

COMMUTE SEATTLE POLICY BRIEF: HOUSING'S IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION



Photo credit: PSRC

Background

In 2024 Seattle's leaders will make significant decisions that will shape the future of this rapidly growing region for lifetimes to come. Local jurisdictions across Washington State will adopt major updates to their Comprehensive Plans, the long-term plans that guide future growth. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is also preparing to finalize the Seattle Transportation Plan, a 20-year vision for transportation investments. Informed by the STP, the City will also adopt a funding package to replace the Levy to Move Seattle, which expires at the end of 2024.

A central focus of our transportation policy is reducing car dependence. SDOT's Climate Change Response Framework includes an ambitious goal of reducing the share of trips taken by gas-powered cars from 65% in 2019 to 35% in 2030. Achieving this goal will require leaders to approach every decision on transportation with a focus on making walking, biking, and transit the easiest ways to get around.

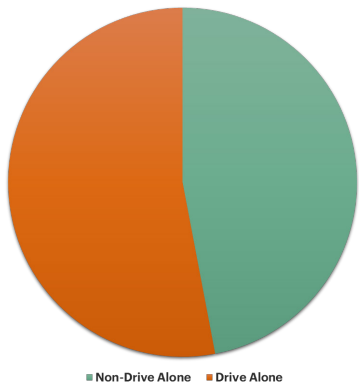
Housing Policy is Transportation Policy

Our 2022 Seattle Commute Survey found that the home you live in says a lot about how you get around. People who live in single-family homes are far more likely to drive-alone, while those in apartments and multifamily housing are more likely to walk, bike, and take transit. Where that home is matters a lot too: Seattle residents live closer to jobs, amenities, and their neighbors than people who live outside the city, and they're less likely to drive to those places. **As we seek to reduce cars on the road, new multifamily housing in Seattle has less impact on our transportation system than single-family homes or new housing outside the city.**

Different Commutes From Different Homes

Our 2022 Seattle Commute Survey asked 64,000 people who work in Seattle about how they get around the city. We found that the denser form of housing you live in, and the closer you are to the urban center, the less likely you are to drive. Seattle residents are less likely to drive to work than people who work in Seattle but live outside the city. Among those who work in person, 36% of Seattle residents drive-alone to work, compared to 57% of people living outside the city. This difference in in-person commutes can be seen by housing type too. 53% of single-family home residents drive to work, compared to 42% of townhome residents, and 32% of apartment or condo residents.

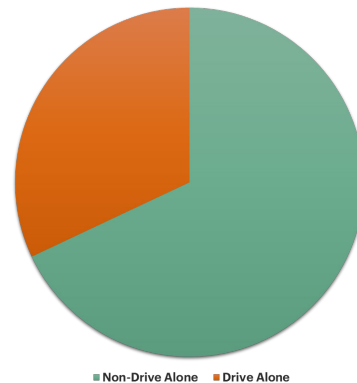
Single-Family Residents Commute Trips



Townhome Residents Commute Trips



Apartment/Condo Residents Commute Trips



Beyond the Commute

Most trips we take aren't commute trips however, and our data shows that these patterns extend to healthcare trips, grocery runs, school pick-up and drop-off, and leisure or social outings:

- **Healthcare:** 38% of apartment residents drive alone vs. 89% of single-family home residents
- **Groceries:** 40% of apartment residents drive alone vs. 88% of single-family home residents
- **School Trips:** 37% of apartment residents drive alone vs. 79% of single-family home residents
- **Leisure Trips:** 27% of apartment residents drive alone vs. 69% of single-family home residents

Drive-Alone Rates For Non-Commute Trips



The bottom line: dense, multifamily housing close to the urban core leads to transportation habits that reduce traffic and climate impacts, and help us reach our transportation goals.

Contact Commute Seattle to learn more!

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