

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

TOWN OF SKYKOMISH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

September 24, 2015



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 major update to the comprehensive plan for the Town of Skykomish, adopted by the town on June 29, 2015. PSRC last certified the Skykomish comprehensive plan in 2005. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with town staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the Town of Skykomish 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 Town of Skykomish 2015 comprehensive plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with 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.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Town of Skykomish 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 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.

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 town'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:

- ☑ Policies emphasizing intergovernmental coordination on transportation-related issues, especially coordination with WSDOT and Washington State Patrol to plan for and mitigate disruptions to US 2 that impact the town, as well as the establishment of a citizen task force to coordinate with King County to address implications of the Old Cascade Highway washout (T-P10, 49).
- ☑ Encouraging the introduction and use of rail, shuttles, and other transit services in Skykomish for transportation, tourism, and recreation (T-P39-41).
- ☑ Numerous policies promoting sidewalk and bicycle trail expansion, as well as promoting pedestrian and bicyclist safety (LU-P7, T-P15-16, 20-24).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- RCW 36.70A.070(6) requires local plans to include a multiyear transportation financing plan for how each jurisdiction will meet the mobility needs identified for the 20-year planning period. While the plan, as adopted, provides important information such as a list of recommended transportation facility improvements through 2035 and their total costs, the town should more fully address financing for identified needs, including:
 1. Provide cost estimates for any improvements needed through the 2035 plan horizon.
 2. Develop an estimate of funding sources, including estimates of total funds available to the town over the planning period.
- The Growth Management Act requires inventories for existing transportation facilities in the transportation element, including roads, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure. The plan update includes inventory tables and discussion that describes town streets. This inventory section should be expanded to address non-motorized facilities, such as sidewalks and bike paths.
- The comprehensive plan discusses Skykomish’s proximity to the Skykomish State Airport and provides helpful context and history of the airport. Since the town is within the airport’s influence area, the plan should also address important issues relative to airport compatible land use, including noise, height hazard, and safety. For more information on addressing airport compatibility, visit the [PSRC Airport Compatible Land Use program website](#). Particularly relevant information can be found in Chapter 4 of PSRC’s recently completed [Airport Compatible Land Use Program report](#). The WSDOT Aviation Division also has [useful information about airport planning](#).

Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted MPPs (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 MPPs, 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. While the plan includes a general description of VISION 2040, the town should more explicitly describe how the plan addresses VISION 2040 when the plan is next amended. 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 town's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- ☑ Promotion of environmental education opportunities for residents as well as partnerships with environmental organizations to promote stewardship (LU-P29).
- ☑ Numerous goals and policies promoting native vegetation, interjurisdictional coordination on environmental issues, and protection of critical areas and open spaces (LU-G4, LU-P26, 30, 36, 40-42).
- ☑ Policies that aim to reduce water pollution, with special attention to reducing stormwater contamination (LU-G8, LU-P3, CF-G7, CF-P30, 41).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- ☐ The multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 and the strategies in Transportation 2040 call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to impacts related to climate change. See page 42 of VISION 2040 for an overview of climate change and related policies and page 34 in Transportation 2040 for information on the four-part greenhouse gas reduction strategy (land use, user fees, choices, and technology). The town's plan includes policies that support positive actions to reduce greenhouse gases, such as provisions that encourage increased development densities and promote alternative modes of transportation to single occupant vehicles (LU-P11, T-P15, 30). However, the plan should be strengthened by adding policies on climate change and policies and provisions that support strategies such as emissions reductions from municipal operations, additional transportation demand management strategies, or increasing tree canopy. 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 the 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 town's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies that encourage clustered development and direct community facilities to be centrally located and accessible (LU-P11, CF-P21).

- ☑ Goals and policies to maintain, preserve, and enhance the town’s historic, cultural, natural, and archaeological resources to enhance the identity of the Skykomish community (LU-G3-5, LU-P20-22).
- ☑ Policies that promote parking at the side and rear of buildings, parking area width limits, and joint-parking opportunities for churches, public buildings, recreation destinations, and commercial areas. (T-P46-47).
- ☑ Promotion of a system of parks, facilities, public trails, and sidewalks (LU-G9-10, T-G1, T-P13).

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 development patterns.

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 town’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Integrating innovative policies and strategies that plan for a diversity of housing types and affordability levels (H-P1, 8-12).
- ☑ Policies that promote housing for low-income and elderly residents, as well as for residents with disabilities (H-P5, 7, 15).
- ☑ Encouraging social and health service organizations that offer support programs for those with special needs and help those residents remain in the community (H-P6).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- ☐ The WAC (365-196-410(2)(c)(ii)) recommends that jurisdictions define and address housing need in a regional context. The housing needs assessment provides valuable insight on affordable housing need and income characteristics within Skykomish. In order to assess both current and projected housing need, the town should reference the King County CPP goal (CPP-H-1) of ensuring that 12% of the housing stock is affordable to households earning 0-30% Area Median Income (AMI), 12% of the housing stock is affordable to households earning 30-50% AMI, and 16% is affordable to households earning 50-80% AMI. For more information on planning for housing, see PSRC’s [Housing Element Guide](#).

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 town’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ ED-P12 prompts the town to work with employers and social service providers to coordinate employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged persons, including support for transportation, dependent day-care, language, and access to housing.
- ☑ Goals and policies that promote the creation of family-wage jobs, new tourism and outdoor recreation industry clusters, and businesses that can be sustained in Skykomish (LU-G7, LU-P14, ED-G2-3).
- ☑ Strategies aimed toward enticing businesses to come to Skykomish, including promotion of a marketing program, telecommunications improvements, regulatory incentives, and public capital facilities infrastructure maintenance (ED-G5, ED-P6-8, UT-P5, 7).

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 town’s comprehensive plan effectively 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:

- ☑ Demand management strategies that promote alternate modes of travel to single occupant vehicles, including integration of sidewalks, trails, and public transportation through coordination with transit providers (T-G5, T-P15, 22-23, 30, 38, 40).
- ☑ Strategies to ensure the safety of Skykomish residents, such as streetlights, appropriate street improvements, buffering between automobiles and pedestrians, and coordination with transportation officials and BNSF to monitor and improve railroad-crossing safety (T-P8, 14, 16, 18-19).
- ☑ Policy T-P3 encourages the connection of streets when considering new street development or street improvements.

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.

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 town’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Encouragement of water conservation to provide for long-term water needs, including through demand management strategies (LU-P32, CF-P29).
- ☑ Promotion of public utility conservation to prevent the need for distribution facility expansion (UT-P11).

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 public services.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the jurisdiction for working through the plan review process. Staff review found that the town has completed the necessary requirements in the update for plan certification. 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 jurisdiction has questions or needs additional information, please contact Yorik Stevens-Wajda at 206-464-6179 or ystevens-wajda@psrc.org.