



ALACHUA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT STAFF REPORT

Application Number: Z24-000005

Staff Contact: Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, (352) 374-5249

SUBJECT: County-initiated text amendment to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Capital Improvements Element to revise Policy 1.2.5(a) by clarifying Level of Service guidelines for fire service response.

APPLICANT/AGENT: Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

CHRONOLOGY: Local Planning Agency Hearing: 8/21/2024 and 9/18/2024
County Commission Transmittal Hearing: 10/22/2024
County Commission Adoption Hearing: 1/14/2025

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Adopt ordinance to approve Comprehensive Plan Amendment Z24-000005

LPA RECOMMENDATION: Approve transmittal for state agency review and comment.

BoCC ACTION (transmittal): Approve transmittal for state agency review and comment.

BoCC ACTION (adoption):

Staff Report Exhibits: [Exhibit 1 – Proposed text amendments to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan](#)

INTRODUCTION

Application Z24-000005 is a proposed amendment to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Capital Improvements Element to revise Policy 1.2.5(a) by clarifying Level of Service (LOS) guidelines for County fire services. The proposed Comprehensive Plan text amendment is shown in strike-through and underline format in [Exhibit 1 of this report](#).

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, Policy 1.2.5(a) of the Capital Improvements Element identifies Level of Service (LOS) guidelines for fire service response. The currently adopted policy calls for initial unit response within 6 minutes for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12-month period for areas located inside the Urban Cluster; for the rural area, that time is 12 minutes.

The fire Level of Service guidelines are used as a capital improvement planning tool to identify capital project needs, such as new fire stations, to be considered for inclusion in the County's Capital Improvements Program. The guidelines enable the County to determine when and where new fire facilities are needed as growth and development occur. The fire LOS guidelines are not a traditional concurrency standard, in that development proposals could not potentially be denied based solely on a failure to meet the guidelines.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* (2020) identifies specific performance objectives for emergency unit responses. Those performance objectives are broken down into three main areas: alarm handling time, turnout time, and travel time.

The currently adopted language in Policy 1.2.5(a) does not distinguish between the different response time objectives that are identified in NFPA Standard 1710. In practice, Alachua County has used travel time for the purpose of implementing this policy. Travel time is the time interval that begins when a unit is in route to the emergency incident and ends when the unit arrives at the scene. Alarm handling and turnout time both occur prior to the beginning of travel time. Travel time is the most effective measure for capital improvements planning purposes because it relates most directly to fire station locations in relation to population, while the other measures relate more to communication processes and other operational considerations.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment would clarify that the response times listed in Policy 1.2.5(a) are referring to travel time and not to the other time-related performance measures for emergency unit response. This amendment will ensure that the Comprehensive Plan aligns with the NFPA standard as well as the County's practice for tracking this measure.

PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT TEXT CHANGES

Underlined text is proposed to be added

~~Struck through text~~ is proposed for deletion

Regular Text is adopted policy language

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT

Policy 1.2.5 Alachua County shall adopt Level of Service (LOS) guidelines for Category "C" public facilities, ~~and include those facilities in the CIP.~~ These LOS guidelines are to be used for analysis and identification of Capital Improvement Project needs for these facilities to be considered for inclusion ~~included~~ in the Capital Improvements Program. The LOS guidelines for Category "C" public facilities are the following:

- (a) Fire LOS guidelines are as follows:
 - (1) In the Urban Cluster, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 6 minutes travel time for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Land development regulations shall require that 100% of development shall provide water supply served by hydrants.
 - (2) In the rural area, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 12 minutes travel time for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Fire suppression/protection service level for all properties in the Rural Area shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection of <10. Development will provide adequate water supply for fire suppression and protection, and fire service compliant fire connections, required through land development regulations.
 - (3) The County shall periodically update the Alachua County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Master Plan, including an evaluation of capital and related operational needs to meet the Fire LOS guidelines identified in this policy and consideration of service delivery benchmarks for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Updates of the Master Plan shall include identification of funding sources that could be established as part of a financially feasible plan to meet these LOS guidelines. The Fire and Emergency Medical Services Master Plan shall serve as a basis for consideration of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to establish level of service standards for Fire Rescue services and Emergency Medical Services as part of the County's concurrency management requirements.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment is internally consistent with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan as adopted, and specifically the following provisions.

Capital Improvements Element

GOAL

Provide and maintain, in a timely and efficient manner, adequate public facilities for both existing and future populations, consistent with available financial resources.

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The proposed amendment to Policy 1.2.5(a) of the Capital Improvements Element would help to provide and maintain adequate fire facilities for existing and future populations by clarifying the level of service guidelines to align with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and terminology.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Alachua County shall define types of public facilities and establish the standards or guidelines for level of service (LOS) by facility type to be used in developing and updating the five year capital improvement program and the 2040 Multi-Modal Transportation Capital Improvement Program to implement this element.

The proposed amendment to Policy 1.2.5(a) of the Capital Improvements Element clarifies adopted level of service guidelines for fire facilities to align with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and terminology. This will help to ensure that the County's capital improvements planning for fire facilities is based on nationally recognized standards for fire protection.

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment is not expected to have an effect on the provision of affordable housing in Alachua County. This amendment revises an adopted policy to clarify how fire level of service guidelines are measured; this clarification would have no relationship to the cost of housing.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the ordinance to approve Comprehensive Plan amendment Z24-000005 based on the following:

The proposed amendment is internally consistent with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, and specifically with the following provisions:

GOAL (Capital Improvements Element)

Provide and maintain, in a timely and efficient manner, adequate public facilities for both existing and future populations, consistent with available financial resources.

OBJECTIVE 1.2 (Capital Improvements Element)

Alachua County shall define types of public facilities and establish the standards or guidelines for level of service (LOS) by facility type to be used in developing and updating the five year capital improvement program and the 2040 Multi-Modal Transportation Capital Improvement Program to implement this element.

The proposed amendment to Policy 1.2.5(a) of the Capital Improvements Element would help to provide and maintain adequate fire facilities for existing and future populations by clarifying the level of service guidelines to align with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and terminology. It will help to ensure that the County's capital improvements planning for fire facilities is based on nationally recognized standards for fire protection.

Exhibit 1 – Proposed Text Amendment to Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

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Regular Text is adopted policy language

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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT

Policy 1.2.5 Alachua County shall adopt Level of Service (LOS) guidelines for Category "C" public facilities, ~~and include those facilities in the CIP.~~ These LOS guidelines are to be used for analysis and identification of Capital Improvement Project needs for these facilities to be included in the Capital Improvement Program. The LOS guidelines for Category "C" public facilities are the following:

(b) Fire LOS guidelines are as follows:

- (1) In the Urban Cluster, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 6 minutes travel time for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Land development regulations shall require that 100% of development shall provide water supply served by hydrants.
- (2) In the rural area, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 12 minutes travel time for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Fire suppression/protection service level for all properties in the Rural Area shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection of <10. Development will provide adequate water supply for fire suppression and protection, and fire service compliant fire connections, required through land development regulations.
- (3) The County shall periodically update the Alachua County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Master Plan, including an evaluation of capital and related operational needs to meet the Fire LOS guidelines identified in this policy and consideration of service delivery benchmarks for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Updates of the Master Plan shall include identification of funding sources that could be established as part of a financially feasible plan to meet these LOS guidelines. The Fire and Emergency Medical Services Master Plan shall serve as a basis for consideration of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to establish level of service standards for Fire Rescue services and Emergency Medical Services as part of the County's concurrency management requirements.