

VISION 2050



Summary of Comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

May 2019

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Introduction

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is extending the region's growth plan to 2050. VISION 2050, the region's upcoming long-range growth management, economic, and transportation strategy, will build on the region's existing plan, VISION 2040, to keep the central Puget Sound region healthy and vibrant as it grows. As the region prepares to add more people and jobs in the coming decades – about 1.8 million more people by 2050 – VISION 2050 will identify the challenges to tackle together as a region and renew the vision for the next 30 years.

The environmental review process for VISION 2050 includes preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). A Draft SEIS was issued on February 28, followed by a 60-day comment period.

To document the public process to solicit comments on the Draft SEIS for VISION 2050, this report summarizes:

- The environmental review process to date
- Draft SEIS comments received
- Next steps

Environmental Review for VISION 2050

To provide decision-makers information on environmental impacts and benefits of plan alternatives, PSRC is preparing a SEIS. The SEIS contains new information and analysis, and builds on data and analysis contained in the VISION 2040 [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) and other existing environmental documents.

Scoping

PSRC sought community input to shape the plan and SEIS during a scoping period. The scoping process, conducted under SEPA, was designed to inform the public, interest groups, affected tribes, and government agencies about the project, and to gather comments about the key issues to be addressed. A scoping notice was issued on February 2, 2018, for a 45-day comment period that concluded March 19, 2018. A wide range of thoughtful comments were offered during the scoping period, challenging PSRC to revisit the Regional Growth Strategy, address the interconnectedness of policy issues, and to provide better guidance, measurable objectives and targets to assist the region's counties, cities, towns, agencies and businesses to take steps to make VISION a reality. A [scoping report](#) summarizes the scoping process and comments received.

Draft SEIS

The [Draft SEIS](#) for VISION 2050 reviews the environmental effects of three distinct regional growth alternatives being considered for VISION 2050: Stay the Course, Transit Focused Growth, and Reset Urban Growth.

Each of the alternatives is intended to help preserve resource lands, protect rural lands from urban-type development, and promote infill and redevelopment within urban areas to create more compact, walkable, and transit-friendly communities. However, they distribute growth in unique patterns that have different trade-offs. The Draft SEIS shows a range of land use, transportation, environmental, and other impacts that would likely occur with each of these alternatives and identifies opportunities to mitigate them.

Notice of Availability and Public Outreach on the Draft SEIS

The Draft SEIS Notice of Availability was distributed in accordance with SEPA, PSRC's SEPA Procedures, and PSRC's Public Participation Plan. Multiple methods were used, including via PSRC's website and blog, a press release, and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The notice was sent to all PSRC boards and committees, and various PSRC members and stakeholders shared the notice through local forums, newsletters, and social media. The notice was also distributed to PSRC's SEPA notification list, which includes local governments, resource agencies, tribes and other interested parties, as required under SEPA. PSRC also sent letters to leadership at all nine federally-recognized tribes in the region to invite their participation in the planning process.

PSRC welcomed comments through multiple methods, including the Draft SEIS website comment portal, in-person at the April 4, 2019, Growth Management Policy Board meeting, comment forms, email, mail, and fax.

PSRC convened open houses in each of the counties to provide information and engage with jurisdictional staff and elected officials, other stakeholders, and members of the public. Information on PSRC, VISION, the proposed growth alternatives, and the Draft SEIS impacts analysis was provided. More than 100 individuals participated in the open houses. Some participants filled out written forms, which were recorded as comments.

VISION 2050 Draft SEIS Open Houses

Bothell | King County | March 18, 2019

Bremerton | Kitsap County | March 19, 2019

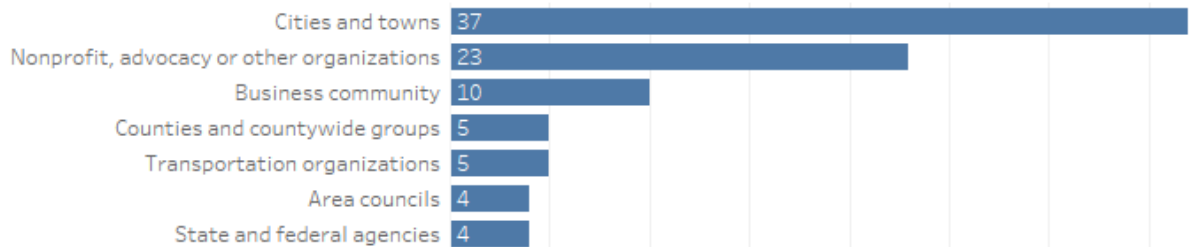
Edmonds | Snohomish County | March 12, 2019

Seattle | King County | March 21, 2019

Tacoma | Pierce County | March 13, 2019

Summary of Comments

During the comment period, PSRC received 150 unique comment communications. About 45% were from public and private organizations and 55% were from individuals. Organizations providing comments included cities, counties, transportation agencies, state and federal agencies, and other organizations as shown below.



The full set of written comments submitted is available on the [VISION 2050 Environmental Review webpage](#). This report provides a summary of key comment themes – the full set of written comments provides additional context.

Comment letters were delineated, with individual delineated comments categorized by the primary topic addressed. Many comments expressed preference for a specific alternative while others recommended specific text edits, clarifications, additions and deletions throughout the Draft SEIS.

Comments on Document Analysis and Organization

While appreciating the regional-level analysis, some commenters requested additional description of impacts and mitigation at the local/county/sub-regional level. Several commenters desired additional discussion of methodology, assumptions, and

limitations of modeling used to develop growth allocations. Several additional analysis tools were suggested to include in the environmental analysis. Suggestions for additional analysis is describe below by topic. Regarding the impact summary table in the Executive Summary, several commenters felt that it presented a clear summary of alternatives' impacts, while others felt that the differences in impacts captured were negligible. Some commenters look forward to seeing the multicounty planning policy analysis in the Final SEIS.

Comments on Regional Growth Alternatives

The highest number of comments received were on the alternatives evaluated. The Transit Focused Growth alternative received the most support, with supporters citing the compact development pattern, reduction in land developed and environmental impacts, and increased access to transit as key benefits. However, commentators expressed concern that the alternative has more population growth in areas with higher displacement risk. Some commenters felt that allocating 75% of growth around transit is unrealistic and would be challenging to implement. Some comments suggested different allocations for regional geographies, while expressing general support for the Transit Focused Growth alternative.

A small number of commenters expressed support for the Stay the Course alternative. They noted that cities and counties have already made planning decisions around VISION 2040 growth assumptions.

Many commenters expressed opposition to the Reset Urban Growth alternative as it results in increased congestion and growth in rural areas. Several commenters felt the alternative would not be consistent with Growth Management Act goals. On the other hand, some commenters felt Reset Urban Growth may be a more realistic alternative and growth pattern, and could help take the burden off large cities and provide opportunities for affordable housing and increased economic growth to outlying areas.

Some commenters suggested a hybrid of the Stay the Course and Transit Focused Growth alternatives. Others proposed development of an alternative that reduces greenhouse gas emissions more significantly than any of the alternatives presented.

Many comments expressed strong support for the Regional Growth Strategy in general. Some comments expressed that the Regional Growth Strategy is a good vision, but unrealistic to implement. Some expressed that the Regional Growth Strategy would be difficult to achieve without adequate funding for transportation, utilities, and other public infrastructure.

Many comments appreciated the updated regional geographies. Several recommended combining unincorporated areas within other regional geographies.

Comments by Category

In addition to comments on the growth alternatives, comments related to specific planning topics were made. The chart below shows the number of comments made by planning topic. Some key comment themes by topic are provided in the table below.



Topic	# of Comments
Transportation	68
Commenters asked for additional discussion of local transit, freight, first-mile/last-mile considerations and impacts related to autonomous vehicle technology, transportation network companies (i.e., Uber, Lyft), and e-commerce. Commenters also asked for additional discussion of aviation and impacts from expanding aviation facilities. Commenters supported the strong integration of transit into land use planning but expressed general concern with increased congestion. Some questioned the small amount of differentiation between alternatives for transportation measures.	

Land Use

60

Commenters supported alternatives that:

- Reduced growth in rural areas and outside or near the Urban Growth Area
- Focused growth in Regional Growth Centers and around transit
- Protected open spaces

Commenters expressed concern over challenges in updating land use plans and regulations to support planned growth patterns. Some commenters suggested more consideration of impacts on manufacturing/industrial centers and military installations. More consideration of impacts of increased high-density development on community character was also suggested. A few commenters noted that it may be realistic to assume that the Urban Growth Area may need to be expanded in the future to accommodate growth.

Planning Process

49

Some comments encouraged more meaningful public participation, transparency, and accountability. Several jurisdictions emphasized the desire to maintain flexibility at the local level for setting population and employment growth targets and to use a bottom-up planning approach instead of top-down. Commenters expressed the desire for increased involvement between PSRC and local jurisdictions during the growth target planning process and for better understanding of what consistency with VISION 2050 means. Some stated that local jurisdictions do not have the control to meet growth targets as many external factors are beyond local control, including market factors, economic conditions, consumer choice, and vested development rights. There is interest in understanding the timing of growth and how it will occur through 2050, with a suggestion to provide interim year growth assignments.

Housing

46

Many commenters expressed interest in greater percentages of moderate-density housing as part of the preferred alternative. Affordable housing was mentioned as a key topic that must be addressed, including the development of effective displacement mitigation tools.

Environmental Justice/Equity

32

Affordable housing and displacement were key issues of concern for many commenters and they suggested expanded and more specific analysis and mitigation for these topics. Several commenters appreciated the effort to evaluate impacts to communities of color and low-income communities and the inclusion of an equity-focused appendix.

Climate Change 29

Commenters felt that more ambitious targets should be set for greenhouse gas reductions and suggested creating a carbon dioxide equivalent wedge chart in support of greenhouse gas reduction goals. Commenters suggested additional discussion of climate impacts on community and natural resources.

Economy/Employment 29

Commenters noted the importance of ports, manufacturing/industrial centers, and freight on the economy. Commenters remarked on the importance of jobs-housing balance and how a better jobs-housing balance should be achieved in all communities across the region. Some commenters felt that more employment was needed outside of King County for an equitable distribution of jobs across region. Some expressed the need for rural areas to have more rural-centered economic opportunities, while avoiding extensions of urban industrial activity into rural areas. Some commenters suggested additional economic measures.

General Environmental 27

Many commenters expressed the importance of protecting the environment in general. Environmental considerations were key factors in supporting certain growth alternatives. Commenters supported measures to mitigate the impacts of development.

Public Services and Utilities 22

Some commenters emphasized that public service and utilities costs are generally less when growth is directed to compact areas/dense urban growth, while others commented that providing services for infill are also resource intensive. Commenters expressed concern that the mitigation measures listed would not be sufficient to handle increased population demands on public services and utilities. A better understanding of funding sources available for public services and utilities to support the growth scenarios would be helpful. Expansion of services and utilities are not fully funded at the local level.

Water Quality and Hydrology 19

Commenters expressed an overall concern for water quality in the region. Commenters suggested additional discussion on climate change impacts, long-term water supply challenges, access to clean water in schools, groundwater, stormwater, and equitable access to clean water.

Parks and Recreation **12**

Commenters support providing green and open spaces, stating that they are critical for maintaining quality of life, preserving ecosystems and counteracting climate change. Equitable access to parks and recreation resources is a concern for some. Commenters expressed support for incorporating policies and actions from the Regional Open Space Conservation Plan into VISION 2050, including identification of funding source to implement open space strategies. Some commenters stated that recreational facilities in rural areas need regional support to accommodate increased visitation from urban residents.

Ecosystems **10**

Many commenters emphasized the importance of protecting ecosystems and reducing impacts. Some suggested identifying ecologically important areas at the local level for greater protection.

Public Health **9**

Some commenters suggested including a health impact assessment as part of the environmental analysis and recommended defining where public health disparities exist and where needs are the greatest.

Historic, Cultural, and Archaeological **8**

Some commenters suggested that cultural resources protection and preservation and accompanying mitigation should play a larger role in implementing the selected alternative. Some suggested additional information to add to the historic sites figure and analysis.

Energy **8**

Some commenters stated that energy conservation and promotion of alternative energy sources are insufficient to address climate change. Some stated that national projections of energy use likely do not reflect trends in Washington.

Air Quality **7**

Some commenters asked why there are only slight differences in emission reductions between alternatives. Suggestions were made to include equity considerations from air quality impacts with an aim to reduce disparities. Some commenters suggested including discussion of construction-related air quality impacts and associated mitigation.

Visual Quality

7

Commenters suggested incorporating Dark Night Sky objectives and increased importance of visual quality in rural areas. Some expressed that the section should acknowledge the subjective nature of visual quality and aesthetic analysis.

Earth

5

Some commenters suggested better communication to address hazard risks in areas where additional development will occur. Some suggested additional information to add to the Regional Geologic Hazard Areas figure.

Contamination/Hazardous Materials

5

Commenters emphasized the importance of cleaning up contaminated sites to the Regional Growth Strategy and human and environmental health. Some commenters expressed concern about contamination in rural areas and the siting of industrial facilities in rural areas that support urban populations.

Noise

5

Commenters suggested additional discussion of aviation noise, noise impacts in rural areas, and lack of enforcement of noise levels.

Mitigation

Mitigation strategies were suggested for almost all resources. The most common mitigation tools suggested focused on housing affordability, displacement, climate change, land use, and transportation. Comments related to mitigation ranged from addition of new mitigation measures, edits to existing mitigation measures, and deletion of mitigation measures that are already in place in some jurisdictions. Some commenters recommended that mitigation measures include more specificity and that they be continually refined, strengthened, and adapted.

Next Steps

Gathering public comments on the Draft SEIS is an important step in developing VISION 2050. Next steps include developing a preferred growth strategy, responding to comments, preparing a Final SEIS, and adopting the plan.

Developing a Preferred Growth Strategy

The Growth Management Policy Board and Regional Staff Committee is reviewing comments on the Draft SEIS and working to develop a preferred growth alternative, which may be a hybrid of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft SEIS. The board will use several tools in the development process:

- [Draft SEIS](#) and [evaluation criteria summary](#) of the Draft SEIS
- Summary of Draft SEIS public comments
- Supplemental technical evaluation
- Board priorities based on discussions at board meetings

The preferred growth alternative will be presented in the draft VISION 2050 plan, which is expected to be issued in the summer of 2019. A 60-day public comment period on the draft plan will follow issuance of the plan.

Responding to Comments

In addition to sharing comments with PSRC boards and committees, PSRC will develop responses to comments on the Draft SEIS and consider updates to the SEIS analysis as appropriate. As required by SEPA, all comments and responses will be provided in the Final SEIS.

Final SEIS and VISION 2050 Adoption

Following the public comment period on the draft plan, the Growth Management Policy Board will review comments and consider updates to the plan, including the preferred growth alternative and multicounty planning policies. In early 2020, a Final SEIS will be issued with updates to the environmental analysis on the multicounty planning policies, preferred growth alternative, and the three alternatives presented in the Draft SEIS. PSRC's Executive Board is expected to recommend adoption of VISION 2050 in the spring of 2020. Adoption of VISION 2050 by the General Assembly is scheduled to occur at the General Assembly meeting later that spring.

VISION 2050 Work Program

