

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF MONROE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

January 28, 2016



BACKGROUND

The Washington State Growth Management Act calls for coordination between local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, state law requires PSRC to certify that regional transit plans, countywide planning policies, and local comprehensive plans within the central Puget Sound region conform to: (1) established regional guidelines and principles, (2) the adopted long-range regional transportation plan, and (3) transportation planning requirements in the Growth Management Act. Within the central Puget Sound region, the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local comprehensive plans is also a requirement for jurisdictions and agencies that intend to apply for PSRC funding or proceed with any project submitted into the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, regardless of funding source.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process ([Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process](#), Revised September 2003) for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans.¹ This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning. A set of materials, compiled in a [Plan Review Manual](#), provides details on the review and certification process, background, and framework. The manual also provides guidance and checklists for aligning plans and policies with [VISION 2040](#), [Transportation 2040](#), and [Growth Management Act](#) requirements.

DISCUSSION

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations regarding the periodic update to the comprehensive plan for the City of Monroe, adopted by the city on December 8, 2015. PSRC last certified the City of Monroe's comprehensive plan in January 2008. PSRC staff reviewed the updated 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Monroe comprehensive plan, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Monroe 2015 comprehensive plan update conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Monroe comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and Local Comprehensive Plan Checklist, is listed in high level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights

¹ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in RCW 47.80. The specific requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in RCW 36.70A.070. PSRC's Interlocal Agreement, Section VII, also provides direction for the review of local comprehensive plans and countywide policies (Resolution A-91-01, amended March 1998). The Council's Executive Board last updated its process for Policy and Plan Review in September 2003. The process is also described in VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation.

exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act planning requirements.

Part I: Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) includes several requirements related to transportation elements in local comprehensive plans. These requirements are summarized as follows:

Land use assumptions and forecasts of travel demand that are internally consistent and consistent with growth targets.

Service and facility needs, including inventories of existing facilities, and level-of-service standards and concurrency provisions that address multiple modes of travel, planned land uses and densities, and state highways.

Financing and investments, including a multiyear financing plan and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls.

Intergovernmental coordination with neighboring cities, counties, and regional and state agencies.

Demand management, including programs to implement the Commute Trip Reduction Act.

Pedestrian and bicycle planning, including project funding and capital investments, education, and safety.

Land uses adjacent to airports, identifying relevant facilities, existing and planned uses, and policies that discourage incompatible uses.

Air quality is largely an interjurisdictional issue in which each jurisdiction's travel behaviors, measured through vehicle emissions, affect the regional airshed. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires local transportation elements and plans to include "policies and provisions that promote the reduction of criteria pollutants" for mobile sources (WAC 173-420-080). When PSRC reviews plans, it also certifies that the comprehensive plans include air quality policies and provisions, including a commitment to meeting the requirements of applicable federal and state air quality legislation.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The City of Monroe's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. Highlights include:

- ☑ Many policies in the plan promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and identify several specific locations for safety projects (P. 001, 007, 008, 148).
- ☑ The plan supports the coordination of regional trail network plans, encouraging future connections to trails including the Centennial Trail and the Stevens Pass Greenway (P.031).
- ☑ The plan promotes alternative modes of transportation by directing the city to provide sidewalks, walking and biking paths, interconnected street networks, and improved transit systems. To help achieve this, new development will be required to include site and building features that support alternative modes of transportation including walking, bicycle, carpool and transit (P.030, 130, and 131).
- ☑ The plan supports implementing Transportation System Management improvements as an economical alternative to traditional capacity-increasing investments (P.141).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- The plan re-designates the Limited Open Space Airport areas to Tourist Commercial under the understanding that the Public Use General Aviation Airport, FirstAir Field, may close. Although the development regulations that ensure land use compatibility with the airport remain, policies that previously complied with WAC 365-196-455 “Land use compatibility adjacent to general aviation airports” and RCW 36.70.547 General Aviation Airports (Planning Enabling Act) have been removed from the comprehensive plan. Until the airport closes, these statutes and requirements are still applicable. In addition, the comprehensive plan should include a reference to the PSRC [Airport Compatible Land Use Program](#), and the city should utilize the guidance contained in the PSRC program in further refining the comprehensive plan. The PSRC Airport Compatible Land Use Program Update lists applicable state and federal statutes and requirements.

Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040, the region’s long-range transportation plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 contains a regional growth strategy with a preferred distribution of the region’s residential and employment growth, as well as a number of implementation actions for local governments to carry out. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2040 is discussed in turn below.

VISION 2040 Context Statement

VISION 2040 calls for local plans to include a context statement that describes how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040. A description of how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040 is contained in Chapter 1.

Environment

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following environmental policy topics:

Stewardship, including addressing the natural environment throughout the plan, decisions based on best-available science, and regional environmental initiatives.

Earth and habitat, including open space protection, restoration and protection of native vegetation, and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions.

Water quality, including actions that maintain hydrologic functions and reduce water pollution in ecosystems, watersheds, shorelines, and estuaries.

Air quality and climate change, addressing federal and state laws, reduction of pollutants, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency policies, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Monroe comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages preserving open spaces through techniques such as conservation easements and density bonuses and identifies and designates areas where a contiguous system would provide greater benefit than a series of isolated areas, including but not limited to open space corridors, environmentally sensitive areas, view-sheds, and recreational and wildlife corridors (P.035 and 043).
- ☑ The plan directs the city to identify, inventory, classify and protect fish and wildlife habitats, providing special consideration to fish that migrate for spawning (P.042).

- ☑ The plan protects water quality through maintaining natural hydrological functions within watersheds and seeking restoration opportunities identified in the Shoreline Master Program (P.054a).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional environmental guidelines and principles.

Development Patterns – Including Regional Growth Strategy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following development patterns policy topics:

Urban areas, including targets for housing and employment growth, compact communities that support transit and walking, and provisions for redevelopment of underused land.

Centers, including planning for one or more central places as locations for compact, mixed-use development, with policies that prioritize funding to centers to advance development.

Unincorporated urban areas, including policies that advance annexation and orderly transition of governance.

Resource lands, including identification of steps to limit development.

Regional design, addressing local provisions that apply the Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines, energy efficient building, historic preservation, and enhanced sense of community.

Health and active living, addressing healthy environment, physical activity and well-being, and safety.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages new development and redevelopment in the downtown area. To enable this development, the plan prioritizes the construction and maintenance of streetscape, transportation, and public facility improvements in the downtown (P.210 and 212).
- ☑ The plan supports the efficient use of urban land through promoting redevelopment and infill, allowing increased density and building heights, and encouraging mixed-use development (P.073, 086, 112, and 113).
- ☑ The plan promotes resource and energy-efficient design and construction methods (P.026).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional land use guidelines and principles.

Housing

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following housing policy topics:

Increased housing production opportunities, including diverse types and styles for all income levels and demographic groups.

Affordable housing needs, including an assessment of existing and future housing needs based on regional and local factors, including household income, demographics, special needs populations, and adequacy of existing housing stocks.

Regional housing objectives in VISION 2040, including promotion of housing diversity and affordability, jobs-housing balance, housing in centers, and flexible standards and innovative techniques.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan promotes the development of affordable housing and includes a policy that directs the city to permit a variety of smaller-sized housing, including cottage housing and manufactured home parks (P.109 and 114). The plan also contains a housing strategy section on Pages 6-7 and 6-7 with additional affordable housing strategies. PSRC encourages the city to implement these additional housing strategies.
- ☑ The plan encourages developing higher density housing close to retail, health-care services, parks and transportation routes (P.107).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional housing guidelines and principles.

Economy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following economic development policy topics:

Include an **economic development element** that addresses: business, people, and places.

Retention and recruitment efforts that support family wage jobs, industry clusters that export goods and services, and small businesses that are locally owned.

Equitable benefits and impacts, including provisions and programs that promote economic vitality in distressed areas or areas with disadvantaged populations.

Adequate housing growth in centers through collaboration with the private sector and provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan addresses some of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan promotes Monroe's downtown by supporting business improvement organizations that are dedicated to the improvement of the downtown (P.058).
- ☑ The plan directs the city to identify economic sectors within Monroe where opportunity to create additional jobs might exist, and implement strategies to attract such jobs (P.067).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on economic development.

Transportation

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 call for local comprehensive plans to address the following transportation policy topics:

Maintenance, management, and safety, including clean transportation with reductions in pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, environmental factors, health and safety, stable and predictable funding sources, system and demand management strategies, and security and emergency response.

Support for the regional growth strategy, including system improvements that align with planned growth, prioritized investments that support compact development in centers, joint- and mixed-use development, complete streets and improvements to promote biking and walking, and context-sensitive design.

Improved transportation options and mobility, including alternatives to driving alone, facilities and services for special needs transportation, avoidance of new or expanded facilities in rural areas, and financing methods.

Linking land use and transportation, including integrating Transportation 2040 physical design guidelines in planning for centers and transit station areas, and land development tools that promote transportation alternatives.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Monroe comprehensive plan addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance, management, and safety; support for the Regional Growth Strategy; and providing greater options and mobility. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan promotes land use patterns that facilitate multipurpose trips and reduce the quantity and length of trips by single-occupancy vehicles (P.128).
- ☑ The plan has multimodal level of service standards and identifies nonmotorized projects to help the transportation network meet those standards.
- ☑ The plan prioritizes the preservation and maintenance of existing facilities over the construction of new ones (P.151).
- ☑ The plan promotes trails and trail networks within Monroe, and encourages in-town connectivity and ties to regional trail networks (P.161).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on transportation. See Part I for the comment on Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements.

Public Services

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following public services policy topics:

Promote more efficient use of existing services, such as waste management, energy, and water supply, through conservation – including demand management programs and strategies.

Promote renewable energy and alternative energy sources.

Plan for long-term water needs, including conservation, reclamation and reuse.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Monroe comprehensive plan update contains policies that address the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages conservation of resources to delay the need for additional energy, water and other facilities and supports renewable energy, alternative energy and water reclamation (P. 047 and 054b).
- ☑ The plan supports low-impact development street design to control localized stormwater and reduce the need for stormwater collection and remote treatment (P. 037 and 144).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional public services guidelines and principles.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found at <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or eharris@psrc.org.