

**Skagit County Planning Commission
2016 Comprehensive Plan Update
Transportation Element: Workshop, Presentations and Commission Discussion
March 17, 2015**

Commissioners: **Josh Axthelm, Chair
Keith Greenwood, Vice Chair
Robert Temples
Kathy Mitchell
Tammy Candler**

Staff: **Dale Pernula, Planning Director
Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner**

Speakers: **Kevin Murphy, Skagit Council of Governments Executive Director
Paul Randall-Grutter, County Engineer (Public Works)
Sara Young, Port of Skagit Planning & Facilities Director/Airport
Manager
Liz McNett Crowl, Skagit Regional Health Healthy Communities
Coordinator**

Consultant: **Lisa Grueter, BERK Consulting**

Others: **John Pope, Skagit County Resident**

Chair Josh Axthelm: I'd like to welcome you out tonight to our Planning Commission meeting and I guess officially call this meeting to order. And if you take a look at your agenda, we have – or – thank you for coming to the open house and speaking with everybody there. The first element will be the Transportation Element and Public Workshop, and I would like to introduce our Planning Commissioners for those of the public that don't know them. If you would stand and introduce yourself, actually. Robert? Robert Temples.

Robert Temples: Robert Temples!

(laughter)

Kathy Mitchell: Kathy Mitchell.

Tammy Candler: Tammy Candler.

Keith Greenwood: Keith Greenwood.

Chair Axthelm: And we're missing a few Planning Commissioners – Kevin Meenaghan, Amy Hughes and Matt Mahaffie are not present tonight. And Annie Lohman is not present as well. Actually I didn't have her checked off.

Okay, so with that, we'll turn the time over to Dale.

Dale Pernula: Okay, I'm Dale Pernula. I'm the Planning Director for Skagit County and I just wanted to go over briefly what this meeting's about. The last time a Comprehensive Plan was prepared and adopted was 2007, and by state statute we're required to update it by June of 2016. And there's a lot of work that goes into it – a lot of public processes, and this is one of those processes. It's being done in accordance with the Growth Management Act of Washington. That Growth Management Act has – originally had thirteen goals and they added a fourteenth one that dealt with Shoreline Management.

Anyway, there are eight required Elements of Comprehensive Plans and I'll go over those real quick: Land Use, Housing, Capital Facilities, Utilities, Rural, Transportation, Economic Development, and Parks and Recreation. And this is the Transportation Element that we're going to be talking about tonight.

I'll let Kirk Johnson go over what the specifics are in terms of the requirements of the Growth Management Act for Transportation. So I'll turn it over to Kirk.

We've got Lisa and Ron Wesen. I should also point out that we have two County Commissioners here tonight: Lisa Janicki and Ron Wesen in the back. Thanks.

Kirk Johnson: Now I'm wondering why we've set a microphone up up here because it's kind of awkward to be standing at a microphone in front of a bunch of people, but I'll do my best. So I'm going to talk just a little bit to kind of introduce the overview speakers who we'll have, and I'm going to talk a little bit about what the Growth Management Act requires in terms of transportation planning, and then what's in our Comprehensive Plan, and then some of the things that we'll be looking at through the 2016 Update.

So the Growth Management Act requires the County to have a Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and the element – there's actually a pretty big laundry list of things that have to be in the element but I've tried to boil it down into at least things that I understand.

So it needs to contain population and employment growth projections, or basically the growth projections that are a part of the Comprehensive Plan as a whole. And we're looking at updating those projections currently for the 2016 Update and they'll be for a 20-year period, so through 2036. So the growth projections for transportation planning are the same as the growth projections for land use planning.

And then we need to have estimates of future travel, based on the projected population and employment growth – what we expect that to do in terms of use of the road system or the transportation system in the county. So from those future travel estimates, a forecast of future transportation system needs. And Skagit Council of Governments maintains a regional transportation model and so we work very closely with them to do the modeling of the growth and how that affects the transportation system. Kevin Murphy will talk about that in a little bit.

And then we also need to have a financing plan to meet the needs for the increased or improved or expanded transportation system for the population and employment growth.

And then a really key element is intergovernmental coordination to ensure the integration of the transportation systems of the County with the Cities within the county, and also the state,

because a transportation network doesn't work very well if it ends at the borders of the county and it's different, you know, in the cities or the state.

And then because not all travel or transportation is by motor vehicle, the GMA requires a pedestrian and bicycle component to identify and designate pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that encourage community access and promote healthy lifestyles.

So when I read those required elements in a comprehensive plan for transportation, I see – come up with two takeaways, and one is that the County's transportation system needs to be integrated with its land use plan. So again, what the population and employment that we're expecting; what that's going to mean in terms of increased travel demand; how that's going to affect the transportation system; and then how – if we're going to build to meet those needs – how that is going to be financed and paid for. And then also the County's transportation system needs to be coordinated with the jurisdictions around it and with the state.

So the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Element is chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, and that's what we're focusing on here today. And so, as with all of the chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, there's a Profile, which is a narrative section that includes some data that talks about kind of the transportation system in the county, and then there's also what we call the Element, which includes the goals and policies, which we are also required under the Growth Management to have goals and policies establishing how we're going to plan for transportation in the county.

We also have a Transportation Systems Plan which is separate from the Comprehensive Plan. And whereas the Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2007, the Transportation Systems Plan hasn't been updated since 2003 and so it's got a lot of outdated information in it, and one of the things that we're considering through this Update – and we've talked with the Planning Commission about that before – is doing away with the Transportation Systems Plan and then moving the necessary components of that into a technical appendix that would be a part of the Comprehensive Plan. So the Comprehensive Plan would have the profile, the element with the goals and policies, and then the technical appendix. And so it would be really one place you could go for most of what you need in terms of the County's transportation planning.

So the primary goal in the Comprehensive Plan's Transportation Element, Goal A, says the following – and it's interesting that it also emphasizes coordination – “Plan and maintain a safe and efficient system for the movement of people and goods in partnership with the Skagit Council of Governments.” So because what we're required to do involves coordination to a great extent and also because it involves integrating with the land use planning, we've asked Kevin Murphy to come speak – and I'm going to introduce all of the speakers in a row here – to talk about the integration element and also about the coordination element.

And then to talk specifically about the County's transportation system, we have Paul Randall-Grutter, who's the County Engineer, and he's going to talk about the County's transportation network and how the County prioritizes and plans for and finances and implements projects, whether to maintain the existing system or build expansions to it.

And then because transportation and economic development are so closely aligned – and there is a goal in the County's Transportation Element that states “Support economic development goals by providing adequate air, rail and surface freight handling route and facilities throughout the County transportation system” – we've asked Sara Young, who's the Planning and Facilities Manager and the Airport Manager from the Port of Skagit, to talk a little bit about what the Port

hears from the businesses and the industries that they work with and others in the county in terms of what the key needs are for the big shippers, the big employers for maintaining a healthy economy in Skagit County.

And then finally we'll have a presentation on non-motorized transportation and physical activity. As I noted earlier, GMA requires a transportation element to include a pedestrian and bicycle component, and Goal A-6 in the Transportation Element calls for a "safe and efficient network of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-road facilities, that link populated areas of the county with important travel destinations. So to speak about non-motorized transportation and healthy communities, we'll have Liz McNett Crowl, who's the Healthy Communities Coordinator from Skagit Regional Health. So first off, Kevin.

Kevin Murphy: Thank you, Kirk. So what I wanted to talk today about is really a couple things. One is, as Kirk mentioned, kind of the regional transportation planning and how it relates to the County's Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Element, and a little bit about how those interrelate.

As Kirk kind of mentioned, you know, the Skagit Council of Governments, which is the regional transportation planning organization for Skagit County, does a lot of the intergovernmental coordination between the jurisdictions, and is actually mentioned in the County's Comprehensive Plan regarding transportation.

A little bit of context regarding the growth that Kirk talked about and remind folks in the Planning Commission of the initial allocations that we talked about last year.

Then I'll do a little bit about transportation funding because that ends up being one of the key elements in anybody's transportation plan – is how you're going to pay for the needs that you've identified.

So this is a slide that shows a lot of the state law references. So essentially, though, the takeaway from these is the regional transportation planning organization, which is the Council of Governments, does have a role in guiding the County's Transportation Element and also we have to certify your Transportation Element and look at your Countywide Planning Policies, as per the state law.

So the two plans have a number of relationships. Cities and Counties develop the comprehensive plans; you develop the countywide planning policies; and the Regional Transportation Plan has to be consistent with those local comprehensive plans and has to be consistent with those countywide planning policies. So there's a top-down and a bottom-up consistency that needs to be achieved through the comprehensive planning process. So our Regional Transportation Plans are developed in concert with the local comprehensive plans and those countywide planning policies. And, in addition, we use – in the state law there's a requirement that they be consistent, and so I'll talk a little bit about how we demonstrate consistency through these processes. But we do achieve consistency and help the County achieve consistency with your neighboring jurisdictions by integrating these things at a regional level.

So that planning consistency has a couple pieces to it. One is regional transportation projects – large capacity-widening projects, for example – have to be consistent – literally pretty much have to be the same in both the County's Transportation Element and the regional plan. We can't have projects in our plan that are suggesting we widen a county road that's not in your

plan, and vice-versa. So that has to get worked out through the process. At the end of the day, the regional plan wins on that one, by the way, so that is in state law that you have to be consistent with the regional plan for regional projects. All the other projects, it's basically local determination.

We're also the link, as Kirk mentioned, between providing the state's plans consistent with the regional plans and therefore consistent with yours. The Transportation Element has to include the state systems in it, but the consistency is really achieved in the regional plan. So we adopt the regional plan locally but we adopt the state projects in that regional plan. The state essentially can't by themselves tell you what's going to be in the regional plan. The region makes that decision.

And, as Kirk mentioned, we achieve part of the consistency through using a similar growth allocation between all the jurisdictions. And then we produce the regional travel demand model and forecasts that the County uses in their Transportation Element, consistent with those forecasts. So we produce the forecasts for all the jurisdictions in Skagit County and provide those to the County for the work.

So this is the initial allocations that the Growth Management Act Steering Committee adopted last July. You don't need to worry about the details. The main points here are – these are initial; they're not final. The plan that Kirk mentioned earlier that you planned for – your current plan – essentially planned for 149,000 people in the county and it was a 2025 horizon year. The new growth allocation is 155,000 people for 2036, so it's ten years later roughly but only 6400 more people. So the growth that you're planning for really isn't on a magnitude significantly different even though your plan is ten years later. So that should make some of the work a bit easier, frankly.

The other major piece that's different in this is Bayview Ridge is no longer an urban growth area for residential in these allocations. So from a county perspective that's key. The growth isn't really that different countywide, but Bayview is now viewed as an *employment* urban growth area, not a *residential* urban growth area, which could change your Transportation Element.

So now I'm going to move into just kind of the transportation funding side of things which is a key component to both the regional plan and the County's Transportation Element. So this is just an example of our current plan. So the metropolitan component of our current plan, which is really the Skagit – we're – Skagit/Island is the regional plan, but this is more the Skagit side of it. We estimate about \$440 million in revenue all the way out to 2030. But the main takeaway here is fully 430 million of that was for what we call non-capital needs, which is preservation, maintenance, operations, traffic, administration. So it was kind of the basic needs of the county collective – this is cities, towns, state. The vast majority of the needs in Skagit County are for – I mean, it's preservation of the existing system.

The capital component or the expansion component of the plan was between 54 and 190 million dollars. So this is road widening, park and ride lots, non-motorized facilities, regional trails, new transportation facilities or capacity, which results roughly in a 43 million to 178 million dollar funding gap over that life of the plan. And then we're required by state law and federal law – and you are, as well – to basically have a financial strategy that addresses that gap, and we have one currently on the books that talks about a number of financial strategies. Kirk already mentioned this, but the Transportation Element of the County's Plan has to have a financing plan as well. Those financing plans between the region and the County shouldn't be significantly different. We shouldn't have – my goal would not have the regional plan have financial

strategies that the County would not embrace in their Transportation Element. So we should generally be all on the same page at the end of the day when our plans are done on what the financing strategy is.

Showing a little bit of just data about what's been going on: So this is just County revenues and expenditures from 2001 to 2012, which is the data that I have. It ranges from anywhere from a little over 15 million dollars – in 2012 it spiked up to about 31, 32 million dollars with additional grants. But this kind of gives you a trajectory of what the revenues and expenditures were. Your *actual* revenues and expenditures, not *planned* revenues and expenditures.

You know, breaking that down (in) a little bit more detail for just 2012: So 32 million dollars in expenditures; 31 million dollars in revenues; maintenance and preservation was 34% of the 2012 number while construction was 45%. On the revenue side, 43% of that 31 million dollars is local revenue, so that's County property tax, the ferry fares, other local revenue. So 43% of your 2012 revenues were local sources. 22% were federal. You know, the vast majority of County revenues are essentially local and I think 2012 is a spike year for grant funding for the County.

So we also have a board out that gives us more detail. But we are updating the Regional Transportation Plan currently, so we've done the initial allocations, as I showed. We're running the travel demand model for those initial allocations. That'll be done this month to provide the County those forecasts. We'll be doing our financial discussions in the spring to the summer; releasing a draft plan anticipated in January; and final plan in – we have to have it done by March/April.

That's it for my presentation. Do you want me just to turn it over to Paul?

Mr. Johnson: Dale? Sure – yeah.

Paul Randall-Gutter: Good evening. I'm Paul Randall-Gutter. I'm the County Engineer. I'm just here to talk about how we program and select projects – you know, get an idea of how we move them forward. The big question usually that we get is how we decide to do projects. We plan them first. We use many different tools to develop what we put on our plans. We look at our level of service, our traffic flows, the safety of the roads – you know, how many crashes have been at these different road segments. We look at our priority array, which is just different segments of different roads, and there's a long list of factors that go into a formula, you know, such as volumes, accidents, horizontal curves, vertical curves. And it goes into a formula and it spits out a rating and so we have a rating, you know, from – a high number means it's not a very good segment that we would like to improve at some time but we have to put it on our plan and look for the funding later on down the line. We get comments from the public quite often because we have over 800 miles of road and we can't see those all the time. We have our road maintenance crews out and they identify different problem areas periodically, but the citizens out there, they're the ones who bring us a lot of the issues that help us address places where we can fix things that we can.

Development that comes up – you know, any kind of residential developments or industrial developments – there's concurrency where they have to meet a certain level of service, and improvements may come with the different developments. And elected officials, you know, they help us set the policy and work with the Cities and the different agencies and the state and the federal government to identify different projects also.

So the Six-Year TIP, or the Transportation Improvement Program, it's a long range planning tool, you know, where we have to – we – sorry – we readdress it every year, so it's on a six-year scale. So we identify – you know, look at our priority array and all the different problems out there that we have – long-term projects that we feel could be improved to help our transportation system, but it's a – at this stage, when it's on the TIP, we haven't secured the funding for it. We haven't done the planning – or we haven't done the design for it, we haven't done all the environmental studies for it because it's still in the planning phase. Because in a project there's basically four different levels of a project. We plan it, or there's the planning phase, and then there's the design and permitting phase, and then a right-of-way phase, then a construction phase. So in the design and permitting phase, that's when we go out with all the environmental studies and get all our permits and get it ready for construction.

And then in the TIP, you know, we have to have a public hearing every year towards the end of the year that – (we) bring it in front of the Board and they accept it. And that's mandated by the state so we have to advertise that for a couple of weeks beforehand, and then the Board hears testimony from the public, and they either adopt or we revise it. But every year before the adoption of the budget we have to adopt our Transportation Improvement Program. Then once we complete, you know, the County's TIP, we send it to SCOG for them to include it into the regional TIP, which gets sent on to the state, which gets put on the STIP, which is the State Transportation Improvement Program. So changes can be done to the TIP anytime during the year but if we do that we have to have a public hearing again and go through the same old process. And once we finish the TIP in one year we start working on the next year's TIP, so it's a perpetual process basically.

And then after we identify all of our projects, the biggest thing we try and do is seek funding to construct them because, you know, you may all know that these projects cost quite a bit of money and we don't just have a big bank account setting back there to do all these things we'd like to. So the County Road Administration Board, or CRAB, they oversee or help guide counties for the rural roads and they help us – they have a – they're set up – they're a state agency that they allocate funding for certain projects that are set up – they're brought up in the county regions that get selected by the different counties and then they go through a grading process through CRAB, and then CRAB selects different projects that can be funded.

Then there's always federal funding. There can be discretionary funding such as ferry – there's a ferry boat discretionary fund that allocates funding periodically. Forest lands – when harvests come in we can get some money into the road fund for that. And the Bridge Replacement Advisory Committee has bridge funding that we can replace some of our bridges. We have a large grant right now to replace the Burlington Northern overpass. And then the highway safety program: Periodically the federal government comes out with a large safety program. Our Pioneer Highway-Fir Island Road intersection was a safety program that we got funding for that.

The state has different funding models that we can find funding for different projects also.

And then the RTPO: The SCOG, they provide the Surface Transportation Program that allocates federal funding throughout – or for different projects.

That's all I have.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah, so Sara Young from the Port is next. And if people have a few questions and if we have time we can take a few after all of the speakers have spoken. We have Sara and then Liz McNett Crowl.

Sara Young: Can I stand here?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah.

Ms. Young: I'm PowerPointless.

(laughter)

Ms. Young: I'm on a one-woman crusade to end PowerPoint ____. Who's with me?

(laughter)

Ms. Young: No, these were good. I'm without a doubt the least qualified person to talk about transportation here tonight, but I work for the Port, the Port of Skagit, and our business is to support business, and transportation assets are one of the greatest things we have going for us in Skagit County. So I can talk just a little bit from the business side and from the side of a port district who has our own investment in some of our regional transportation assets.

We own – at the Port – we own and operate Skagit Regional Airport and we have La Conner Marina in La Conner on the Swinomish Channel. We're very involved with a number of our regional partners to get the Swinomish Channel dredged on a three-year cycle so that it can continue to be used for freight mobility through our region. So we have a local stake in it.

The other thing I wanted to start by mentioning was that my Port district just celebrated its 50th anniversary, and when the citizens of the district voted the Port into existence in 1964 the first comprehensive plan for the Port was one that was really based on transportation. The mission at the time was to support the resource-based economy in Skagit County. That was mining and agriculture and fisheries and forestry. And those founding fathers had a vision of freight terminals up and down the Skagit River corridor – so rail terminals and truck terminals, shipping terminals on the Skagit River. So transportation, you know, has always been really essential to our economy in Skagit County. That's true nationwide, but it's important in our small, rural county here.

And those were maybe the easy days when we had sort of the development of our backbone of infrastructure and had to decide what that was going to look like, and now we have that backbone. And when we think about our county and its sort of economic competitiveness, transportation is one of those things that we talk about a lot at the Port. Location might be the first thing. Skagit County has a great advantage in being located centrally between the urban centers of Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., so we're located within about 100 miles of 6½ million people. So we have this great rural quality of life here but we have the benefit of a lot of big-city access for our businesses.

So we also have a very complete transportation system, which is maybe unique for a small county like ours. We have the I-5 corridor access. We have our east-west Highway 20 corridor. So we have great highway access. We have a deep-water marine terminal, which is a pretty special asset. So our waterways are really vital here. The Swinomish Channel is basically a water highway corridor that moves the majority of our recreational boaters from the Seattle-King County-Snohomish County area to the south through to the San Juans, so a huge part of our tourism economy but also we see a lot of freight being moved on that channel throughout the year.

Our rail corridors: We're part of the Great Northern Rail Corridor. We have great rails for a very significant rail spur that serves all of our heavy industrial property in the Fredonia area and March's Point. And we have three airports in Skagit County – we have Concrete Municipal, Anacortes Airport, and Skagit Regional Airport – and they all serve a really unique function.

So our transportation assets are intricately connected to our economy here in the valley. And as we work with our businesses, you know, I think we hear that a lot of the advantage to locating in Skagit County has to do with those transportation assets. We're not hearing a lot of limitations to businesses at this point. When we talk with businesses about what's going on, I think a lot of it is being felt more by the shippers and the haulers right now. We're very involved in value-added agriculture right now. I talked to some of the major agricultural haulers in the area. They're feeling things like congestion to the north and to the south. Those are things that are really beginning to impact us here in this valley, and our businesses see it in maybe indirect ways and increased costs. They're not doing that shipping themselves, but when you talk to those shippers they've now stopped paying their drivers by the mile and they're paying their drivers by the hour, because their drivers are spending so much time sitting in traffic. So those are real costs that we're feeling in this valley and we need to be aware of when we're thinking about our regional transportation planning.

Rail: I would say, as a part of the Port world, the Port world talks about rail a lot, and it's a very different perspective than we talk about as a citizen. You know, citizens of Skagit County and all the rail concerns that are out there nationwide right now, but we're really feeling it locally. Our rail carriers are putting massive capital investment in their system and we need to be thinking about what that means long-term, regardless of the commodity that's being carried today. But we need to think about having that capacity in our entire transportation system. So that's something that our businesses, I think, are concerned about – making sure that we have access to multi-modal transportation; that we have adequate capacity to handle whatever might come down the road in the future and that we're getting ahead of that, because you just don't turn around and build rail spurs and improve our infrastructure overnight. We need to be thinking ahead.

So those are things that our businesses are concerned about.

In the waterway world, the Swinomish Channel is something that the Port works on a lot. Like I say, we go back to Washington, D.C. every year and lobby for funding for dredging the Swinomish Channel. The Swinomish Channel is a major economic asset to our community, but it doesn't meet the threshold for Army Corps of Engineers programmed funding for dredging. So we have to go back and we have to try to find small pots of money where we can get that channel dredged.

If you're into the boating world or if you're a part of the tourism economy and you really believe in that huge fleet of recreational boaters that are coming through every year, we need to make sure that that asset continues to be viable.

I mentioned that we own and operate Skagit Regional Airport. The Port has really gone about developing that asset deliberately for business use in the valley. We're a port district and so our mission is economic development, and we want to make sure that we're managing our assets to further those goals. And so to that end, we've improved the airport so that it can handle any class of business jet that you might see out there, and every year we're seeing an increasing number of business jets coming in to our valley using that airport basically as an onramp or off-

ramp to our community. Long term we'd like to see a runway extension, and the goal of that would be that those transcontinental business jets that come into the valley now could leave this valley and go straight to Europe or Asia and be able to do business directly.

So bottom line: It's essential that we get ahead of this, that we be thinking about our transportation infrastructure. Again, our businesses, I think, are maybe not feeling this so much, but when you talk to those very specific transportation businesses – the shippers and the haulers that are dealing with our capacity limitations on the rail end or getting through congestion on I-5 north and south of Skagit County on a daily basis – we are starting to run out of slack in the system. We're starting to run up against capacity and that's starting to translate to some increased costs, and we need to be thinking about that as a county.

That's it. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Sara.

Liz McNett Crowl: Good evening. I'm Liz McNett Crowl. I'm the Coordinator of Skagit Healthy Communities at Skagit Regional Health. I work with community partners to increase access to healthy nutrition and physical activity to fight obesity and chronic disease.

The obesity epidemic has huge consequences on the health and economy of our nation. It's linked to a rise in major chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Chronic diseases cost our nation billions and billions in health care costs and reduce the quality of life. Transportation planning has the ability to prevent and reduce the numbers of obese-related diseases by incorporating people-based planning. The people who walk, bike, ride transit, have disabilities should be just as important as the people who drive. About 66% of adult Americans are overweight or obese. 80% do not meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity, and rates of diseases and premature death continue to rise. Skagit County generally reflects the trends of our nation and state. We're not unique when it comes to chronic disease, obesity, and overweight.

Updating the Transportation Element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan is a great opportunity for us to look at how we plan and build a transportation network that meets the needs of all of our residents, supporting successful and sustainable options for active living. Looking for ways to plan safe environments for people who walk, bike, and use transit helps ensure that our residents have better access to more places. Creating opportunities for people to be physically active and considering the needs of all people supports health for all Skagit County residents.

Our County's transportation plan has a responsibility to provide a transportation network for our rural, non-urban residents, but it must also look to how we support our urban areas in the same plan. Our cities and towns are like islands, each responsible for transportation planning for their residents, but linked by the County providing a strong, connected transportation network for all users. Investing in transportation facilities impacts the health of our residents and our county's economy. Our county is a gateway to truly amazing natural resources like the San Juan Islands, our agricultural heritage, and the North Cascades, attracting tourists from all over the world. We have an opportunity to expand on the economic benefits that active recreation and transportation offer. Skagit County resident John Pope, in partnership with Washington Bikes and the Washington State Department of Transportation, were successful in getting national U.S. Bike Route 10 designated across Washington state last year. There will be three more routes – two more routes: Route 10 is one of two additional routes that will come through Skagit

County. So Route 10 is the first of the three routes that will travel through Skagit County, bringing with them people who need places to eat, sleep, and buy supplies as they tour our state and the nation. By working with community partners to develop a transportation network that meets the needs of all people in Skagit County, we invest in our county's health, economy, and future, making Skagit County a great place, a healthy place, to live, work, and play.

Mr. Johnson: So now we're going to transition to the small group discussion part of the evening, which I'm sure a lot of you are here for. And so Lisa Grueter from BERK Consulting is going to help facilitate that and talk a little bit about how we're going to break up into the groups and the questions we'll be talking about.

Lisa Grueter: Before we get to the small group discussion, I just wanted to see if there were any questions for our speakers, which were Kevin, Paul, Sara, and Liz. Any questions? Yes?

Ms. Mitchell: A short one for Liz: You said there were three routes.

Ms. McNett Crowl: Yes.

Ms. Mitchell: Where are the other two?

Ms. McNett Crowl: John?

John Pope: They're actually down the metro corridor. One is from Vancouver to Portland – Vancouver, B.C. to Portland, not Vancouver, Washington. Another one is slightly east of that, also down the metro corridor so they'd be more like Highway 9 all the way down – Yelm Highway when you get down farther. There's a third one and that would sit on top of the metro corridor route and then split on off across through Coupeville down the Kitsap Peninsula and out to Astoria to take the coast route. So there's three routes that will impact Skagit County and bring more visitors. We already have people up and down that route now.

Ms. McNett Crowl: Kathy? If I could just add: I think it's really important for people to know that even though John said "on certain routes," those routes have not been ground-truthed and, you know, we would be looking for the safest routes as we come through the county. And knowing that these routes could be coming through the county would be an opportunity for us to look for what some of those potentially off-road or how to make some of those routes safer in our planning process.

Ms. Grueter: Any more questions?

Mr. Greenwood: This is for Kevin. Do you determine what that funding gap is and then pass that down to the County for them to deal with? Or did you work from the – some information that's given from the County to you? Do you do both the regional plans, you develop the projections, and then do you determine what the funding gap is?

Mr. Murphy: It goes both ways. So the County component is one of – we have to deal with the state revenues, so WSDOT revenues and expenditures; city revenues and expenditures; transit revenues and expenditures. So we will look to the County and the Transportation Element to do the baseline forecast for County revenues and then we'll combine that with the revenues of all those other sources and look at – what the County is figuring is their gap added with all the other gaps and then address strategies for all of those by _____. So some strategies would be appropriate for the County but not a city, but it would be done in cooperation, in conjunction. So

we won't say what the gap is and push it down. It'll be basically a back and forth process. So our plan will be further out the horizon than theirs will be, frankly, so we'll have to go out to 2040 or beyond because of our rules. So they'll be consistent but not necessarily exactly the same.

Mr. Greenwood: Yes, but how do you manage it in light of the – as Paul mentioned, the transportation Six-Year Plan doesn't even have its funding sources nailed down, let alone the project itself. So how do you come up with what the funding gap would be based upon –

Mr. Murphy: It's going to be uncertain. It ends up being an estimate in a range. So, I mean, this is going to be a 20-, 30-year number so we'll do a planning estimate of what the project costs should be. Some will be pretty accurate because you're going to be doing them ____, but some will be an estimate that's going to take ten million dollars to do the bridge deck replacement on x-facility – it may be eight million when you actually get to it; it may be 12 million. So these numbers will actually be a range more than an absolute number. But what we really want to be consistent with is what the County thinks their road fund estimate or forecast is going to be. We should be using the same number. We shouldn't grow the County road fund at 3% if you're only growing it at 1%. So those are the consistency issues, and project development will change over time. And remember: These plans get updated every x-number of years, so if our project's out in 2040 the likelihood that that project is going to – the costs are going to be the same when we update the plan several years from now. Yeah, we will build in inflation factors, but if you look at the last plan versus this plan, a lot of the growth numbers went – tamped down. And so the growth expectations were far higher ten years ago than they are now, which *should* result in ____. In some cases, the prices for projects are going to be higher in adjusted dollars, but the amount of project needs may not actually be as much as they used to be.

Mr. Greenwood: Do you think the project costs are just driven by inflation, or do you think there's a bigger picture than that?

Mr. Murphy: Well, this is giving way too much detail but –

Mr. Greenwood: Your chart showed a pretty big spike there at the tail end.

Mr. Murphy: Well, that's a – yeah, and that's a reflection, I think, of grants received by the County. So it's a grant that you've received for a specific project before. But, otherwise, if you look at the numbers, your – the County numbers don't really bounce around a lot. But because they're so small, you'll always get these spikes. Unlike other regions, WSDOT numbers spike like that, too. 2013's going to be a huge spike for WSDOT because of the Skagit River bridge collapse. You don't trend-line off of those kinds of things. You take those kinds of things into account.

Ms. Grueter: I think what we'd like to do is transition to the small groups where you can talk further about pretty complicated issues around funding and modes.

(SKIP TO PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION.)

Chair Axthelm: Okay, we'd like to end the recess and come back to the Planning Commission portion of it where we will provide feedback to the County.

But just to remind the public that the public participation portion isn't right now and we're just talking to the County at this point.

Okay, there was one question, though, on the blue slips. A member of the public had approached me on the blue slips – and those will be scanned in and put into – or put on the Internet, along with the – you’re also scanning in these big ones?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah, we’ll type up the flip chart notes and we’ll put them on the website and then these comments that come in and if somebody submits an e-mail that’s clearly about the Transportation Element or about this forum then we’ll put that on the website – the 2016 Update website – as well. And when those are placed up there we’ll let you know that they’ve gone up there so that you can read there.

Chair Axthelm: Perfect. Okay, thank you. So we will see those. Okay. So I think we’ll go like we did last time and go down through the four questions. Tammy, if you’d like to start out with the first one – just, yeah, let’s do question 1 and then go back down through on each question.

Ms. Candler: Okay, thank you. So the first question is: What do I think the top priorities should be for Skagit County’s transportation system? And I think this bleeds into question 2 a little bit. First I just wanted to say I appreciate all of the input. I think that one of the common themes that kept coming up later was prioritize, prioritize, prioritize. One person said it and I don’t think that they were the only group that thought that. And, you know, obviously I think the problem with that is when you’re prioritizing you have to ask – the next logical step is, *Whose* priority? Because I do think that it varies.

But back to question number 1. I think in this county we’ve had sort of a unique situation where we actually had a catastrophic event that was referenced earlier, the bridge collapse. And so my thinking is that we have to prioritize catastrophic events, meaning keeping arterial routes open. The difference – when I had to get across that river back and forth to work every day – the difference between one extra arterial route or two was pretty huge. I think everybody in this county now knows all the ways to get, you know, A to B. And so, to me, priorities catastrophic: Keep in mind those circumstances for keeping the arterials open – two would be avoiding gridlock. So I think it’s hard to prioritize. Those are both equally important probably. But avoiding the gridlock, I think, means expanding maybe a lane or two where we need them. I think those are mostly going to be on state highways – the freeway, Highway 20, 536 – those main, main thoroughfares that are eventually – hopefully they wouldn’t – but eventually probably going to get jammed up if the population grows.

So a subset of avoiding gridlock, I think, is just the expansion of the – maintenance and expansion of the current infrastructure.

And number three, I think, is safety. And this one, for me, comes up when you’re talking about sharing the road with bikes, which is very important, or versus finding some trails that are a little bit off-road. Because, you know, a lot of the roads do not have that shoulder that can accommodate that. And so everybody’s entitled to do their activities and I just think safety can be an issue when bike versus car can be very ugly.

So those are my three for the answer of the first question. Oh, can I say one more thing? Sorry, Kathy. I have noticed – and this is just – it goes back to number 1. You know, there’re some areas in the county where roads that used to be open – my example I’m thinking of is a place on Fruitdale Road near the golf course up by Northern State – used to be open and now you can’t get through there anymore. And so if something catastrophic happened on Highway 9, that closes down a main extra route. And so a priority for me – huge – just get those roads that are existing open. Keep them open.

Ms. Mitchell: Okay, thanks. Boy, it's going to sound like we were mirroring each other's thoughts. Just change up the order a little bit. My thoughts for answering that – top priorities: I believe very strongly that we should maintain the infrastructure that we have as best we possibly can before we start expanding the needs to something else when it comes back down to keeping those bridges safe, keeping the main arteries safe, keeping the county roads as safe as they can be.

Number two for me would be safety and that's because I see it all the time. There are problems with some of the roads being very, very narrow, and with having either truck traffic, extra tourism traffic, whether it's motorcycle rallies or bicycle rallies or running – things like that. Those margins are pretty narrow, and there's a lot of the county roads where we've got some deep, wet ditches a lot of the time of the year. Throw in a little bit of weather or things like that, there's not – if there's an accident happens and somebody needs to move off the side of the road or avoid something quickly, there's not much place to go. And I can tell you there's many a time where we've had to dig somebody out of the ditch upside down in water, and thank heavens it usually comes out pretty well. It's even worse if it's just a motorcycle. Bicycles are also at risk the same as pedestrians. So I cannot stress enough the safety thing.

And the other part that feeds back to all of – the top two, of course, are prioritize. We need to keep up with the prioritizing for top notch. That's the most important thing before you can do much else – is how you're going to spend your money. How are you going to keep the maintenance going? I think our guys do pretty well with that. But when we have our wish list for the things we would really like to have, there are certain things I would like to have for fun. But this county is relatively a small county, if you will. Fiscally we don't have a whole lot of funds and we have to seek other monies. We really have to prioritize well and choose what that's going to be, and wrap into one other thing – you're going to see this come up again with some of the other questions. We have different needs based in different areas in the county. It's not all the same in every place, and we really – with those priorities it has to be focused on where you are, whether it's more for businesses, more for residential, more for schools – those kinds of things. Put those priorities in top perspective but keep those things alive. It makes a difference on where you are and what's going to be needed for the priorities. So I'm sure there'll be more thoughts later but that's what comes to mind first. Thank you.

Mr. Greenwood: I thought there were some good ideas that came from some of the groups I wish I had participated in as well. And I think most all of them hit on what we already have, I think, in place, but maybe a refocusing on the maintenance, preservation, and the priorities of those so that we can evaluate the asset, maintain the asset, protect the asset before we expand, but recognize where we're going to make those expansions take place. I think coordination was another key word that I heard, and I don't think you can do it by yourself and you shouldn't, whether you're participating in a regional transportation model – you've got someone else developing the traffic flow and the population data. It doesn't make sense to work independent. So whether we're developing any step along the way, whether it's the six-year plan or the hundred-year plan, I think you need to coordinate. Coordinate with all the participants. You've got state participants and federal participants, and we shouldn't be working with our own models or our own finances.

One real, I think, helpful comment was made about perhaps prioritizing by our need rather than the grants that are available. And that's a new way of looking at it that I didn't necessarily think of, because sometimes we think we've got eight million dollars contributed to a project; let's

jump on that one. But it costs the County four million so that's almost the whole budget, you know, for everything else.

So with that, maybe one other example that really struck home was looking ahead and then addressing competing uses that have changed over time. Like Peterson Road was a good example of what was ag became one for not only ag but residential and now freight. So we'd need to address those conflicting uses so they don't cause safety issues.

That was it for me.

Chair Axthelm: Robert?

Mr. Temples: Well, I didn't look at the priority quite as trying to scrutinize the priorities that are already pretty well predetermined by our engineering department. I've reviewed a lot of those and it was really kind of an eye opener. And it's not just dreams that the County has of doing things. A lot of it is serious items that need to be addressed. They also deal with what they call a level of service, which is trying to provide to the public a certain amount of level of expected service on using these roads and facilities. So in doing so, the backbone – I've dealt with government long enough over the years – the backbone of all this is having some revenue source period. Now this county, as well as a lot of the counties in the state of Washington, has been suffering because the state legislature has not properly funded a lot of the transportation projects in this state. I think that's well-known and well-televised on the news these days. But it also does make a serious impact to the County trying to figure out how are we going to pay for what we need to pay for, which directly leads to the last question we're all addressing. So to me the priority is, How do we best fund what we need and what we want? And I think that is – it's a – to me, that's the most difficult question in everything that's on our list today. Period. Thank you.

Chair Axthelm: I noticed a couple things that were significant to me. One was the safety. I think as Skagit County grows or as we change from maybe a farming community to having more industry and having more tourism and more busy streets, that we have to address that, especially, like, going up over top of Sedro-Woolley and going over the Cascades. You know, there're some areas there that are just not very safe situations that could be solved by widening the road or providing a separate avenue for non-motorized and even motorized in some situations where it's similar to Peterson Road – is where you have a safety issue where it's been traditionally used as a farm road might be an issue with traffic now because of all the residences.

Priorities: We have to support the economy – I think that's important – but also support the people for safety, not just on economic reasons but for the right reasons.

And then also preserving the identity of Skagit County. You know, we can't protect everything necessarily. We try to as much as we can, but with growth, unfortunately, there are issues that come in, and I think but trying to preserve that as much as we can is great.

I think that's about – that's it for that portion of it for me. Tammy, why don't you go ahead and start? Do you want to start again?

Ms. Candler: Sure. So the question is: What are the most important transportation needs for maintaining a healthy economy in Skagit County? The thing that comes to mind is free flow of traffic, like Ms. Young talked about. People having higher costs, based on how long their drivers

have to sit in traffic – that kind of thing. It doesn't get very specific into what to do about it but I do think the avoiding gridlock came up there again and that's the most important transportation need regarding a healthy economy. There's transportation to work, which I think is a separate category from transportation for recreation and physical activity. And I'm a person in the county that lives a long way from my job and there's no bus route where I live, so I tend to think about transportation and economy tied with vehicle traffic, like one of the groups talked about – I think it was Group 2 – because it is the main one. I'm not saying that it's the best one or the most desirable one or that other ways should be ignored, but even the bus route needs that free flow of traffic. So just about anything that we have that can deal with it needs that.

That's all I have on that.

Ms. Mitchell: Okay. For transportation for maintaining a healthy economy, aside from the roads certainly the railroads – maintaining those routes to be open and safe – and the same thing for the airport Authority, whether it's literally by air or by water. For Skagit to maintain its independence as much as she can, we're going to need to depend on those as much as we possibly can – so keeping the infrastructure strong on those for planning ahead for alternate routes should something happen. I hate to think what happened to those businesses when the bridge went down – what happened to them. I know what it was like getting stuck six hours there out there one day trying to get to a meeting here, and I didn't have to go to work. I can't imagine what the folks do in those instances. But to maintain the education for arterial routes when something does happen, putting as much as you can into the infrastructure for the Port Authority for keeping the railroads healthy. There's all kinds of information you can find through the Department of Emergency Management and other organizations on how those kinds of things can be as safe as they can be. You never know about a cataclysmic accident or something that's going to happen, you know, whether it be a hurricane, tornado, or anything like that, but we can plan for regular things and that's to maintain rail bed safety, road safety – those kinds of things. So, again, I think that's the best thing that we can do for that.

As far as for a healthy economy and talking about how people get to and from work, wherever I've lived for the thirty years I was working I never had the luxury of being able to pick one versus the other. Either I could afford a certain place and I had to drive or I just got lucky and it was close by. I don't think most people have that choice. It's a very small percentage, in my experience, of the people that actually had the choice on where they can live or where they can work. I think it's admirable to try to get more people out of their cars as much as possible, but I think the realistic thing is when you are working in those years that you have to do what you have to do, and that may be getting in the car and going. If you could, carpool if you can. There are options for some companies for doing carpooling. Sometimes that's voluntary. I have taken part in that myself when I lived in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. But with those kinds of things, again it takes a certain type of people with being able to do that and time to be able to do that. I do not think that you can tell people that. They can encourage them but at the end of the day people will make their own choices. So having said that, for a vibrant economy support the arterial systems – the different modes – and try to maintain that infrastructure and that will help encourage the economy otherwise. Thank you.

Mr. Greenwood: On the economic side I tend to look pretty strongly at agricultural transportation and it's – because it seems to be a big driver in our county, so transportation from farm to market. That includes resources upriver, too. But in addition to that, rail transportation is pretty important around here, not just what is most current of interest – that being an increase in traffic as a result of other types of resources coming on the rail lines – that being oil and coal –

but with that I think we need to plan for how that's going to impact our existing system and transportation, because those delays can be pretty long.

We do want to remain multi-modal so being able to plan for perhaps alternate routes for places where we have conflicts of – there's routes that won't fit farm traffic and freight traffic and bicycles at the same time. Somebody's going to get wet.

And then the other is water transportation. We don't oftentimes see it because it's a little bit removed, whether it's the deep water transport of the ships to March's Point, or quite often people don't see that there's also log transportation on the water both to and from the county, which I think is important to maintain. That's it for me.

Mr. Temples: I just read some information in relationship to Skagit County that I found kind of very fascinating, and that is approximately 80% of all the people who live in Skagit County work in Skagit County. This is very unique. There is no other county on the west side of the Cascades – they are all less than 10%. That should tell you a big thing about ___ needs of our citizens as it stands right now. Now that's the way it's probably been for a long time. But right now we are right on the edge and the cusp and you're seeing it every day in the news where businesses are really changing from anything many of us grew up to know. I mean, somebody could have a room in their house and be generating a multimillion-dollar business through the Internet. So transportation needs become kind of a whole different realm. But I think kind of the bottom line is that we have to be – and I think the term we've heard is proactive as much as possible to try to address the transportation needs of what's going to be coming up. My biggest – my first thing that comes to mind – and we were seeing this in some of our groups – are places like down in Seattle where Lake Union that used to be just small businesses are suddenly now towering skyscrapers with residential. They have retail and they have *some* parking but not much. And people are learning other ways of transporting themselves. And I'm not saying we're going to be Lake Union in the next 20 years. I'm just saying things are probably going to change in a manner in which maybe we cannot predict. But I still think we need to kind of stay on top of everything and try to be as proactive so that when these things start to come in – and I know, you know, Planning has talked about this. You know, if there's a new development that's going to come in, it requires new road improvements and stuff to house the transportation element and maybe along with it comes a residential element. We don't know. So I'm just saying it's going to be a new world out there and I don't know how many of us are ready for it. So that's my only comments. Thank you.

Chair Axthelm: I think by nature Skagit County is a pretty diverse county now. It seems to be at least there's a lot of things here. You know, you look at the water transportation and air and the farming available and industrial. Some of the stuff seems to be increasing, bringing business up here to Skagit County. Maybe it's offsetting a little bit of the farming community. But I think just maintaining that diversity's really going to help.

Some things that I saw that I really didn't know about was some of the waterway access as far as La Conner – considering that and the impact that if we don't maintain that access and that – have it available, that may impact tourism and boating and industrial.

And the airport – you know, the airport expansion. You know, it seems like it would only impact a few businesses, but as you bring those businesses in I think that those businesses then have the ability to employ more people because of the access that they have. So that's a great thing there.

That's all I had. Tammy?

Ms. Candler: Moving on to 3: What should Skagit County's role be in promoting non-motorized transportation and physical activity relative to the role of Cities and Towns? So I read this as really looking at our role relating to the City's role, and we talked about this a lot with housing. I think that to a certain extent the role is different because, like, I live out in county so – as we all do. I can't – I don't think it's feasible to think of walking distance to a store or anything other than a beautiful place to walk for exercise and it's wonderful for that. But, anyway, I think walking to work is not much of an option.

And so anyway – getting back to the question: Relative to the role of the Cities and Towns, I think that what we need to do is just try to make – through the collaboration and the cooperation that people were talking about tonight – to make sure that we're sort of matching up access points so that there's continuity and flow from the county areas into city access routes – safe access routes in business areas.

And I do agree with some of the comments tonight that it's probably a good idea to prioritize a few of the routes to invest in rather than trying to, you know, spread ourselves too thin. That's it.

Ms. Mitchell: Okay. For full disclosure, I also live in the county. And, really, it's almost two miles to the mailbox let alone trying for a half-hour to get to town. So it could be a long way. In my own experience I've also found that if people are going to exercise, they're going to exercise whether they will or won't or can or won't or wish to or desire to. I think the best thing that the County can do is to encourage people as much as possible for physical activity and education purposes those are excellent things to do. Also the second point would be to coordinate with other jurisdictions to help tag on to what they have. The next thing I think that the best thing that the County can do is to maintain the different trails and park systems that we have. We have really good ones and we can use those to the best that they can be. I'd like to see those in top notch form before we increase to other areas. I applaud the times that we can add on new trails or new ways to do things or a new park for new activities. That's just great. But a lot of times we can't. It comes back down to fiscal responsibility. If I had to choose between keeping a bridge healthy or, you know, expanding for another trail, I'm going to go for the bridge every time.

So back to prioritizing, I think that the best thing we can do is to prioritize the different projects as they need and come up; encourage education and physical activity where they can; and to continue the friendly coordination with the other jurisdictions because I do think that it takes all sides to be able to do something well. Thank you.

Mr. Greenwood: Okay. I don't think that non-motorized traffic is even an option to not consider. So it's required in our Comprehensive Plan and so how we choose to prioritize it is up to us. But connections are important. How many connections we make – maybe it's just one but if we could keep people and I think we heard about safety. If we're going to have people coming through the county I think we need to have at least one safe route through, whether that's bicycle or what. The walking traffic is going to tend to be pretty centrally located and then spreads out to a limited extent beyond the urban boundaries, but they're important too.

I did like the idea of prioritizing expenditures by use levels, and that was stated that I think allows us to take limited resources and apply them in a useful way. So we're going to consider it and it's going to be part of the plan. That's it for me.

Chair Axthelm: Robert?

Mr. Temples: Well, I agree with Keith 100% about the safety angle on the highways. What I was concerned about tonight – for the first time I was exposed to seeing that there had been some designated bike highway designations being planned to go through Skagit County. When I heard of a few of the roads, I'm going, one, I was – somebody, I thought, told me was Highway 9 north of Sedro-Woolley. It's a gravel shoulder! There is no shoulder. The bridges and everything that go over the roadway, there's no place for bikes. And who's designating this and how are we going to improve it? I just – it surprised me and I want to do some more research into it. I don't know how we're going to accommodate these things and whether it's being mandated by the federal government or what, or the state. So I've just got some concerns that – I think we need to have that element, but I can tell you all my travels on Highway 9, a bicyclist could easily be killed on that highway. If they haven't so far I'm surprised. Most of the bikes I see on Highway 9 are Harleys. So I think the concept sounds good. It may develop into that, but it's going to take a lot of financial infrastructure to make it happen to make roadways compatible with – and again, I'm kind of thinking non-motorized transportation: We think bicycles today; God only knows what it's going to be a few decades from now. And we've got smart cars and everything else that are out on the highways now. And here in Skagit I've seen them. So nothing would surprise me. That's my only comment.

Chair Axthelm: As far as the role of the County promoting non-motorized transportation, I think it's not necessarily to me to promote it. I think that they just need to protect it and keep it safe. And some of the promotion – I think that it is working quite well – I appreciated was the walking trail guide and the county bike map. I looked at those this evening and it really helped to understand where those pathways are, and I think this education on it is really helping. And keeping those routes publicized but then also taking routes like Highway 20 where your increase in traffic – or is it Highway 20 that goes up over Sedro-Woolley and up over the Cascades? – is that there are locations where they're just unsafe. And I think the County could protect that a lot better and protect the people that use it and make it safer for them to go through there. So if that's promoting, then I would say yes.

And then there're some roads that are not safe for non-motorized traffic, that may not be appropriate for non-motorized traffic, at least directly on the road, because of the type of vehicles that are using it. You know, I'd never want my kids on a road that has the trucks constantly going by and have a sidewalk right beside it. But I could understand where it'd be appropriate for the County to promote perhaps a bike path a little farther off, or a walking path a little farther off that has better protection. And that sense of promoting I think is very appropriate. Thank you.

Tammy?

Ms. Candler: Thank you, Josh. So number 4: With roadway maintenance and capacity expansion needs greater than the amount of available funding, how should Skagit County address the shortfall?

So I was thinking of this as the \$20,000 question, but really it's more like the – what was it? – 43 million to 150 million dollar question. The first thing I did hear one of the groups – I think it was Group 2 – talk about not necessarily going after the grants for funds for projects we don't want because we're thereby deflecting our matching funds from the projects that we really want and we need. And I heard Keith mention it earlier and I agree with that 100%. So that's number one.

And then the other thing that came up in my small group was that everything is a cost-benefit analysis basically. Everything costs. How much gridlock are you willing to put up with to avoid higher taxes? And so because neither of those are good – we don't want higher taxes; we don't want gridlock – I think we have to try to focus our funding on the limited areas that will keep our gridlock down, which is the arterials and the expansion of the main roads. That's all. I mean, nobody has an answer to this, I don't think. But go ahead, Kathy. You're going to try anyway!

Ms. Mitchell: This is such a tough one. I realize that there's an awful lot that we have to do to seek funding assistance through federal/state programs, but I'm always leery of the strings that get attached one way or the other. But when it comes to that, then it's back to prioritize, prioritize, prioritize and I do agree with that. We have to pick those top projects first and decide the risk to benefit ratio, as in what's it going to cost Skagit County for its own personnel and resources to use those funds. And the point that the others have made: Is this a project that we really want to have done in lieu of perhaps another thing or that will shuffle the priorities? So the best thing I can suggest is still is to really hammer that priority. I think we did that back on the TIP, too, is to say the same thing – is just to keep hammering on the prioritization.

As far as adopting – there are some suggestions down here that say “Adopt plans for accommodating less growth,” “Accept increasing congestion,” and those kinds of things. There are some facts of life for where we are and our timing. The other thing is to do the best with what we can at this point in time. Maybe five years or ten years from now we can revisit something, but back to the prioritization thing. This has been a lean few years so our priorities are going to be in a certain order compared to what they might have been 15 years ago or perhaps, if we're lucky, ten years from now. So let's do the best that we can with what we have right now and be fiscally responsible for those basic things.

So that's about the best I can do. Thanks.

Mr. Greenwood: Okay. I would like for us to be able to make – and I think we're doing it now – but to make the prioritization process more transparent. There's a model that's being employed and we don't know – I can't say for sure – that it's a 40 million dollar hole or if it's a 200 million dollar hole, because the priority array shows many projects that are not on the list. So we may have many projects that are going without repair and they should be. We may actually be going down the list further than we need to. So I think to enable the public and ourselves to be able to evaluate what seems like a pretty complicated system, if we could just allow for a little more transparency in the methodology I think we can pick and choose a little bit better about whether we're spending the money appropriately, which will include public and private partnerships because many of these projects we contribute – like I mentioned before – we might contribute \$200,000 and somebody else is putting in millions of dollars into a project. And these are projects that we can't ignore. Some of them are fish projects that we have a timeframe we have to get them done in. Some of these are bridges that are very, very expensive, so if we don't look to other funding sources we'll sink the budget really, really quick.

I think, too, there was a comment – and I might have even echoed it – but maybe we don't need to plan for the worst hour of the day. But I think when it comes to rail I think we should plan for the worst case, which would be the worst and the highest traffic volume for the county because it's going up, and how that's going to affect us. And then there might be something similar, but I would consider it more the best hour of the day, which is actually the best month of the year: Are we adequately planning for that month when we have that tulip traffic which really benefits the county? If people can't get there, they'll turn away. And I want them to be able to stay and lodge and enjoy what we enjoy, because the only time I get to enjoy it is just before dark when

everybody else has gone home during the week. Because on the weekends when we can actually bring in some additional funding sources and I see ___ lists and – let's make that safe and let's plan for it – whatever it takes to allow as much flow through those areas as we can. I think many of the farmers who benefit from it would like it, too. Maybe some of the residences in the area – I know it's a hassle for them, but it's a big draw and if people have to turn away because they can't get through Kincaid Road I think we've got a problem. So best case and worst case.

Chair Axthelm: Robert?

Mr. Temples: My biggest concern with question number 4 is the fact that again I think – and I don't blame the County, but somewhere along the line the revenue source to fund our projects has to be addressed in some fashion. We've kind of looked to the state, probably looked to the federal government. We've looked for grants. We've looked for everything to try to squeeze, you know, a nickel wherever we can get it. I mean, it's sort of a sad testimony. I think somebody in here would probably echo a lot of this, but somewhere along the line the revenue has just got to be addressed and that's the only way. And I've got one example and I'll try to be very brief with this because I saw this happen. Down in the city of Lynnwood when I was down there we had council people that did not want to raise property taxes at all because they wanted to be elected. Now there was even discussion by the Finance Director, saying, Well, even if you raise it in increments of the cost of living – you know, our costs go up and we've got to fund it. And they said, No, we're not going to take this to the people. Years and years and years went by. The Finance Director even quit because he couldn't – didn't want to be there to see what was going to happen. I told some of the councilmembers, Wait, in case there's a recession. Because they had the mall down there and they said, Well, that's where we get all our money is the mall. That's our cash cow. They were going to expand the fire department, the police department, everything. Well, guess what happened in 2008? Most of the fire department – a lot of people got laid off. The police department got laid off. City employees got laid off. And it's all because they didn't want to raise property taxes even a bit.

So here we have a funding issue with our roadway system, and somewhere along the line somebody has to step up and say, No, we're going to have to pay for this some way and we need champions to do that. So I hope somewhere along the line – and I know we have political leaders and I'm sure they may have misgivings about doing that kind of thing but still it's what maintains the level of service for our community. And with 80% of us living and working here, it's all about us. Thank you.

Chair Axthelm: I have a couple things. One is – one was the grants: just making sure that we go after – the grants are an excellent way of funding, but make sure we go after the grants that Skagit County wants and that we don't necessarily go after the grant because it's money available. Do it for the right reasons.

The other one is I think a lot of our maintenance and stuff, some of it can be resolved by impacts that the businesses or the residential developments that are impacting that road or the area of transportation, that those things should be paying for the upgrades that happen: development paying for itself. And part of it is accepting the congestion, you know, certain times when the congestion is there. And the more public partnerships we can get the better. So if people want to see improvements in Skagit County, I think there's some times that taxes are appropriate, or that sometimes that things are appropriate to bring the funding in. How can we do that? I don't know. I know there's only so much money in a pocket. But I – that's all I have on that. Yeah?

Mr. Pernula: There's just a point I'd like to make. I think you guys have done a great job of summarizing the input and providing some feedback for us. But one thing that really struck with me: I was facilitating Group number 1, and in that group there was – a fellow came in. He was in a wheelchair and I just got the impression it was very important to him to be at this meeting. And he did leave early because he had to catch a bus because he's in a wheelchair and that's the way he gets around. He was very articulate about the issues and he's also very accommodating. He said whatever we do, don't backslide. He remembers what it was like 20 years ago or so. And it's very difficult for him to get around in certain parts of a town where they haven't had buildings be remodeled to accommodate a wheelchair and so on. So don't forget about dealing with people with disabilities as well as all these other issues. That's all I had.

Chair Axthelm: I think it's been really good tonight. I really appreciate the public participation and the amount of people that have shown up and the input. It seems like there's a lot of common themes but there's a lot of different opinions as well, and that's really important. It doesn't – you know, if you have it all one direction then you don't always see the opposite side, and I think tonight we had a pretty good, diverse group of people. So I appreciate the public participation.

So if it's okay with the rest – or, should we move on to the next item on the agenda?

Ms. Candler: Yes, please.

Chair Axthelm: Dale, the Department Update?

Mr. Pernula: Okay, I'm just going to go over a few things that's going to happen. The next meeting isn't for three weeks for the Planning Commission. The next meeting's on April 7th and you'll be having a couple of public hearings. One will be on the proposed marijuana ordinance that the Board of County Commissioners is considering (for) adoption, and the second is on Capital Facilities Plans and impact fees for the City of Mount Vernon, the City of Sedro-Woolley, the Mount Vernon School District, and the Sedro-Woolley School District, so it'll be a pretty busy meeting.

The following meeting on April 21st will consist of deliberating on the marijuana ordinance and the Shoreline Master Program, completing that review. That's all I have.

Chair Axthelm: Okay. Thank you. Any – the next item on the agenda – any comments or announcements from the Planning Commission?

Ms. Mitchell: I actually have a question. Your bringing up the fellow with the disability reminded me of something else that almost went right past. Somewhere in one of the groups – and I don't remember which one it was now without going through the notes – had cited RCW 9A.52 about trespassing and those kinds of things relating to safety and all kinds of things. Can we ask Ryan to dig up information on that for us for more specifics?

Mr. Pernula: Okay. I can ask him – sure.

Ms. Mitchell: That'd be helpful. Thank you.

Ms. Candler: I was in that group so I might be able to talk to you about it as well.

Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

Mr. Johnson: What was that again – the reference?

Ms. Mitchell: RCW 9A.52, and it had to deal with trespassing and –

Chair Axthelm: I think it's written on the last board.

Ms. Mitchell: Yeah.

Chair Axthelm: Number 4.

Mr. Johnson: Okay.

Ms. Mitchell: And that actually ties in to a question that I would have anyway from before, which lends to there were certain state laws, and I don't remember what RCW they were. It was something about property owners and liability for landowners and businesses if there's fires, and who pays for those kinds of things if proper notice isn't given or proper procedures aren't taken care of. And why this comes to mind is that with the trespassing idea that was raised in that group I know we've had issues out in our area in the past – I think Gary remembers talking about some of that stuff – and those tie back in. What I don't know is what the laws are today. Last time I had read anything about it was about 2008. And those things do tie in together and may be important on how we look at some of these things. If you can ask Ryan about that, too, please.

Mr. Pernula: Let me see if I can get you right. You're talking about landowner responsibility if there's fires?

Ms. Mitchell: If there's fire damage. I seem to remember from DNR work and some things that had happened up Chuckanut from years ago where we had to have certain signage up. There had to be posting. There was issues with squatters starting fires and it comes back to kids on beaches and things. And that ties in with things that happen all over the county. You don't know what people are going to do to different places, and especially with fire season coming up. This all ties back in to the trespassing issues because there's an awful lot of folks that don't understand where public access is versus private property versus who has responsibility for seeing that the risks and responsibilities are taken care of. And that all ties together in a mish-mash so I apologize for that, but that's – I cannot remember for the life of me what those laws are, but they do tie together with that one that Group 4 talked about.

Mr. Greenwood: I just had one.

Chair Axthelm: Yep.

Mr. Greenwood: Dale, could you see that – with Paul – that we get the priority array on the website so that it's available for people to review?

Mr. Johnson: Electronically? Because my understanding is it is on the Public Works website now.

Mr. Greenwood: Well, it wasn't on the Public Works today when I looked for it. So if – maybe I just need a little better focus, but even some of the GIS was still kind of old, some of the maps

looked kind of old. So whatever's on the website, let's see if we can get that updated so people could look at it a little more closely. The priority array, which has a real good front end to it – description of how it was done – and then it'll look like a lot of other tables that are out there.

Mr. Pernula: Okay.

Chair Axthelm: Robert?

(silence)

Chair Axthelm: Tammy?

(silence)

Chair Axthelm: Do we have a motion to – motion to adjourn?

Ms. Mitchell: I'll move that we adjourn.

Mr. Temples: I'll second.

Chair Axthelm: Okay, all those in favor?

Ms. Candler, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Temples, Chair Axthelm and Mr. Greenwood: Aye.

Chair Axthelm: (gavel) Adjourned.