



Puget Sound Regional Council

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Pierce County 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

- 1) Memo dated July 20, 2017 (see page 2). As of this Executive Board action taken at the July 27, 2017 meeting, the Pierce County comprehensive plan is now fully certified for consistency with the transportation-related provisions of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040.

- 2) Certification report dated April 28, 2016 (see page 10). This report summarizes complete review of the 2015 comprehensive plan update and a certification condition for the city to address by December 31, 2017.



Puget Sound Regional Council

CONSENT AGENDA

July 20, 2017

To: Executive Board

From: Councilmember Rob Johnson, Chair, Transportation Policy Board
Councilmember Ryan Mello, Chair, Growth Management Policy Board

Subject: **Approve Full Certification of the Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County**

IN BRIEF

The Growth Management Policy Board and Transportation Policy Board recommend that the Executive Board certify the 2015 comprehensive plan for Pierce County, as clarified by the county's report dated June 26, 2017.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Executive Board should certify that the transportation-related provisions of the Pierce County comprehensive plan update, as clarified by the county's report dated June 26, 2017, conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with the multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

DISCUSSION

Pierce County adopted its updated comprehensive plan on September 1, 2015, consistent with the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040. The plan was conditionally certified by PSRC contingent on additional work to address strategies related to growth in the unincorporated urban area and annexation or incorporation.

The [certification report](#) included three specific requirements for further action to address consistency between the planning of the unincorporated urban area and VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Report on progress made employing strategies identified in Pierce County Ordinance No. 2011-36s to address management of growth in the unincorporated urban area.
- Continue to work to affiliate areas of the unincorporated urban area with adjacent cities and support annexation or incorporation.
- Pass a resolution stating the county's intent and deadlines to work with surrounding cities regarding annexation and incorporation.

The county adopted a [resolution and work plan](#) in June 2016. The attached report from Pierce County describes the county's implementation of several planning strategies that make progress on planning for the unincorporated urban area consistent with VISION 2040 and the county's work supporting annexation.

Central to the conditional certification is planning for the large unincorporated urban area in central Pierce County. The board recognized at the time that neither VISION 2040 anticipates nor would it be practical for the area to be fully affiliated with adjacent cities or be incorporated within the conditional review period. Annexation and incorporation are efforts that can take years to complete, require joint planning with cities, and often require a public vote for action. Therefore, the certification report sought confirmation of the county's continued progress of both appropriately planning for the unincorporated area and progressively working towards annexation or incorporation.

Growth Management Strategies

At the time of certification, the amount and rate of growth of the urban unincorporated area raised concerns regarding consistency with VISION 2040, which sees a larger portion of the unincorporated urban growth occurring within areas affiliated with cities. The county initially identified and evaluated a range of growth management strategies and subsequently initiated multiple planning efforts, including:

- Community plan updates (currently in process) that provide a combined land use and transportation strategy that redirects growth to a limited number of mixed use centers that increase walkability and transit access.
- Decreasing the urban growth area in locations that are not encumbered with existing urban density, infrastructure improvements, or vested projects.
- Review of the county's vesting policy and consideration of termination of the application extension program.
- Review of the county's sewer exception program.

Each of these initiatives has the potential to continue planning efforts in a manner consistent with VISION 2040 by supporting development where urban infrastructure is already in place and reducing the incentive to develop other portions of the urban UGA.

Annexation

Following the initial plan certification, the county has advanced efforts to support annexations and worked cooperatively with several cities on specific annexation opportunities. These efforts include:

- Development of Potential Annexation Areas [profiles](#) that identifies specific areas and their attributes to focus on future annexation opportunities.
- Prepared updates for consideration in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle that clarify policy related to areas of potential incorporation, identify Potential Incorporation Areas, and identify Potential Annexation Areas (Bonney Lake).
- Community plan updates (as noted above) that further individual community discussions, including about potential annexation or incorporation.
- Enhanced outreach and partnership with Pierce County cities, including:
 - Bonney Lake Annexation Agreement
 - Fircrest Annexation Agreement
 - Discussions with Gig Harbor, Fife, Bonney Lake, and Puyallup

- Efforts to encourage the state Legislature to address annexation in the 2017 legislative process, including a request to re-enact the state sales tax rebate that was used successfully for multiple annexations in King County.

Pierce County presented at PSRC's Peer Networking event on May 18 a [presentation](#) about developing annexation agreements with cities, which highlights some of their recent work.

As part of the conditional approval, Pierce County was to report to the Growth Management Policy Board regarding the county's progress working towards consistency with VISION 2040 and its planning for the urban unincorporated area. Staff review of the attached report by the county finds it addresses the requirements set out by PSRC to enable the plan to be fully certified. At the July 27 meeting, the Executive Board will be asked to take action on a recommendation to certify the plan.

For more information, please contact Paul Inghram at (206) 464-7549 or pinghram@psrc.org.

Attachments:

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan - Report on Conditions



Report to the PSRC on the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Certification Requirements June 2017

Overview

On April 28, 2016, the PSRC Executive Board issued a “Conditional” Certification of the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. The PSRC issued a “Conditional” Certification to bring the County’s planning into greater alignment with VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. The specific issues related to:

- *The amount of growth planned within unincorporated urban Pierce County (i.e. adopted growth targets); and,*
- *Planning for the transformation of local government from the County to a city through annexation or incorporation.*

The April 2016 PSRC Plan Review Report identified three (3) steps the County must accomplish to receive “Full” Certification. Pierce County has completed these steps and has satisfied the requirements to receive a “Full” Certification. This report summarizes the actions taken by Pierce County to meet these requirements.

Conditional Certification Requirements

- 1) **Actions and measures to bring growth in unincorporated urban Pierce County into greater alignment with VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. It is anticipated that this will include reporting on progress made employing strategies identified in Ordinance No. 2011-36s.**

***Pierce County Response/Actions:** In 2009, the PSRC Executive Board recognized that in some regional geographies, growth trends prior to 2008 had been at significant odds with VISION 2040’s Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). As it was unlikely 2040 goals could be met, the Executive Board asked jurisdictions (through VISION 2040’s Appendix II-B) to try their best to set targets as close to the RGS as reasonably possible. Jurisdictions facing this circumstance are asked to explain what steps they are taking to align with the RGS. Certification is to be based on those steps rather than an assessment of the targets alone.*

The Pierce County Comprehensive Plan assumes growth in the unincorporated urban area that is consistent with the County’s adopted 2030 growth targets; however, it represents a larger share of the county’s growth than called for in VISION 2040’s RGS. In pursuit of greater consistency with the RGS, the County has made significant progress in achieving the following strategies as identified in Pierce County Ordinance No. 2011-36s:

- Establishing a land use and transportation strategy that redirects growth to a limited number of mixed use centers in each of the community plan areas.

Pierce County started the update process of four (4) community plans in early 2016. These community plan areas represent the core of the unincorporated urban county. A significant change being considered through this process is the implementation of a Centers/Corridors strategy. Through this strategy, future growth would be encouraged along one of four (4) major transportation corridors. An objective of this redirection of growth is to establish land use patterns and densities that make public transit and other forms of active transportation more viable. The county completed its initial public outreach effort for these updates in June 2017. Staff is in the process of reviewing and developing alternatives and minor modifications to respond to received comments. While there may be modifications, the Centers/Corridors strategy remains a concept reflected in the plan updates. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will forward its recommendation to the county Council in late December 2017.

- Decreasing the urban growth area in locations that are not encumbered with existing urban density, infrastructure improvements, or vested projects.

Pierce County has embarked on an analysis of the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA). The initial analysis shall be completed by fall 2017. Outreach to potentially affected landowners and other stakeholders will start in October 2017. Potential adjustments to the UGA shall be incorporated into the County's 2018/2019 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle. It is anticipated that applications submitted through this amendment cycle would be considered for approval by county Council in June 2019.

- Modifying the County's policy on time extensions for vested projects.

Pierce County adopted Ordinance 2016-14s on April 26, 2016. This Ordinance deleted provisions (18.160.65 and .085) addressing Extension of Approval and Reactivation of Expired Approvals.

- Eliminating policies and code provisions that allow for "exceptions" such as building without sewer or limiting bonus densities.

Pierce County adopted Ordinance 2016-14s on April 26, 2016. Provisions adopted through this ordinance put additional parameters on development as related to meeting minimum density requirements for property that is more than 300 feet from a sewer hook-up. If a lot is more than 300 feet from a sewer hook-up, the minimum density requirement shall not apply, provided that only one lot of the proposed residential plat exceeds 7,260 square feet and associated improvements don't preclude future access or other improvements needed to achieve minimum density for any future land division.

- 2) Continued work to affiliate areas of the unincorporated urban area and support annexation or incorporation. PSRC is committed to supporting affiliation efforts and it is recognized that progress in this area will rely on affected cities and unincorporated communities.

Pierce County Response/Actions: VISION 2040 contains a goal to have all unincorporated urban areas either annexed into an existing city or incorporated as a new city. The supporting policies direct the County to affiliate all of its unincorporated areas with a city or identify areas that may be feasible for incorporation. A policy further supports joint planning between the appropriate cities and the County to plan for an orderly transition.

Through its 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, the County incorporated policy that supports annexation and the identification of areas that may be appropriate for incorporation. The County adopted Resolution No. R2016-79s to express its commitment in addressing annexation and incorporation. As committed to in R2016-79s, the following items have further advanced the discussion of annexation and incorporation:

- Profiles of Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs).

Pierce County collected information for each of the PAAs related to demographics, housing, land use, local special district, and zoning. The purpose of the published document is to assist in understanding the unique characteristics of each of the PAAs. A better understanding of an area may lead to a more productive discussion about future annexation opportunities.

- Adoption of additional Comprehensive Plan policies addressing Potential Incorporation Areas (PIAs).

Through its 2017 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle, the county adopted additional policies that clarify PIAs can be established for an area based upon logical geographic boundaries, size, population, potential tax base, and a variety of uses for a city.

- Designation of its first Potential Incorporation Area (PIA).

Through its 2017 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle, the county designated the Employment Based Planned Community of Tehaleh as a PIA. This designation was supported by the developer and existing community residents.

- Affiliation of two additional Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs) in unincorporated urban Pierce County with a city.

Through its 2017 Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle, the county designated two additional Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs) affiliated with the City of Bonney Lake. These two PAAs encompass 725 parcels totaling roughly 280 acres. Joint planning shall be passed over as the county and city agree to cooperate in the annexation of these areas via an Annexation Agreement.

- The inclusion of an “Annexation” and “Incorporation” discussion through the update of four (4) community plans.

Pierce County started the update process of four (4) community plans in early 2016. Early in the process, county staff began discussions about annexation and incorporation with the associated four Land Use Advisory Commissions. It is anticipated that some extent of these conversations will be incorporated into the community plans, with possible support to identify additional area(s) as a Potential Incorporation Area (PIA).

- Legislative efforts at the State level. The County worked with legislators and succeeded in having SB 5215 and HB 1681 proposed in the 2017 legislative session to address urban annexation issues. The bills:
 - *Extend the deadline to January 1, 2022 for certain cities to commence the annexation of certain unincorporated territories in order to be able to assess a sales and use annexation tax;*
 - *Expand, for certain counties and annexed areas, the population requirements for a city to be able to assess a sales and use annexation tax of 0.1 percent;*
 - *Eliminate a timing requirement for certain unincorporated territories to be eligible for annexation as an unincorporated island of territory; and,*
 - *Modify the notice and publication requirement for annexations being undertaken by an interlocal agreement between a city and county to include the option of publishing a summary of the agreement in a newspaper of general circulation within the area to be annexed for two (2) weeks prior to the hearing, along with concurrently posting the full agreement on the legislative body's official website.*

The Senate held a hearing on SB 5215 during 2017 regular session, but it was not forwarded out of committee despite interest and support by Kitsap County, Snohomish County, and a number of cities. Legislators cited the cost to the state from the proposed sales and use tax credit as the reason it did not move forward.

Pierce County worked with Kitsap County later in the session to amend SB 5652 and incorporate items from SB 5215 other than the sales and use tax credit section. However, while SB 5652 did move to the House Rules Committee, it did not move to the floor for consideration due to opposition by the Association of Washington Cities.

Pierce County’s current intent is to include SB 5215 and HB 1681 (or their content if a different bill becomes the vehicle) on the county’s 2018 legislative agenda.

- Outreach/partnerships with cities to promote/facilitate annexation.

Pierce County has actively promoted both annexation and the establishment of joint planning agreements. Further progress has been made with annexation in comparison to joint planning. The focus of annexation is on unincorporated “islands” utilizing an interlocal agreement as permitted through RCW 35A.14.460.
- *The county entered into its first annexation agreement on April 17, 2017 with the City of Bonney Lake.*
- *The county is in the final stages of completing an annexation agreement with City of Fircrest.*

- *County staff has made various presentations before the Gig Harbor City Council discussing joint planning, annexation, and potential reduction of its designated Urban Growth Area. It is anticipated work will begin on an annexation agreement with Gig Harbor before the end of the year.*
- *The county has had productive discussions about annexation with staff from the cities of Fife and Puyallup. As mentioned above, the county will enter into two additional annexation agreements with Bonney Lake as a result of the designation of areas as Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs) through the County's 2017 Comprehensive Plan Amendment cycle.*
- *The county has had on-again/off-again joint planning discussions with the cities of Puyallup and Gig Harbor. These joint planning discussions served as a catalyst to the annexation discussions. Joint planning efforts have currently been set aside to advance annexation opportunities.*

3) The Pierce County Council will, no later than June 2016, pass a resolution stating their intent and deadlines to work with surrounding cities regarding annexation and incorporation.

Pierce County Response/Actions: The Pierce County Council adopted Resolution R2016-79s on June 28, 2016. Exhibit A of this Resolution provides a work program and schedule as required by PSRC to receive "full" certification. The work program includes those items listed under 2) above.

Background

The Pierce County Council adopted an update to its Comprehensive Plan on September 1, 2015. This adopted document incorporated changes as suggested through an initial June 5, 2015 PSRC comment letter. Pierce County submitted its adopted plan with a completed Plan Review Checklist to PSRC on October 12, 2015 for certification purposes. PSRC staff had recommended the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan receive "full" certification. The PSRC Growth Management Policy Board discussed the County's certification at its March and April meetings. In response to comments from some Board members, the Pierce County Plan was recommended to the Executive Board with a "Conditional" Certification. The PSRC Executive Board approved a "Conditional" Certification for the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan on April 28, 2016.

As the PSRC staff was drafting its initial recommendation, the Pierce County Council adopted Resolution R2016-31 on March 15, 2016. This Resolution reiterated the County's policy to "encourage affiliation of unincorporated urban lands with adjacent cities and towns and encourage annexation of these affiliated lands, and to identify future incorporation areas within the unincorporated urban area." This Resolution also asked for technical assistance from PSRC to encourage affiliation and promote annexation.

On June 28, 2016, after the PSRC Executive Board approved a "Conditional" Certification, the Pierce County Council adopted R2016-79s. This Resolution states it is Pierce County's intent to encourage affiliation of unincorporated urban areas to existing cities, and support annexation and incorporation where appropriate and consistent with the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies and the policies of the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. Exhibit A of this Resolution provided a work program and schedule as required by PSRC to receive "full" certification.

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

April 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 Pierce County comprehensive plan, adopted on September 1, 2015. PSRC last certified Pierce County's 1999 comprehensive plan in February 2001. PSRC staff reviewed the updated 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with county staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the Pierce County comprehensive plan and supplemented information provided by the county, including Pierce County Council Resolution R2016-31, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Executive Board:

The Puget Sound Regional Council conditionally certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the Pierce County 2015 comprehensive plan update conforms to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with the multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

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.

Conditional status is in place until Pierce County further addresses consistency between the planning of the unincorporated urban area and VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. This will include:

- **Actions and measures to bring growth in unincorporated urban Pierce County into greater alignment with VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. It is anticipated that this will include reporting on progress made employing strategies identified in Ordinance No. 2011-36s.**
- **Continued work to affiliate areas of the unincorporated urban area and support annexation or incorporation. PSRC is committed to supporting affiliation efforts and it is recognized that progress in this area will rely on affected cities and unincorporated communities.**
- **The Pierce County Council will, no later than June 2016, pass a resolution stating their intent and deadlines to work with surrounding cities regarding annexation and incorporation.**

Pierce County will work with PSRC, affected cities and the Pierce County Regional Council to address these issues and report back to the GMPB by December 2017 on progress to date.

Pierce County and PSRC staff have agreed to continue to work together to advance appropriate planning strategies to manage growth of the unincorporated urban area and to work toward annexation and incorporation. Resolution R2016-31 adopted by the county on March 15 “acknowledges its commitment to efforts to further align growth within the unincorporated area with Vision 2040 in the future consistent with the spirit and intent of Ordinance No. 2011-36s and the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies” and commits the county to report back to the Growth Management Policy Board no later than December 31, 2017.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Pierce County comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and [checklist for local comprehensive plans](#), is listed in high level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights 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 GMA planning requirements. PSRC recognizes that the timing and mechanism for addressing each of the comments will vary based on the jurisdiction, its resources and plan update process, and the nature of the comment.

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 county 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:

- ☑ The county is commended for developing an extremely accessible and well-organized plan document that clearly references related plans and other documents and provides hyperlinks throughout the document for easy navigation and cross-referencing. Developing a comprehensive plan for a large and complex geography like unincorporated Pierce County while maintaining transparency, accessibility, and readability is a very difficult task and the county did an excellent job in this important area.
- ☑ The plan includes a number of impressive community plans that provide thoughtful guidance for the development of individual subareas, including subarea policies supporting center-oriented development and preservation of rural areas and open space.
- ☑ The plan includes notable policies that endorse the concept of complete streets for newly constructed or reconstructed roads, call for developing improved programs to encourage increased levels of active transportation, and encourage developers to include active transportation elements in all projects.
- ☑ The plan references a detailed and thorough inventory and analysis of the existing pedestrian transportation system, including sidewalks, curb ramps, traffic control signals, driveway entrances that include ramps, and barriers to the accessibility of these facilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ☑ The transportation element includes a thorough discussion of the context and status of transportation demand management efforts in Pierce County.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The county should address the following comments at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans (see comments addressing consistency with regional guidelines and principles on transportation and Transportation 2040 on page 11):

- The Growth Management Act requires that the comprehensive plan be an internally consistent document (RCW 36.70A.070). One important measure of this is consistent planning periods and land use assumptions across various elements. In the Pierce County comprehensive plan, the transportation element makes it clear that the planning horizon and land use assumptions extend to 2030. However, for the other elements, including land use, housing, community plans, and others, no horizon year or planning period is defined. Instead, those elements reference, e.g., “the 20-year planning horizon” (page 2-43). The county should amend the plan to clarify the relevant planning period and land use assumptions across all elements, consistent with the land use and transportation elements and adopted targets. The county is encouraged to work with Pierce County cities to identify a strategy for future extension of the 2030 targets to 2035 or beyond consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy.
- The Growth Management Act requires intergovernmental coordination efforts, including an assessment of the impacts of the transportation plan and land use assumptions on the transportation systems of adjacent jurisdictions (RCW 36.70A.070). As the county plans for and implements its transportation system, it should ensure close coordination with cities, adjacent jurisdictions and the military. While the plan includes modeling of countywide travel behavior, the transportation element in the plan would benefit from clearer information that shows how the transportation system in the unincorporated part of the county is connected and integrated with the systems in other jurisdictions.
- The county should work to complete the pedestrian and bicycle component of the transportation element (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(vii), WAC 365-196-430(2)(j)) and update key information in the Nonmotorized Transportation Plan to address existing conditions, new information, and collaborative efforts such as the PSRC Active Transportation Plan.

The plan includes notable policies that call for endorsing the concept of complete streets for newly constructed or reconstructed roads, developing improved programs to encourage increased levels of active transportation, and encouraging developers to include active transportation elements in all projects. However, some important components of a complete pedestrian and bicycle component appear to be missing or out-of-date, including an inventory of the existing bicycle network, a review of available pedestrian and bicycle collision data to identify priority areas for safety improvements, and a list of planned projects.

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. The plan includes descriptions of and references to VISION 2040 in several places within the plan. The county also provided a detailed reporting tool along with the plan’s submittal for certification review. The county is encouraged to continue to expand on the

references in the plan in future updates, including discussion of actions and measures the county is taking to bend development trends to align with the Regional Growth Strategy and discussion of how the plan's land use strategies are coordinated with other Pierce County jurisdictions. Examples of context statements are provided in PSRC's [Plan Review Manual](#), page 2-1.

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 county's comprehensive plan addresses many of the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- The environment element includes goals and policies addressing protection of critical areas, including best available science, interjurisdictional coordination on fish and wildlife habitat issues, and protection and restoration of native vegetation (goals ENV-1,2,3,8,14, policies ENV-1.5,2.2).
- The plan includes an open space element that describes and addresses five major categories of open spaces which are organized by their primary value or function (habitat, working lands, outdoor recreation, community-defined values, and public health and safety). The open space element includes policies that apply to all types of open spaces, and provides helpful cross-references to other plan elements that address specific types of open spaces. Open space overlays and compatible land use designations provide clear standards for protection of these open space functions.
- The plan establishes a goal (U-38) of making the use of low impact development techniques in public and private developments and projects the preferred method of land development.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 call for the region to address its contribution to climate change and to plan for adaptation to unavoidable impacts related to climate change. The comprehensive plan includes a variety of policies and provisions that will help move the county and region towards a more balanced transportation system and minimize greenhouse gas emissions. However, the plan does not include goals or policies that specifically address the county's contribution to climate change, state initiatives and directives regarding climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gases (e.g., [RCW 70.235.020](#), [RCW 47.01.440](#)), or actions the county will pursue to mitigate climate change impacts. MPP En-23 calls for regional and local actions to reduce vehicle miles traveled and increase alternatives to driving alone. Notably, even though the plan states, "Pierce County will explore additional opportunities to reduce VMT through increased usage of transit and rideshare," tables 12-D, 12-J, and table 2-B in the plan show a forecasted increase in per capita vehicle miles traveled according to the travel

demand model. The plan explains that model statistics on per capita vehicle miles traveled on county roadways do not fully reflect county actions to reduce transportation emissions because of relationships with other jurisdictions and the state highway system.

The county should adopt goals and policies that support the region’s commitment to addressing climate change. The county should also work to develop and document specific provisions to reduce emissions, which may include measures to reduce vehicle miles traveled and shift to lower-emission vehicles, measures to make more efficient use of land and buildings, supporting renewable energy, and increasing the number of trees in the county. Helpful information on identifying emissions-reducing strategies can be found in the [Washington State Climate Change Resources](#), [Washington State Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy](#), and [PSRC Climate Change Information](#).

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 county’s comprehensive plan addresses many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- Policies calling for infrastructure funding to be prioritized to support designated centers and transit-oriented corridors, consistent with VISION 2040’s emphasis of focusing and supporting growth in centers.
- Policies and provisions that support farming and farmland preservation throughout the county through strategies such as tax incentives, restrictions on incompatible uses on adjacent lands, prioritization policies for land acquisition programs, utilization of public lands for lease-back farming programs, and policies calling for the county’s purchasing programs to seek out locally grown produce.
- A dedicated cultural resources element that aims to identify, protect, and enhance historic properties and cultural landscapes throughout unincorporated Pierce County.
- A dedicated design and character element that aims to build on community planning efforts throughout the county to enhance neighborhood quality, encourage attractive development, and reflect the “heart and soul of a community.”

DISCUSSION: CONDITIONS FOR CERTIFICATION

The county must address the following provision of the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040 in order to maintain certified status:

- The Growth Management Act calls for a transformation of local governance in the urban growth area, through annexation to or incorporation of a city, so that urban governmental services are primarily

provided by cities and rural and regional services are provided by counties (RCW 36.70A.210, WAC 365-196-305). VISION 2040 calls for all unincorporated lands within the Urban Growth Area to transition into cities and assumes this transition to be largely complete by 2040. Two important steps in this process are (1) affiliation of the urban growth area for annexation by neighboring cities or identification of areas not appropriate for annexation for incorporation (MPP-DP-18), and (2) joint planning to ensure an orderly transition to municipal governance (MPP-DP-19). VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy also calls for affiliated portions of the unincorporated urban growth area to accommodate a greater share of growth than nonaffiliated areas.

The county has adopted notable goals and policies that support affiliation of the unincorporated urban growth area with cities, encourage annexation of these areas through joint planning, and call for identifying areas not suitable for annexation for incorporation as new cities. These goals and policies provide a roadmap for facilitating this transformation of governance and go a long way towards implementing the Regional Growth Strategy and Growth Management Act. However, the comprehensive plan (Map 2-2) indicates that the majority of the unincorporated urban growth area is not affiliated for annexation or identified for incorporation. The comprehensive plan (Table 2-D) also allocates about three-fourths of the unincorporated urban growth area's housing and employment growth targets to unaffiliated portions. The county has indicated that it has already begun implementing the plan's goals and policies on affiliating, annexing, and incorporating the unincorporated urban growth area.

The county should continue its work to affiliate urban unincorporated lands with an adjacent city or identify those that may be feasible for incorporation. Once affiliated, the county should revise the plan and supporting documentation to reflect the affiliation, including revised allocations of growth within the urban unincorporated area to better reflect the Regional Growth Strategy by focusing growth in affiliated areas.

- Growth targets adopted by Pierce County in 2011 allocated 28.8% of assumed countywide population growth for the 2008-2030 planning period to the unincorporated urban growth area. This was significantly higher than the 20.6% called for by the Regional Growth Strategy. The adopting ordinance documented potential strategies to bend the trend of recent growth to align with the Regional Growth Strategy.²

The Pierce County 2015 comprehensive plan assumes growth consistent with this target and has adopted or made progress toward several of the strategies documented in the growth target's adopting ordinance, as well as others. The plan also includes numerous goals, policies, and actions to support efficient and low-impact development patterns consistent with VISION 2040.

However, it is unclear whether the ongoing and proposed strategies will sufficiently change the rate of growth for unincorporated urban areas and ultimately align with VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy in years after 2030. The plan should be amended, consistent with VISION 2040 and the guidance in Appendix II-B, to recognize and further the objective of aligning with the Regional Growth Strategy, especially for the period after 2030.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The county should address the following provisions of the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040 at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- VISION 2040 calls for coordinating planning efforts to facilitate a common vision, including focusing growth in designated regional centers (MPP-G-1, MPP-DP-5). The plan identifies and reflects adopted

² In 2009, the PSRC Executive Board recognized that not all local plans or targets would perfectly align with VISION 2040 and in a [technical amendment](#) to the Regional Growth Strategy (“[Appendix II-B](#)”), stated that PSRC's review and certification of plans will be based on the actions and measures already taken or proposed to be put in place to bend the trend, and not just on an assessment of the targets alone. Jurisdictions with growth targets higher or lower than what would be expected from a straight-line application of the Regional Growth Strategy should show the actions and measures that are being undertaken, or expected to be taken, to bend the trend of recent growth to align with the Regional Growth Strategy.

countywide growth targets and addresses local centers and the Frederickson manufacturing/industrial center. The county is also encouraged to add discussion and develop policies that address the overall countywide growth pattern, including support for the region’s designated centers as a focus of growth and development.

- VISION 2040 calls for avoiding new fully contained communities outside of the designated urban growth area because of their potential to create sprawl and undermine state and regional growth management goals (MPP-DP-23). Goal LU-75 in the land use element is supportive of this regional policy, but the Key Peninsula Community Plan discusses the possibility of establishing a reserve area for a fully contained community and includes an implementation action to explore its viability. The county should work with the Key Peninsula Land Use Advisory Commission to revise the community plan to be consistent with regional and county policy on avoiding new fully contained communities in the rural area.
- VISION 2040 calls for using existing and new tools and strategies to address vested development to ensure that future growth meets existing standards and prevents further fragmentation of rural lands (MPP-DP-25). The county is encouraged to explore and implement strategies beyond goal LU-109 (“Maintain consistency with state vesting laws”) to address the impact on the region’s rural area of development applications that are vested under outdated standards.
- VISION 2040 calls for designating and permanently conserving natural resource lands within the region, not converting these lands to other uses or adversely impacting them through adjacent development, and supporting local food production and agricultural uses (Resource Lands goal, MPP-DP-28 through 32, MPP-DP-47). The county is encouraged to review its policies, resource land designation criteria, and application of designation criteria in the future land use map to ensure that the plan effectively supports these regional goals and policies. The county should review several policies, including LU-86, that potentially allow redesignation of agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance to other uses, including low-density residential development or urban growth area expansions.
- The Frederickson manufacturing/industrial center plays an important role in accommodating future growth in the region. VISION 2040 includes an action for jurisdictions with regional centers to develop subarea plans (DP-Action-17), and PSRC will be certifying center plans for consistency with regional policies and procedures. Subarea planning will help the county both achieve its vision for the area as well as address regional center expectations in the [center plan checklist](#). The county has developed a community plan for the broader Frederickson area and adopted policies calling for developing a market study and establishing center-specific employment targets and mode split goals. The county should also ensure that it addresses these and other centers planning expectations for the Frederickson manufacturing/industrial center.

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 county's comprehensive plan addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. The plan incorporates a number of best housing practices that address identified housing needs. Highlights include:

- ☑ Strong overarching goals and policies that support a range of housing choices and affordability levels and address a variety of special housing needs.
- ☑ The county's commitment to use innovative approaches to balance density and neighborhood character, preserve market affordability, mitigate displacement due to redevelopment, and produce new affordable units through inclusionary and incentive zoning.
- ☑ Goal H-12 and associated policies call for the county to reuse the existing housing stock where possible to help meet housing demand.
- ☑ Goal H-15 calls for the county to monitor the success of the housing policies, including developing benchmarks to measure the development of affordable housing and an assessment conducted at least every five years.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- ☐ The county is commended for addressing a variety of tools to increase affordability in the Pierce County housing element goals and policies. However, many of these policies appear to rely on future work. In order to strengthen the plan, the county should add more information on strategies and timing for implementation of the policies in the housing element.

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 county's comprehensive plan update contains a thorough and detailed economic development element that effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ An economic development element that provides a helpful analysis of important industry clusters in Pierce County, anchored by healthcare and medical services, commerce related to the Port of Tacoma, and the military operations at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
- ☑ A useful analysis of average wages in various Pierce County employment sectors to help focus economic development efforts to support widely shared prosperity and a diversity of family wage jobs.
- ☑ Policies that support investment in the county's workforce through education, training, and technical assistance to businesses.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

- VISION 2040 calls for the region to protect industrial lands, particularly designated manufacturing/ industrial centers, from encroachment by incompatible uses and development on adjacent land (MPP-DP-53, MPP-Ec-19). While the land use element includes a goal and associated policies that call for ensuring no overall loss of industrial lands, the Fredrickson community plan calls for allowing a range of uses within the Fredrickson manufacturing/industrial center, including office, service, and regional retail uses including “big box” retail buildings up to 170,000 sq. ft. in the Central Place. This intensity of regional retail development has the potential to adversely affect the industrial character of the Fredrickson manufacturing/industrial center through traffic impacts on freight movement, increased land values, eventual pressure to convert additional industrial land to retail, service, and other commercial uses that will seek to capitalize on retail traffic destined for the Central Place. The county should reevaluate the potential that the plan will result in erosion of industrial character in this regionally designated center and consider revisions to the plan to maintain consistency with regional policies on protecting industrial land and designated manufacturing/industrial centers from incompatible uses.
- VISION 2040 calls for economic development efforts within the region to include programs and provisions for distressed areas and areas with disadvantaged populations (MPP-Ec-11,12,13). The county should work to develop and highlight supportive policies, programs, and strategies within the economic development element.

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 county’s 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’s transportation element discusses the importance of prioritizing maintenance and preservation, includes a goal that identifies maintenance, operations, and preservation as the county’s highest priority for investments, and implements the goal with significant funding in the transportation element’s financing plan dedicated to maintenance and preservation.
- ☑ The transportation element identifies roadway safety as a high priority, including endorsement of a complete streets concept, which promotes roadways that are safe for all users.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The county should address the following comments at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans (see comments addressing Growth Management Act transportation planning requirements on page 4 of this report):

- VISION 2040 calls for the region to emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel and increase travel options and increase the proportion of trips made by transportation modes that are alternatives to driving alone (MPP-T-23,24). While the comprehensive plan reflects the regional plan with high-level goals and policies, including calls for additional future work to support a multimodal transportation system, the transportation plan as a whole supports a capital investment strategy that appears heavily focused on the construction of new and expanded roadways, arterial intersections, and highways.

For example, the pedestrian facility inventory developed as part of the county's Americans with Disabilities Act transition plan reveals significant gaps in pedestrian infrastructure throughout the county and the comprehensive plan identifies significant needs for improvements to the bicycle network. However, less than 5% of the expenditures identified in the improvement portion of the plan's financial strategy are targeted to standalone pedestrian and bicycle projects despite the county's Nonmotorized Transportation Plan's goal of 15% of the county's construction fund being dedicated to improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The plan notes that, "most people agree that nonmotorized facilities are important to have in their community. There are many nominated projects but the costs are high and the prospects for funding are less than stellar. It is suggested that a programmatic approach be tested that would identify partners and use seed money to draw down more grant dollars." The plan also does not identify dedicated projects, programs, or funds to support more reliable and efficient transit service.

In order to more effectively and completely address the need to plan for and implement a multimodal transportation system, the county should build on the notable goals and policies in the plan with clear implementation measures and additional identified transportation funds for projects that benefit transit, pedestrian, and bicycle modes. The plan also should identify transportation and land use strategies to support transit, including identifying dedicated projects, programs, or funds to support more reliable and efficient transit service, and orienting land use patterns toward transit service. Doing so will support the region's goal of offering greater options, mobility, and access in support of the Regional Growth Strategy. See PSRC's [Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit](#) and [Active Transportation Plan](#) for more information and examples.

- VISION 2040 calls for level-of-service standards to be focused on the movement of people and goods instead of only the movement of vehicles (MPP-DP-54), and for concurrency programs to address multimodal transportation options – both in assessment and mitigation (MPP-DP-55). The county has made progress towards addressing these policies and should continue to work towards supporting multiple modes of travel in its level-of-service analysis and concurrency program, and consider additional provisions, such as nonmotorized improvements, transit service, high occupancy vehicle priority treatments, and intelligent transportation systems. These efforts would support implementation of the transportation element's goal of reducing the need and expense of new transportation investments (T-33).

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 county's comprehensive plan update contains policies that address the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- The plan's utility element includes goals and policies that support efforts to reduce solid waste and encourage water and energy conservation.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- VISION 2040 calls for new development within the urban growth area to be served with sanitary sewer systems or fit with dry sewers in anticipation of connection to the sewer system (MPP-PS-9). The plan includes goals and associated policies that partially address this policy, including goals LU-25, 27-29, but they should be strengthened to more fully address regional policy in this area as well as Goal LU-27 in the land use element ("urban level facilities and services must be provided prior to or concurrent with development").
- VISION 2040 calls for locating schools, institutions, and other community facilities that primarily serve urban populations within the urban growth area (MPP-PS-21). The county should review provisions in the plan, including Goal LU-78 and policy LU-78.1, to ensure consistency with MPP-PS-21.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the county for working through the plan review process. We look forward to continuing to work with the county to advance planning strategies to manage growth of the unincorporated urban area and work toward annexation and incorporation of the urban growth area as addressed through Pierce County Council resolution R2016-31, which "acknowledges its commitment to efforts to further align growth within the unincorporated area with Vision 2040 in the future consistent with the spirit and intent of Ordinance No. 2011-36s and the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies."

The county will report back to the Growth Management Policy Board in late 2017 on progress towards "bending the trend" toward consistency with the Regional Growth Strategy and encouraging affiliation and annexation of the urban growth area. This report should also address any additional measures that may be needed to continue to manage growth patterns in a manner supportive of VISION 2040.

PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates and additional planning resources can also be found at <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the county has questions or needs additional information, please contact Yorik Stevens-Wajda at 206-464-6179 or ystevens-wajda@psrc.org.