

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS on June 2008 Draft “Themes & Policies”

THEME THREE

Develop a Comprehensive, Integrated Transportation Strategy

Big Picture:

This theme falls short in adequately linking transportation and wildlife issues. While the “statement of ideal” mentions the need for “safe, unimpeded movement of wildlife”, the remainder of the language lacks adequate discussion and recognition of key issues (particularly as they relate to the two top community priorities – stewardship of wildlife and responsible growth). In general, this theme needs to directly address the linkages between transportation and wildlife population viability, particularly in terms of connectivity and fragmentation. It needs to address fundamental questions, such as: How do major transportation routes (and potential expansions) affect wildlife movements throughout the valley? This current draft doesn’t provide strong policies that work to address these critical and very real challenges.

Also, as we move forward, it is critical to adopt policies that are tied to current conditions in Teton County. In a nutshell, recognition of the real consequences of the current “exceeding of traffic capacity” is critical. The “themes and policies” states: “The traffic generated by present populations of residents and visitors is exceeding the capacity of existing roads and intersections. Future traffic volumes anticipated from continuing auto- dominated travel behavior and dispersed development patterns will far exceed the available road capacity.” These facts alone should strongly influence land-use decisions in Jackson Hole in the years to come.

This theme should specifically address the role of controlling the overall rate of growth (in terms of managing traffic demands and infrastructure capacity). Road (or multimodal) costs and funding sources need to be more adequately considered.

This theme should address scenic character and wildlife issues in an objective way. Road widening will have significant impacts on scenery and the highly valued attribute of Jackson Hole as a small mountain town that provides a high quality of life and visitor experience. Our community should not concentrate and facilitate excessive increases in development potential if it further increases the chances of road widening, given the known impacts that wide road crossings can have on certain wildlife species. Importantly, our community did not voice support for additional road creation and expansion.

Key Issues:

- In order to reduce anticipated transportation demand, this theme should more strongly emphasize policies that limit overall development potential. Limiting overall development potential is a feasible, cost-effective and proactive policy alternative that should be applied.
- Traffic modeling report uses different numbers/data than presented in other reports and statements. Numbers should be consistent across all reports, or variations should be explained.
- Mitigation polices to limit trip generation are positive. That said, it is critical to remember that the degree of vehicle trip reduction (overall) will largely depend on the degree of development intensification that is permitted.
- In terms of incorporating street improvements, fiscal obligations must be balanced with other community priorities.
- Seasonal differences for the use of non-motorized alternative transportation should be recognized.
- Wildlife issues are insufficiently addressed. Transportation infrastructure strongly impacts wildlife. This should be at the center of all transportation policies (not just policy 3.4e).
- Congested roadways (including widening, increases in traffic lights, etc.) will impact the rural character of Jackson, affecting both quality of life and visitor experience.
- Stronger language (in term of pathway design) is essential. Pathways should be configured to maximize the benefits of open space for both wildlife and people in new developments.
- Prioritization should be given to pathways that have greater potential as essential alternative transportation routes than those primarily for recreation. It is critical to examine factors that distinguish alternative transportation-based pathways from recreation-based pathways.