



MEMO

To:	Department Directors and Division Heads
From:	Michael J. Wright, City Administrator
Subject:	City Transportation Language Policy
Date:	November 14, 1996

Please be advised that the City of West Palm Beach has adopted a new transportation language policy. Employees are asked to follow the policy and encourage those who deal with the City to do the same. The intent of the policy is to remove the biases inherent in some of the current transportation language used at the City. This change is consistent with the shift in philosophy as the City works towards becoming a sustainable community. Objective language will be used for all correspondences, resolutions, ordinances, plans, language at meetings, etc. and when updating past work.

Everyone's cooperation will be greatly appreciated. Please ensure that your employees are aware of, and use, the objective language. After a few of weeks of practice, using the objective language will become second nature.

Background: Much of the current transportation language was developed in the 1950's and 1960's. This was the golden age of automobiles and accommodating them was a major priority in society. Times have changed, especially in urban areas where creating a balanced, equitable, and sustainable transportation system is the new priority. The transportation language has not evolved at the same pace as the changing priorities; much of it still carries a pro-automobile bias. Continued use of biased language is not in keeping with the goal of addressing transportation issues in an objective way in the City.

Languages Changes: There are several biased words and phrases that have been identified and summarized at the end of this memo. Suggested objective language is also summarized. The rationale for the changes is explained below. In summary, the City has to be unbiased, and appear to be unbiased. Objective language will also allow the City to be inclusive of all of the City's constituents and modes of transportation.

The word *improvements* is often used when referring to the addition of through lanes, turn lanes, channelization, or other means of increasing motor vehicle capacity and/or speeds. Though these changes may indeed be *improvements* from the perspective of motor vehicle users, they would not be considered *improvements* by other constituents of the City. For example, a resident may not think that adding more lanes in front of the resident's house is an *improvement*. A parent may not think that a channelized right turn lane is an *improvement* on their child's pedestrian route to school. By City staff referring to these changes as *improvements*, it indicates that the City is biased in favor of one group at the expense of others. Suggested objective language includes being descriptive (e.g. use through lanes, turn lanes, etc.) or using language such as modifications or changes.

Department Directors and Division Heads

enhance, deteriorate
upgrade
level of service
traffic
traffic demand
accident
protect
efficient

change, increase, decrease
change, redesignate, expand, widen, replace
level of service for
motor vehicles
motor vehicle use
collision, crash
purchase, designate
fast

doc i.d.: f:\janl\language.ply