed or if the street can simply be restriped as is. When Mobile GR staffidentify streets in need of changes, they gather and analyze data, coordinate with Planning to engage nearby residents and stakeholders, and design a new striping plan. Mobile GR then coordinates with its striping contractor to restripe each street after resurfacing.

There are several challenges with the existing coordination process, though. On streets where Mobile GR wants to change the existing striping, gathering and analyzing data, conducting community engagement, and then designing a new striping plan can take months. With the existing timeline, though, there may only be a few weeks between when Mobile GR receives a final list of projects and resurfacing work begins. This forces Mobile GR to either rush through the engagement and design process or let the opportunity go by. The resurfacing schedule can also change at the last minute or specific project boundaries might shift, both of which can lead to Mobile GR missing an opportunity to make safety improvements or other changes.

**Figure 7. Coordination Process for Vital Streets and Capital Projects**



**Issue**
Once Mobile GR isinvolved in Vital Streets or other capital projects the scope is already set. This means there is limited opportunity to add pedestrian, bicycle, or safety improvements to the project— even if this would be the cheapest and fastest way to construct needed improvements.
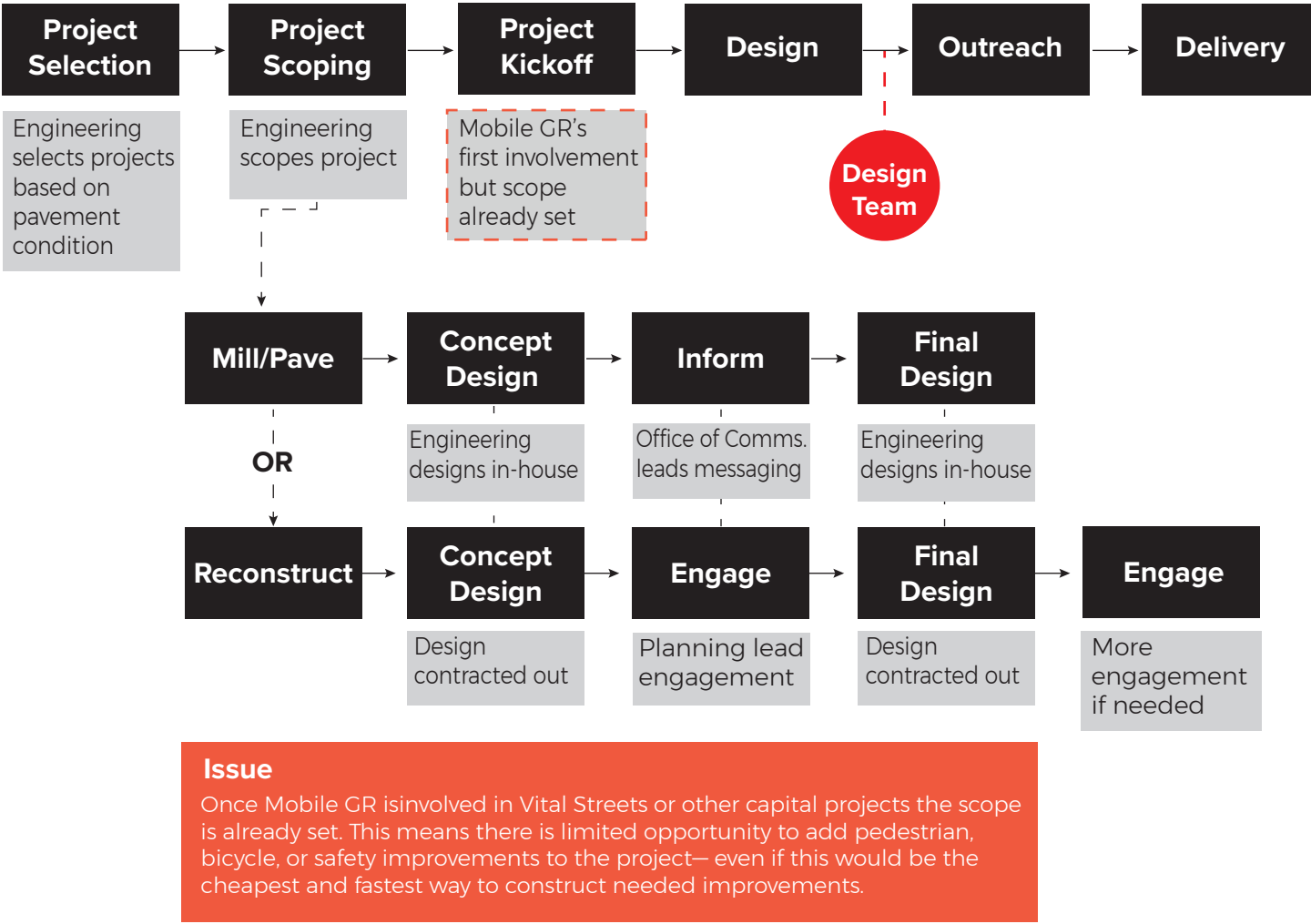
**Figure 8. Coordination Process for Street Resurfacing and Restriping**

### Street Resurfacing

| Eligibility | Prioritization | Scheduling | Execution |
|---|---|---|---|
| Engineering sends PW a list of eligible streets | PW prioritizes streets to be resurfaced that year | PW schedules resurfacing work and sends final list to Mobile GR in April/May | Resurfacing completed between May and October |

**Issue**
Mobile GR has insufficient time to identify projects, collect data, engage the community, and design striping/markings plans.

### Striping and Markings

| Identification | Outreach | Design | Coordination | Execution |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mobile GR reviews initial list, identifies streets needing new striping or markings | Planning staff engage with residents and stakeholders for projects that involve major changes | Finalize striping/markings plans based on community feedback | Finalize timing with PW and striping contractor | Install the new markings after resurfacing is complete |

**Leadership is too burdened with individual project management and day-to-day tasks to focus on high-value management tasks.**

Mobile GR's Director oversees all the department's 66 full-time employees and is heavily involved in the department's day-to-day operations and managing projects. Because there is only one director in the department with limited capacity, and a relatively flat organizational and reporting structure that de-emphasizes hierarchy, high-value tasks like setting the department's overall direction, process improvement and innovation, championing department initiatives, and developing partnerships receive relatively little attention versus making sure the department functions from one day to the next.

**Technical staff receive too many requests directly from elected officials and community members. The volume of requests and desire to provide excellent service take away from strategic priorities and long-term goals.**

Mobile GR staff receive a significant volume of requests directly from residents and from elected officials. These requests vary from questions about paying for monthly parking to requests for traffic signs. Mobile GR has a strong ethos of customer service, so staff prioritize these requests and do their best to resolve these issues when possible. However, the volume of requests staff receives absorb significant portions of their time and detract from strategic priorities.

Some requests are recurring topics that could be handled by a frontline community liaison or customer service staff rather than operational staff. While the department's focus on customer service is laudable, there needs to be a clearer process for residents and elected officials to submit requests and for the department to filter, distribute, and track their resolution.

**Lack of clarity in communications and outreach responsibilities between Mobile GR, the Planning Department, and the Office of Communications lead to inconsistent messaging and uneven experiences for residents and stakeholders.**

Communications and outreach for transportation projects can be handled by Mobile GR, the Planning Department, and/or the Office of Communications depending on the project, the communications channel being used, and other factors.

The lack of a clear owner for transportation communications can lead to mixed messages and is a missed opportunity to educate the public regarding the City's vision for transportation. The level of outreach on transportation projects can vary, leaving residents and stakeholders wondering why one project might receive more attention versus another.

# Key Actions

 **Create an organizational framework with department-wide mission, division-level missions, clear role descriptions, and transparent performance metrics.**

High-functioning organizations align their strategies, capabilities, resources, and systems to support their overall mission. Mobile GR must define its overall mission, and then align the organization around this mission.

This will entail divisions within the department translating the overall mission to apply it to the group's functions. It will entail reviewing and updating roles across the department to reflect their core responsibilities and making it clear how those roles relate to the division-level and department-wide missions.

Establishing key performance metrics will be critical to operationalize and track Mobile GR's mission. Metrics should be easy for the department to track and provide a succinct picture of performance at different levels— for the department as a whole, for divisions within the department, and for each role in the department.

Leadership should create a succinct formal document explaining Mobile GR's mission and performance metrics for the benefit of internal staff, elected officials, partner organizations, and the public.



| Mission | Strategy | Resources | Systems |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do we have a clear, compelling mission? | Do all of our goals and objectives support our mission? | Do we have the funding and staff needed to deliver our strategy? | Do our processes drive the performance of our resources? |
| Have we communicated the mission to our staff, partners, and the community? | Are there meaningful metrics for tracking our progress? | | Does our technology help maximize our resources? |

*Framework for organizational alignment*

# Case Study
## Oakland, California

In 2016, the City of Oakland created a new Department of Transportation (OakDOT) to bring disparate transportation functions into a single department and unite them around a common purpose. As part of the process, the new department released a strategic plan that articulated OakDOT's mission, defining it as the effort "to envision, plan, build, operate and maintain a transportation system for the City of Oakland—in partnership with local transit providers and other agencies— and to assure safe, equitable, and sustainable access and mobility for residents, businesses and visitors." By 2019, the department completed a visioning process for all of its 18 sections, formulating a mission statement and conducting a S.W.O.T (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for each one.

By defining its mission, OakDOT was able to organize its transportation and mobility goals under one vision and provide its staff, partner agencies and the general public with a sense of cohesiveness regarding the City's day-to-day work. The strategic plan continues by defining tangible goals and measurable benchmarks, all geared towards accomplishing the department's mission. Readily available to the public, the plan both binds OakDOT to its mission and serves as a communication means with external stakeholders about the City's transportation initiatives.



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¹ OakDOT Strategic Plan, 2016
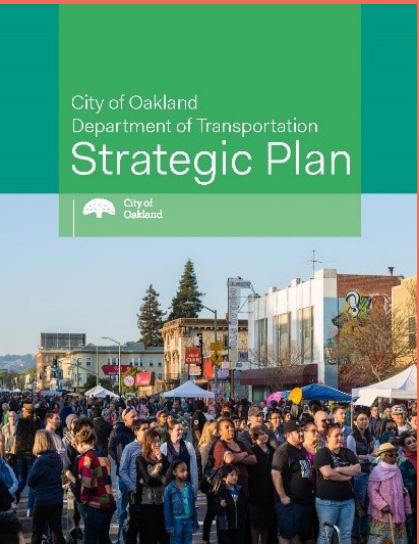
**Increase Mobile GR's staffing to better align with leading peer cities, maintain excellence in service delivery, and pursue ambitious goals and innovative practices.**

Mobile GR should aim to achieve similar staffing levels to leading peer cities. Adding 22 full-time staff (with an emphasis on signal maintenance, transportation planning, traffic engineering, and communications/outreach) over the medium-term would bring Mobile GR close to a ratio of a 2 staff per 10,000 residents, more in line with Minneapolis and Madison. This level of staffing would better equip Mobile GR to continue delivering outstanding service to its customers while also pursuing the goals in the City Strategic Plan and EEDMP.

Throughout the Organizational Assessment process, our team heard about challenges of getting new positions approved. If hiring approvals for full-time staff continue to be extremely difficult, Mobile GR could evaluate the possibility of establishing long-term contracts that embed consultants within the organization for certain targeted roles/functions where appropriate— a relatively common practice employed in cities like Chicago, Austin, and many others.



**Increase Mobile GR's funding by upping the commitment from the general fund, seeking more grant funding, employing innovative funding sources, and continuing to develop public-private partnerships.**

If delivering affordable, efficient transportation services is truly a city priority, allocating more budgetary resources from the general fund would enable Mobile GR to pursue innovative projects while maintaining its core services. As Mobile GR's staffing becomes more sufficient and support staff have more clearly defined roles, the department will also have increased capacity to pursue grant funding.

In addition to increased city funding and pursuing more grants, Mobile GR has the opportunity to develop new revenue streams, potentially through advertising and licensing related to the DASH program and through forthcoming micromobility pilots. Public-private partnerships will continue to be an important tool for Mobile GR to bolster its own resources and test and employ new technologies and services.
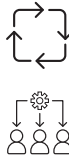
**Clarify ownership of important transportation functions and create formal teams and workflows for functions that span multiple departments.**

*Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning, Design and Project Delivery*

Grand Rapids should create a cross-functional working group to coordinate bicycle and pedestrian improvements, develop a database of citywide needs, prioritize those needs, identify and coordinate funding, and develop a pipeline of future bicycle and pedestrian projects (drawing from existing plans and studies). Mobile GR staff could lead this team's efforts, but it will be important to include staff from Engineering, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Planning, and The Rapid. The bicycle and pedestrian coordinating team would be less focused on large capital needs and more focused on smaller improvements that could be delivered with a variety of methods.

*Multimodal Project Development and Design*

Currently, many street resurfacing and reconstruction projects in Grand Rapids are designed by private contractors (with Engineering staff managing these contracts). While targeted use of consultants can be beneficial, especially for new or unusual skills, having the internal capability to handle core work can help create an efficient process that links project development through delivery. As Grand Rapids looks to implement more multimodal projects, there needs to be more capability to design these projects in-house, even if that starts with just the initial phases (i.e., concept design, project estimating). In the

short-term, Grand Rapids should commit to providing staff in Engineering and Mobile GR more training on multimodal design (as well as training for Public Works on how to maintain new types of infrastructure). With Mobile GR taking on more project development work (e.g., the Bicycle Action Plan), it would be beneficial to have a multimodal design team within Mobile GR so they could coordinate with the department's transportation planners and further scope and design projects.

*Right-of-Way-Permitting*

In the long-term, the City should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of moving the ROW permitting function from Engineering to Mobile GR. Mobile GR staff currently devotes significant time reviewing permit applications, and there is an opportunity to expand the department's on-street parking enforcement function to also inspect and enforce ROW permits (an important area that is currently lacking).

# Case Study

## Seattle ROW Services



To simplify permitting for any activity that impacts the Right-of-Way (ROW), the City of Seattle decided to concentrate the authority to issue such permits at the hands of its Department of Transportation (SDOT). Seattle's non-ROW permits are handled by another agency, the Department of Construction and Inspection. SDOT divides the permits it is responsible for into two categories. Simple Construction Use permits are those required in order to perform landscaping work or station residential storage containers in the ROW. Complex Construction Use permits are meant to regulate any construction activity that impedes access by the public to the ROW.

All ROW permitting functions live under the Operations and Maintenance line of business, where permitting officials can communicate with other operation branches and stay informed of any considerations they may need to account for. Furthermore, all ROW functions are grouped into the same Budget Control Level (BCL), called Right-of-Way Management. The BCL's purpose is "to review projects throughout the city for code compliance for uses of the right-of-way and to provide plan review, utility permit and street use permit issuance, and utility inspection and mapping services."[2] In 2018, the ROW Management BCL was budgeted approximately $32.5 million and 134 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), or $43.5 per capita and 0.17 FTEs per 1,000 Seattle residents.

*Image courtesy of Seattle DOT.*

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[2] SDOT

### Transportation Demand Management

The EEDMP calls for Mobile GR to pilot expanded TDM incentive programs and to formalize its role as the city's designated TDM provider. Mobile GR should contract with an organization to develop a transportation demand management (TDM) program for Grand Rapids and lead outreach to employers and potential partners in 2020, with plans to scale the program in the future and hire an internal TDM coordinator.

### Repaving/Restriping Coordination

Mobile GR and Public Works should collaboratively develop an updated methodology for prioritizing which streets are included in the annual resurfacing program (e.g., building in equity and safety criteria), scheduling work to give Mobile GR staff adequate time to develop striping plans, and defining the boundaries of projects. These changes would enable Grand Rapids to capitalize on more opportunities to coordinate safety improvements with existing work. In addition to these changes to the prioritization and scheduling process, Mobile GR and Public Works should also ensure there is a defined list of "backup" projects each year that would be completed if there are excess funds available for the program that year. In years past, the decisions around where to allocate any excess funds have been unclear and Mobile GR has not had sufficient time to coordinate striping and marking changes with these last-minute projects.

**Revamp project scoping process for Vital Streets and other capital projects and identify additional funding and project pipeline for multimodal projects.**

Mobile GR needs to be involved in the scoping of Vital Streets and other capital street, sidewalk, public utility and trail projects, either through the Design Team process or another vehicle. For Vital Streets projects, Engineering and Mobile GR should establish joint scoping meetings where staff can provide input on bicycle, pedestrian, and safety needs when there is still an opportunity for these needs to be easily incorporated into the project.

Vital Streets program funding is focused on improving street and sidewalk pavement condition in Grand Rapids. In order to make multimodal improvements and ensure projects are distributed equitably across the city, there needs to be another avenue(s) with dedicated funding for multimodal projects like bikeways, pedestrian crossings, improving access to transit, or safe routes to schools and parks. Many cities, including Pittsburgh, Chattanooga, and Milwaukee, have specific city funds that dedicate over $1 million to walking and bicycling projects each year[3].



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[3] *Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2018 Benchmarking Report*

# Case Study
## Seattle Complete Streets Checklist
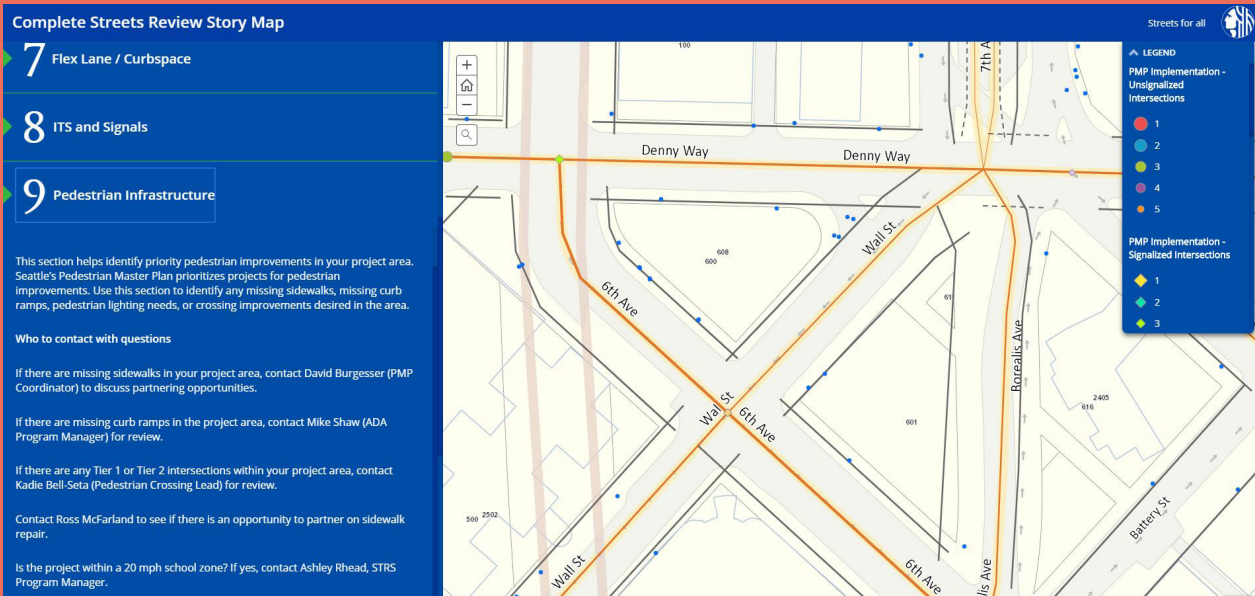
In 2007, Seattle passed the Complete Streets ordinance requiring its Department of Transportation (SDOT) to design streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and persons of all abilities, while promoting safe operation for all users. Updated periodically, the Complete Streets Checklist is a main tool used to comply with the ordinance, especially when major maintenance and construction projects are considered. The Complete Streets Checklist is used to collect data and information about the status of the street and surroundings, as well as the details of the project, with a goal of identifying specific improvements that can be incorporated into the project to balance the needs of all users.

Data and information compiled in the checklist include traffic volume, street classification and type, sidewalk conditions, crosswalks, transit facilities, and parking restrictions and recommendations from existing neighborhood and bicycle, pedestrian, transit and freight plans. Each project manager must fill out the checklist as part of the Project Definition stage of the design process in order to provide recommendations on Complete Streets elements to be incorporated into the project's scope. The Project Definition Steering Committee then makes decisions regarding project scope, based on the preliminary Complete Streets recommendations.

The checklist enables the City to evaluate its major projects through the lens of safe operation that promote mobility for all users. It helps SDOT ensure its projects are consistent with relevant City plans, make recommendations regarding potentially conflicting right-of-way priorities and explore opportunities for streetscape and placemaking enhancements.

*Image courtesy of Seattle DOT.*

**Hire two Assistant Mobile GR Directors: one to oversee Service Delivery and Operations and one to oversee Transportation Planning and Engineering.**

Mobile GR should add two Assistant Directors: one to oversee the Service Delivery and Operations business line (including off-street parking, curbside operations, and signal maintenance) and one to oversee Transportation Planning and Engineering. The Assistant Directors will play a critical role in building organizational alignment within Mobile GR and should lead the development of missions and performance metrics for their business lines and individual divisions. They will also bring in-depth technical knowledge to their service areas and can focus on developing and customizing processes for the key functions they oversee. The addition of two Assistant Directors will also increase the existing Mobile GR Director's capacity and ability to focus on high-value leadership priorities.



**Develop standard outreach and engagement processes for common project types and formalize roles and collaboration procedures between Mobile GR, the Office of Communications, and the Planning Department.**
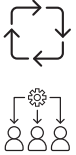
Involving the public and stakeholders in the transportation decision-making process is critical for Mobile GR and the City to achieve their transportation goals. Mobile GR, the Office of Communications, and the Planning Department should work together to develop standard outreach protocols for transportation projects, incorporating lessons learned from successful engagement efforts around the city.

The outreach protocols should be tailored to different types of projects and projects of different sizes, but, regardless of the type of project or size, all transportation projects should identify language needs, racial equity considerations, and strategies to engage people who may be unfamiliar with or wary of participating. The protocols should also standardize how public input is catalogued and analyzed and establish policies for reporting back to the public on how their input shaped the final decision. Lastly, standard outreach protocols should clarify different departments' communication roles and responsibilities throughout the project.

# Case Study

## SFMTA Engagement Program

**Public Outreach Notifcation Standards**
Public Outreach & Engagement Team Strategy
(POETS)
A Guide to Conducting Community Outreach for SFMTA Projects
JULY 2016

In order to strengthen community relationships, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) created a consistent approach to outreach and engagement for transportation projects. Taking its commitment one step further, it formalized the standards by introducing the Public Outreach and Engagement Team Strategy (POETS) and mandating their implementation during the project delivery process. POETS is applied across SFMTA projects to promote transparency and accountability in the agency's work.

The program operates based on three core elements: requirements for outreach and engagement that every project is expected to meet; resources and training to support staff members who are responsible for working with the public; and relationships with stakeholders to build trust in the community.

Each project with an impact on the public must have a public outreach and engagement plan that has to be implemented and documented according to POETS standards. By creating the POETS program, SFMTA standardized its public engagement practices, made them a requirement and enhanced the agency's relationship with residents.

*Image courtesy of SFMTA.*
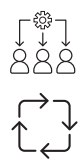
**Create dedicated community liaisons and a City Commission liaison. Develop and deliver information sessions to educate key stakeholder groups on various aspects of transportation in Grand Rapids.**

To handle many of the recurring requests that come from community members and build community relationships, Mobile GR should create dedicated community liaisons. These community liaisons would handle or triage community requests but would also proactively educate community groups and members on policies and programs. In addition to community liaisons, Mobile GR should consider dedicating a City Commission liaison to handle government affairs and address or filter requests from the Commission. Both roles would help technical staff focus on their priorities, but also could establish consistent relationships and better two-way communications.

Mobile GR should also develop standard information sessions and deliver them to key stakeholder groups, such as elected officials, other city departments, community groups, and existing or potential external partners. These sessions should educate participants about the City's vision for transportation, Mobile GR's mission, transportation responsibilities across city government, decision-making processes, and procedures for submitting and addressing common issues. These information sessions should be customized for different audiences. For example, a session with a community group might focus on how to submit issues to Mobile GR and existing application-based programs (e.g., neighborhood traffic calming) while a session with a potential private sector partner might focus on Mobile GR's mission and priorities and identifying areas of overlap. The community and City Commission liaisons could be responsible for delivering these information sessions.

# Case Study
## NYCDOT Academy



In its 2008 strategic plan, New York Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) described a new program it called DOT Academy. As part of its efforts to make DOT more transparent and responsive to its constituents, the agency designed seminars about its priorities, processes, and policies. The sessions also solicited input regarding ways to improve customer service. The audience for the Academy seminars were members of New York's 59 community boards as well as elected officials and their staffs.

The sessions covered the different tools NYC DOT uses to manage streets and sidewalks and were designed to build understanding and gain public buy-in. The Academy promoted mutual understanding and trust between the agency, community, and elected leaders; invited input from the audience on the tools the City uses; and encouraged the public to serve as experts on their local transportation-planning issues.

*Image courtesy of NYCDOT.*

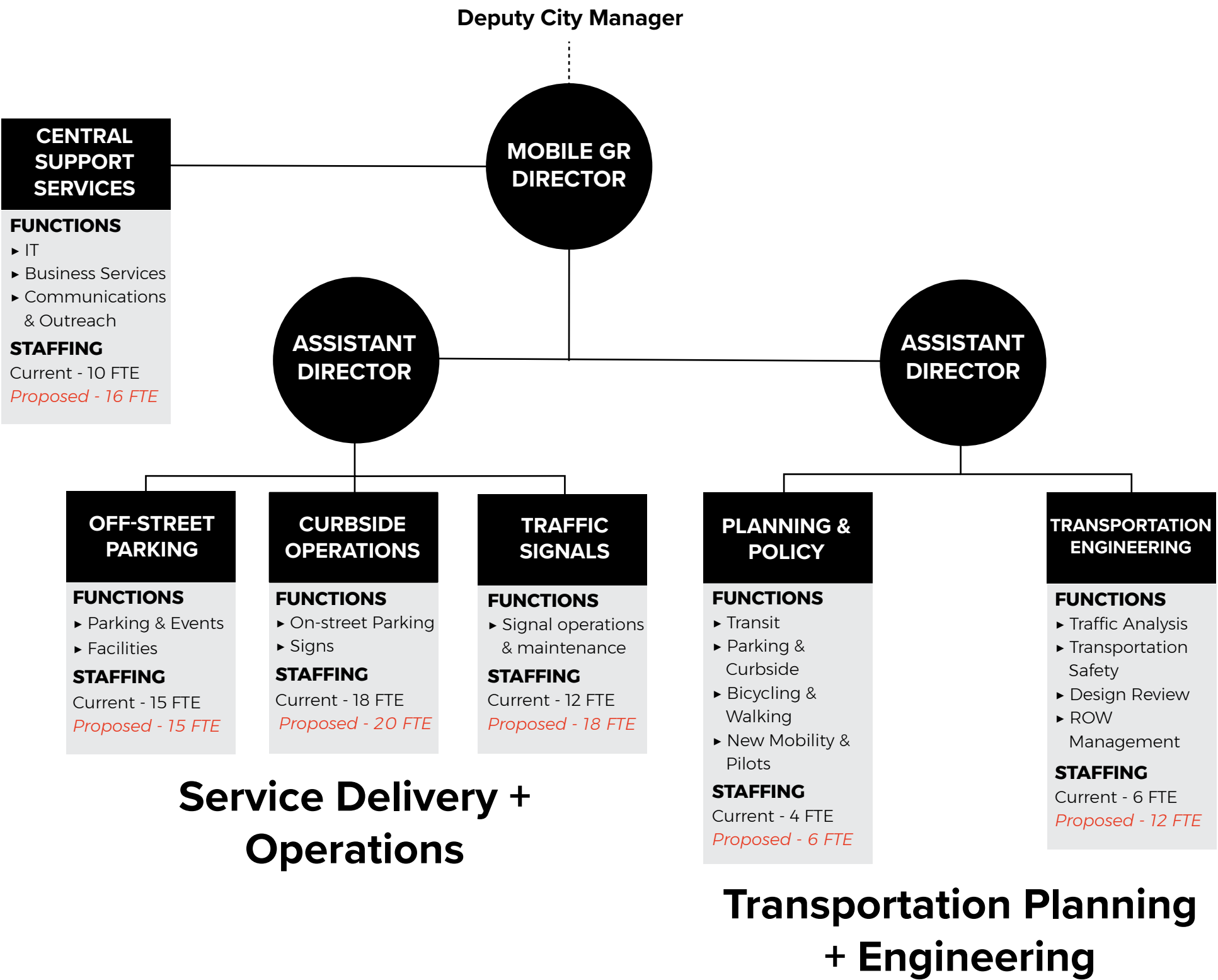# Changes to Mobile GR's Organizational Design

## Mid-Term Changes

- Adopt a functional organizational model with two main business lines: Service Delivery and Operations and Transportation Planning and Engineering.

  Many cities delivering successful transportation outcomes organize their departments using a functional model, which groups together employees who perform similar functions and bring similar knowledge and skills to bear.

  The functional model enables staff to develop in-depth expertise, allows for efficient balancing of resources and workloads, offers clear reporting structures, and makes it easy to standardize processes and deliver services consistently.

- Hire two Assistant Mobile GR Directors to oversee the department's two business lines.

- Centralize Mobile GR's support functions reporting to the Mobile GR Director. Move the department's communications and outreach staff into this group to better support the whole department.

- Create a Curbside Operations division—consisting of on-street parking operations, on-street parking enforcement, and

## Potential Long-Term Changes

- Consolidate ROW permitting in Mobile GR.

- Broaden on-street parking enforcement staff's role to include permit inspection and enforcement and increase staffing as necessary.

- Develop a multimodal design team within Mobile GR under the Transportation Planning and Engineering business line.

- Hire specific customer service staff so that business services staff can focus solely on their financial and accounting responsibilities.

- Establish government affairs/community liaison roles under Central Support Services whose role is to handle recurring requests and build consistent relationships.

- Establish a performance management role under Central Support Services to track key performance metrics and overall organizational performance.

- Establish a dedicated Vision Zero team within the Transportation Engineering

Mid-Term Organizational Structure

**Deputy City Manager**

**MOBILE GR DIRECTOR**

**CENTRAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ IT
▸ Business Services
▸ Communications & Outreach

**STAFFING**
Current - 10 FTE
*Proposed - 16 FTE*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**OFF-STREET PARKING**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Parking & Events
▸ Facilities

**STAFFING**
Current - 15 FTE
*Proposed - 15 FTE*

**CURBSIDE OPERATIONS**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ On-street Parking
▸ Signs

**STAFFING**
Current - 18 FTE
*Proposed - 20 FTE*

**TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Signal operations & maintenance

**STAFFING**
Current - 12 FTE
*Proposed - 18 FTE*

**PLANNING & POLICY**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Transit
▸ Parking & Curbside
▸ Bicycling & Walking
▸ New Mobility & Pilots

**STAFFING**
Current - 4 FTE
*Proposed - 6 FTE*

**TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Traffic Analysis
▸ Transportation Safety
▸ Design Review
▸ ROW Management

**STAFFING**
Current - 6 FTE
*Proposed - 12 FTE*

**Service Delivery + Operations**

**Transportation Planning + Engineering**

Long-Term Organizational Structure

**DEPUTY CITY MANAGER**

**MOBILE GR DIRECTOR**

**CENTRAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ IT
▸ Business Services
▸ Communications & Outreach
▸ *Customer Service*
▸ *Performance management*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**OFF-STREET PARKING**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Parking & Events
▸ Facilities

**CURBSIDE OPERATIONS**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ On-street Parking
▸ Signs
▸ *Permit Enforcement*

**TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Signal operations & maintenance

**ROW PERMITTING**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ *Permit Review*

**PLANNING & POLICY**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Transit
▸ Parking & Curbside
▸ Bicycling & Walking
▸ New Mobility & Pilots

**TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ Traffic Analysis
▸ Transportation Safety/*Vision Zero*
▸ ROW Management

**MULTIMODAL DESIGN**

**FUNCTIONS**
▸ *Project Scoping*
▸ *Design Review*
▸ *Preliminary Design*

## Service Delivery + Operations

## Transportation Planning + Engineering

38                                                                                                          39

# 4

# Full List of Issues & Opportunities

## Organizational Alignment

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Mobile GR lacks a clear, compelling mission that unifies the entire department | Use the EEDMP and City Strategic Plan to clearly define Mobile GR's mission and memorialize it in a formal document for the benefit of internal staff, partner agencies, elected officials, and the public | Short |
| Mobile GR doesn't feel like one department and divisions that have been added over time still feel siloed | Hire two Assistant Mobile GR Directors | Short |
| | Develop mission statements and core functions for each organizational unit within Mobile GR | Short |
| | Investigate opportunities to consolidate the majority of Mobile GR staff in one office location | Short |
| | Unify Mobile GR's online presence (e.g., move all traffic safety content onto Mobile GR's webpage) | Short |
| | Use consistent, department-wide branding and develop standard langauge and communications around the department's mission, recurring issues, etc. | Medium |
| | Evaluate the name Mobile GR and Parking Services to ensure the department's name reflects the mission and encompasses all services. | Medium |
| Mobile GR does not have key performance metrics at department, division, and individual level | Develop performance metrics for the department, organizational units, divisions, and individual roles. Use performance metrics to understand how the department and its component parts are doing and communicate results to elected officials and the community. | Short |

## Roles and Responsibilties

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Roles across the department have unclear responsibilities, too broad a range of responsibilities or have not been updated to reflect changes in the transportation landscape. | Review and update job descriptions (including performance metrics). Establish a regular schedule for reviewing role descriptions to ensure they are up-to-date | Short |
| | Use office titles, in addition to civil service titles, that describe staff's roles and what they do (e.g., transit planner) | Short |
| There is a lack of formal mechanisms to institutionalize and standardize collaboration on bike and pedestrian planning (Outside of Design Team) | Create a cross-functional working group to coordinate bicycle and pedestrian improvements, develop a database of citywide needs, prioritize those needs, identify and coordinate funding, and develop a pipeline of future bicycle and pedestrian projects | Short |
| City relies on outside consultants for nearly all street design work due to lack of training and capacity internally | Grow multimodal design capabilties to improve project scoping and do more preliminary design for projects in-house | Medium |
| | Create a multimodal design group within Mobile GR to handle project scoping, design review, and project design | Long |
| Responsibilities for ROW permitting not always clear. There is almost zero capacity to conduct inspections and enforce permit requirements | Consolidate ROW permitting in Mobile GR. Broaden on-street parking enforcement staff's role to include permit inspection and enforcement. Increase staffing as necessary. | Long |
| There is no coordinated, citywide TDM strategy. | Contract with an organization to develop a transportation demand management (TDM) program and lead outreach to employers and potential partners. | Short |
| | Hire a full-time TDM coordinator to develop the program and lead outreach to partners and employers. | Long |
| | Scale the TDM program as necessary | Long |
| Technical staff receive too many unfiltered requests directy from elected officials and community members | Establish a cross-departmental working group to identify potential improvements to the existing 311 system and how issues are either addressed or passed on to technical staff | Medium |

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Technical staff receive too many unfiltered requests directy from elected officials and community members | Dedicate community/elected official liasions to serve as bridge to the City Commission and the public. | Long |
| Many roles across the department have changed and staff indicated the need for consistent training on new technologies and changes (e.g. regular training on pay station equipment) | As part of the process of creating updated role descriptions, identify gaps between staff's current skills and new role descriptions. Provide necessary training to close these gaps. Incorporate the identification of training needs into the regular review of role descriptions. | Short/ Ongoing |

# Case Study
## Denver Job Descriptions
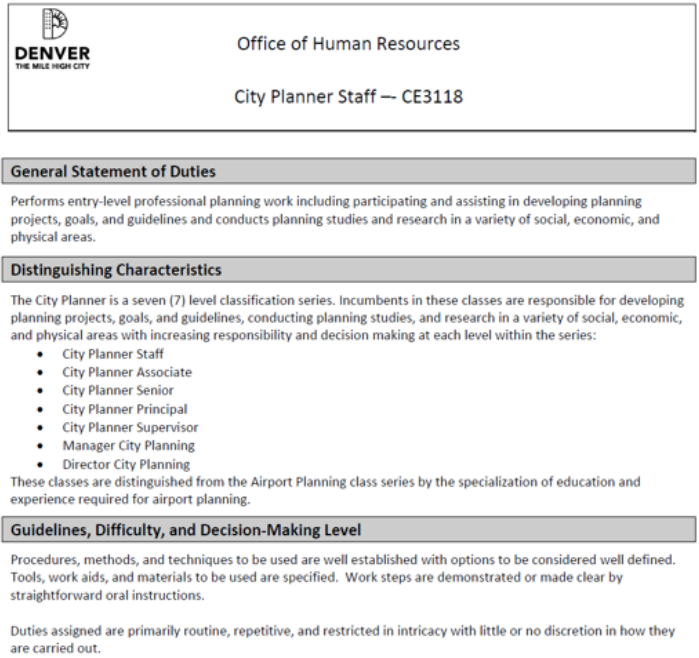


The City of Denver created the Career Service Rules (CS Rules) to govern city employment terms and to define job titles, descriptions and pay ranges for all city employees.

As part of the CS Rules, the Office of Human Resources issues occupational group definitions dividing City jobs into different categories. It also produces position specification documents.

For each position, the job specification document describes the employee's role within the context of the unit in which they are stationed. It includes a general statement of duties; distinguishing characteristics; guidelines, difficulty, and decision-making level; level of supervision received and quality review; interpersonal communication and purpose; level of supervision exercised; essential duties; expected competencies; required knowledge and skills; education requirement; experience requirement; education and experience equivalency; required licensure and certification; working environment; level of physical demand; description of physical demands; background check requirement; probation period; and the position class details.

Job specifications are reviewed periodically for adjustments in titles and definitions, and the date of the last update is recorded in the document. In addition to providing information for potential candidates, that level of transparency helps current employees understand their role within the organization and its link to the unit's mission. It also benchmarks career progress and enables employees to understand the requirements for workplace development.

*Image courtesy of Denver Office of Human Resources.*

## Processes and Systems

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| The flow of information between leadership and staff needs to be improved in both directions. | Translate Mobile GR's mission into key messages for leadership to emphasize with staff. Customize and tailor recurring messages to different levels of the organization and functions | Short |
| | Major decisions need to be communicated to the entire organization (using a mix of communications channels). Include a cross-section of staff in the decision-making process and/or solicit feedback from staff at different levels and in different functions | Short |
| | Create pathways for all levels of staff to provide input to leadership (both on one-time issues and on an ongoing basis). Pathways should include a mix of virtual and in-person solutions (e.g., a Slack channel for process improvements as well as in-person listening sessions). | Medium |
| | Use quarterly staff meetings to reiterate key messages, gather input/communicate upcoming major decisions or changes, and provide opportunities for staff to share issues and bring forward new ideas or process improvements | Medium |
| | Train staff on how to leverage communication tools (e.g., Slack) to improve coordination across groups | Short |
| | Set up frameworks for soliciting and sorting innovative ideas and process improvements | Medium |
| | Conduct an annual employee engagement survey | Medium |

## Processes and Systems (cont.)

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Mobile GR lacks a standardized process for customer issue intake and tracking | Implement a unified system for customer issue intake and tracking—both to improve customer experience and ensure issues are resolved in a timely manner. Use data from the new system to demonstrate the volume of customer issues the department handles. | Short |
| | Clarify when and how existing systems should be used for customer issue intake and tracking. Ensure data from both systems is compiled, analyzed, and stored. | Medium |
| Employee performance management is opaque | Update performance management procedures and criteria to align with Mobile GR's mission and key performance metrics | Short |
| Career path and growth opportunities for staff are limited and/or unclear, leading to high turnover and inconsistent service delivery | Work with HR and Administrative Services to develop career paths for common roles in the department and promotional criteria | Medium |
| | Launch a succession planning process to identify and mentor future leaders | Medium |
| Some of the department's IT systems have not been integrated as new groups have been added to Mobile GR (different payroll systems in Traffic Safety vs. Parking and Transportation, some groups use work order management software others use time keeping software-- neither of which integrate with payroll) | Identify a consolidated suite of software tools. Launch software suite and provide detailed training to staff. | Short |
| | Work with City Manager to establish city-wide timekeeping software and process | Long |
| | Consider an on-call contract for IT training (due to lack of internal IT staff capacity) | Medium |
| There is no standardized project management process in Mobile GR | Select project management software and provide in-depth training to all users. Utilize software to conduct short- and long-term staffing and resource planning. | Short |
| | Establish project management protocols for different project sizes/types (e.g., project, program, recurring task, continuous evaluation) | Medium |
| | Develop a scorecard to evaluate potential pilot projects against department's priorities and assess staff and budget needs | Medium |

## Processes and Systems (cont.)

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| There are no documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) which negatively impacts consistency and makes onboarding challenging | Develop an initial list of key processes that need to be documented and create SOP guides | Medium |
| | Develop an onboarding process that orients new staff to Mobile GR's mission, how their role fits into the mission, key performance metrics, SOPs, and technology platforms | Medium |
| The Design Team process functions well but can be revamped to improve multi-modal outcomes | Mobile GR needs to be involved in scoping Vital Streets projects (either bringing those projects to Design Team earlier or outside of Design Team). Consider a quarterly Design Team meeting focused on project scoping for upcoming projects | Short |
| | Mobile GR needs to be involved in scoping Vital Streets projects (either bringing those projects to Design Team earlier or outside of Design Team). Consider a quarterly Design Team meeting focused on project scoping for upcoming projects | Short |
| | Clearly define which projects go through Design Team with the goal of expediting routine projects | Short |
| Lack of coordination with Public Works and Engineering on street maintenance overlay projects impedes Mobile GR's ability plan and prioritize changes to striping and markings | Revamp and codify the coordination process around street overlays so that Mobile GR can maximize these opportunities. Ensure Mobile GR staff receive appropriate lead time on overlay projects. | Short |

# Case Study

## Toronto Customer Service Training
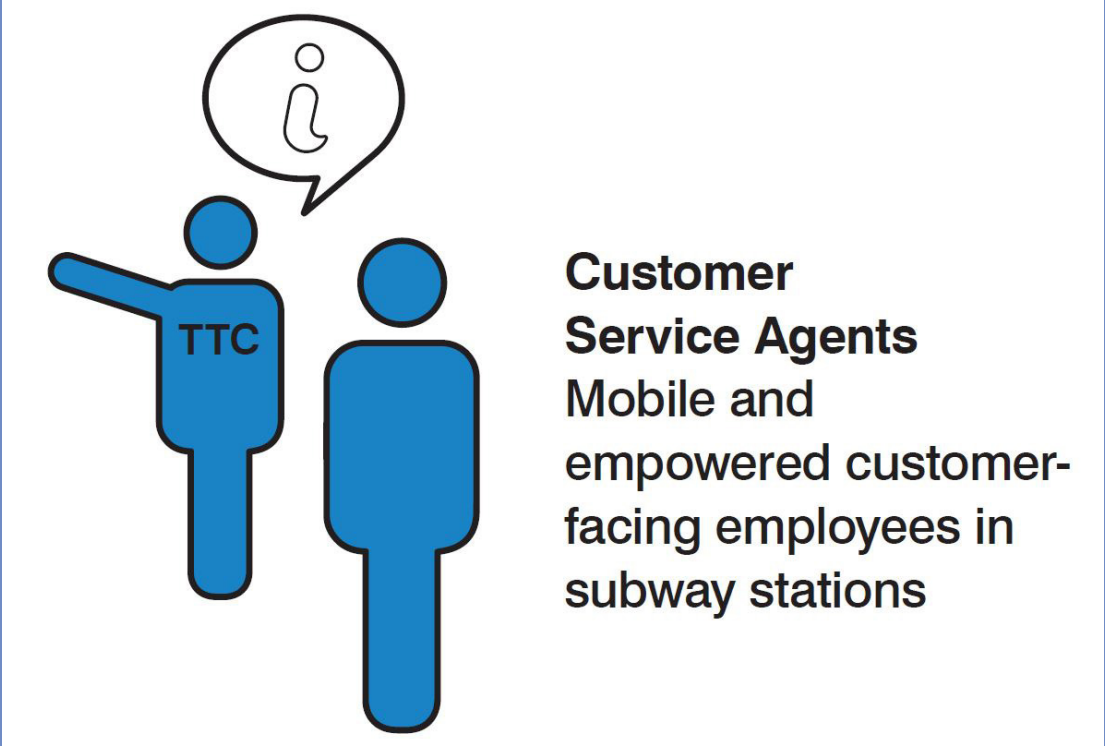


The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) oversees Toronto's bus, subway, streetcar, and paratransit services. In its 2018 Corporate Plan, TTC announced a shift in its collection-booth agents' role that would be accompanied by extensive training. The shift is aligned with one of agency's strategic goals: make transit seamless. In their new role and with the title of Customer Service Agents (CSA), agency staff no longer occupy collection booths and strictly collect fares. Rather, they walk around stations, greet passengers and help those in need of information or assistance with overcoming physical disability in the system. In addition, the agents inspect stations and engage in some cleaning and maintenance work. As part of the transition, TTC created a multi-day customer service training during which its public-facing staff learns how to inclusively help customers with diverse needs. The sessions also include accessibility training on the means to make transit a seamless experience for all. The new module complements an already running customer service training provided to TTC's frontline staff.

For TTC, a seamless transit experience includes being greeted by friendly agents and receiving assistance whenever physical or cultural barriers present themselves. By integrating the CSA training into the management plan and folding it into the seamless transit goal, TTC exemplifies how customer service duties and training can both support and feed off an agency's overall strategy.

*Image courtesy of Toronto Transit Commission.*

## Funding and Staffing

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Restrictions on how Mobile GR can use parking revenues limit funding options | Push for changes to legislation that limits uses of parking revenue | Long |
| Mobile GR is almost entirely dependent on two sources of funds with uncertain futures (Parking Fund and Act 51) | Make identifying, pursuing, and winning grant funding a departmental priority | Short |
| | Pursue public-private partnerships and alternative funding sources (e.g., advertising and licensing with DASH/bike share) | Medium |
| Mobile GR receives almost no general fund dollars (even though they contribute to the general fund through ticket revenue) | Illustrate need for additional operating funding (quantify needs to fulfill goals in City Strategic Plan and EEDMP) | Medium |
| Outside of Vital Streets (which is geared towards pavement condition), there is almost no capital funding for transportation projects | Develop a long-term funding source(s) for multimodal projects and maintenance needs | Long |
| Mobile GR staff spend time reviewing permits but don't charge for their time and receive no revenue from permit fees | Review permit fees and ensure Mobile GR receives part of fee revenue to cover staff time spent on permit review or charges for time | Short |
| Mobile GR provides subsidized service to several city departments (e.g., subsidize special events staff) | Begin charging full rates internally for the department's services | Medium |
| Traffic signals group manages signals for the City, MDOT, and Kent County but does not recover full cost from outside partners | Evaluate and renegotiate rates with MDOT and Kent County for signal management | Short |
| | Educate elected officials and the public on the importance of signals for CAV issues and other future technologies | Medium |
| | Quantify maintenance backlog and necessary upgrades for capital requests | Medium |

## Funding and Staffing (cont.)

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Neighborhood traffic calming program receives minimal funding ($25,000/year). Cost of staff time and overhead outweighs the funds available for projects | Increase city funding for neighborhood traffic calming to levels found in peer cities | Medium |
| Current staffing levels are insufficient for existing portfolio of work plus new initiatives and responsibilities | Use City Strategic Plan and EEDMP to make case for new staff (estimate staff needs for key goals/projects) | Short/ Ongoing |
| Mobile GR director has insufficient capacity to provide leadership and high-level management (versus day-to-day involvement in fielding requests and managing initiatives) | Hire two Assistant Mobile GR Directors | Short |
| | Foster a management structure wherein the Director provides high-level leadership, management and accountability but delegates day-to-day issues to Assistant Directors | Short |
| The widespread use of temporary/contract staff inhibits productivity (due to frequent turnover and labor requirements) and lowers morale across the department | Identify roles that can be efficiently filled by temporary/contract staff. Outside of these roles, move towards full-time staff or evaluate alternative strategies to get more consistent staffing in place (e.g., consulting contracts that embed staff within the department). | Medium |
| Compensation is an issue in attracting/keeping talent and doesn't always align with roles' changing responsibilities | Link updated role descriptions to appropriate salary ranges (based on most recent compensation study). Establish a regular schedule for reviewing compensation and benefits | Medium |
| | Increase flexibility to reward high performers | Long |

## External Communications and Partnerships

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Outside partners don't always know who to go to with transportation issues (both within Mobile GR they don't know the right person and then may not know if Mobile GR is the right department vs. Engineering or Public Works) | Use the City Strategic Plan and EEDMP to reset collaboration processes with partners oriented around strategic priorities | Short |
| | Develop a citywide transportation responsibilities matrix in partnership with the other lead departments and provide information sessions to elected officials, community groups, and other key partners | Short |
| | For key external partners (e.g., The Rapid, DGRI, etc.) ensure there are consistent points of contact and relationship owners | Short |
| Standards and decision-making processes are not clearly communicated internally or to outside partners (e.g., art in public rights of way, stop to pedestrian signs, etc.) | Clarify and document internal decision-making process to ensure accountability and consistency | Short |
| | Include information on Mobile GR's priorities, processes for common requests/ issues, and decision-making in information sessions | Short |
| | For emerging/hot-button issues, organize briefings for elected officials, community groups, and partner organizations | Short |
| There is significant overlap in communications/messaging among Mobile GR, Planning, and Office of Communications | Clarify and document each group's main transportation communications responsibilities and resume regular meetings for coordination | Short |
| | Develop standard outreach protocols for different project types/sizes to ensure consistency and strengthen community relationships | Long |
| | Ensure all divisions in Mobile GR have the same level of communications/outreach support | Short |
| | For transportation issues that span multiple departments, develop joint messaging and communication strategies to ensure consistency and avoid contradictions | Medium |

## External Communications and Partnerships (cont.)

| Issue | Recommendation | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| Community input and re-quests that Mobile GR receives and responds to tend to come from the most well-off areas. | Tailor information sessions (described above) to educate residents/community groups and empower them to use available programs and systems | Short |
| | Work with other customer-facing departments to establish neighborhood service centers | Long |
| Mobile GR is a customer-facing department but isn't doing everything to maximize interactions with public | Revamp public-facing communications around Mobile GR's mission and goals | Short |
| | Train front-line staff on key messages and customer service | Short/Ongoing |
| | Hire specific customer service agents to focus on issue intake, triage, and resolution (and free up business services staff to focus on core functions) | Long |



# Case Study
## Rochester Neighborhood Service Centers
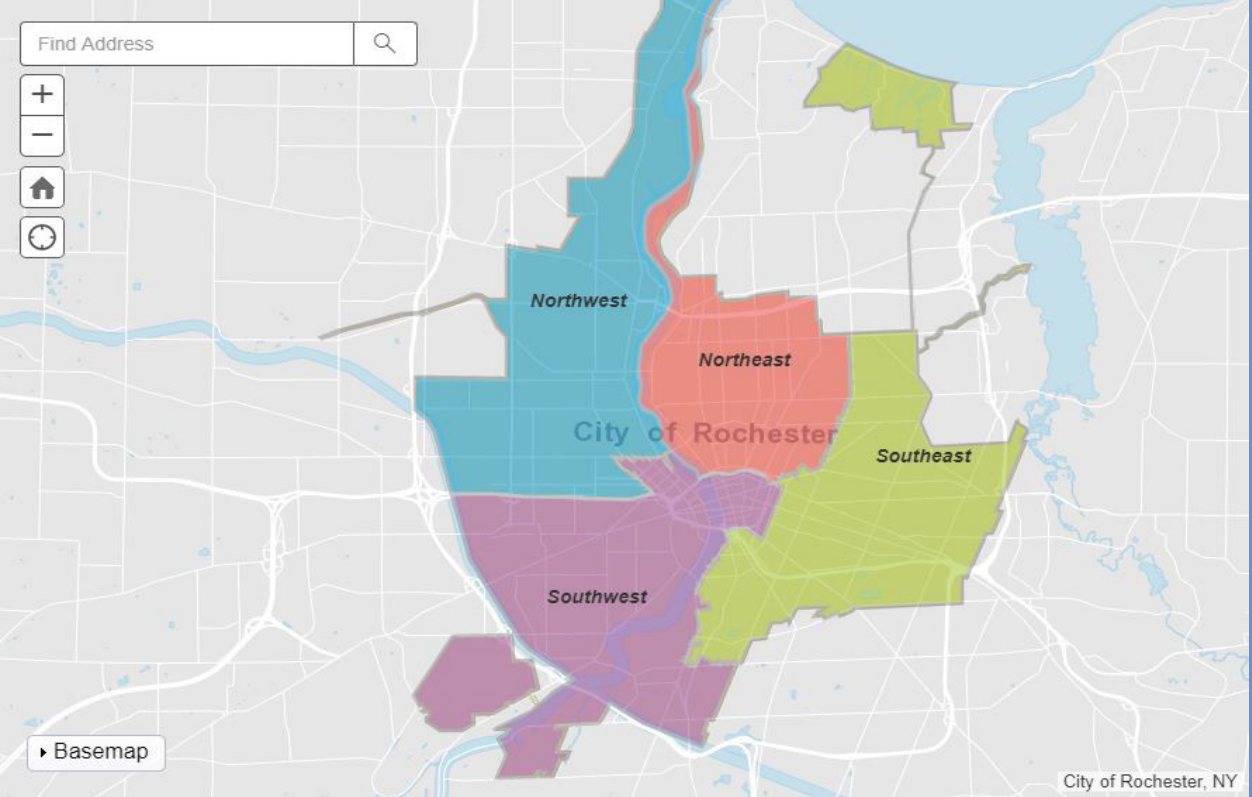


In 2008, the City of Rochester established the Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) to provide neighborhood-centric city services to the local communities and to liaise between the City and its residents. The NSCs' mission is to improve blighted properties, revitalize commercial strips and enhance the safety and vitality of the city. They are based on the notion that the best way of responding to neighborhood issues is by teaming residents with City staff. The NSCs replaced the Neighborhood Empowerment Teams (NET), a predecessor that was criticized for inefficiencies. Each of the four Rochester quadrants (Northwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast) has an NSC, as part of the Department of Neighborhood and Business Development (NBD).

Comprised mainly from NBD staff, each NSC has a cross-functional team of professionals from different City departments: NBD, Department of Recreation and Youth Services and the Department of Environmental Services and the Rochester Police Department. An extended, larger core team addresses issues requiring additional expertise.

Each quadrant's team meets quarterly and engages regularly with representatives from the neighborhoods composing the quadrants. In addition, The NSC Director meets monthly with neighborhood association and business association presidents to discuss any concerns affecting the quality of life of the residents.

*Image courtesy of the City of Rochester.*