

Biased Language

The following is adapted from the Transportation Language from the City of Palm Beach, Florida's Comprehensive Plan.

For the most part, the transportation system has focused on developing an infrastructure designed for motor vehicles in the past few decades. Many localities are now trying to balance their transportation needs by making intermodal connections and offering people more transportation choices. Pedestrian travel is the oldest form of transportations and almost every trip has a pedestrian component. Transit is dependent on pedestrians and people hesitate to walk unless communities are designed for their comfort and safety.

Contemporary transportation language has many biases and needs to be modified to allow for objective ideas and concepts for a shift towards balance and equity. For example, the term "improvement" is widely misused. It commonly refers to adding lanes, turning lanes, channelization or means of increasing automobile capacity. These "improvements" often make pedestrian travel more difficult and thus the term is bias towards motor vehicles.

The following changes to the transportation language was adopted by the City of West Palm Beach for City staff to use in all transportation correspondence and documents:

Conventional word/Phrase	Substitute (Unbiased) Word Phrase
Accident	Collision/Crash
Alternative	Human Powered/Non-polluting/Nonmotorized
Capacity	Motor vehicle volume policy threshold
Capacity deficient	Motor vehicle use exceeds the motor vehicle volume policy threshold
Demand	Use
Desirable/Acceptable	Desirable (for whom)/Acceptable (for whom)
Efficient/Efficiency	Increased speed or faster
Enhanced	Increased
Impact	Effect
Improvement	Modification/Change
Level of service	Level of service for (mode of transportation)
Movements	Motor vehicle trips
Protect	Designate or Purchase
Road system	Motor vehicle
Roadway	Street
Traffic	Motor vehicle traffic
Traffic demand	Motor vehicle use, travel demand
Undesirable/Unacceptable	Undesirable (for whom) /Unacceptable (for whom)
Upgrade	Expansion/Reconstruction

