

2024 KCCP Major Update Executive's Recommended Plan

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

February 6, 2024

To: **King County Council Local Services & Land-Use Committee:**
CouncilCompPlan@kingcounty.gov

Re: **Public Comment— 2024 KCCP Major Update—Executive's Recommended Plan**

Please accept *Comments* herein on the subject **2024 King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) Major Update (Update)—Executive's Recommended Plan (ERP)** from the Joint Team of King County Unincorporated Rural Area organizations (*).

We have participated in the **Update** since the beginning of 2022 working with KCCP Manager, Chris Jensen. We provided detailed Comments on *Scoping*, *Conceptual Proposals*, *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping*, and the *Public Review Draft*. We have now conducted an in-depth review of the ERP—all Chapters, Appendices, and Supporting Documents. Our *Comments* encompass KCCP Text, KCCP Policy changes, and changes to King County Code. We found that the Executive's Office used many of our comments to improve the **Update**—we thank them. However, we still find several areas where changes should be considered to minimize unintended negative consequences to the Rural Area. We encourage you to please consider our Comments herein as the you proceed in your review and approval process of the **Update**.

For some Chapters, Appendices, and Supporting Documents we have included *Overall Comments* to provide a broad perspective on the subject matter, followed by our *Specific Comments* on Text, Policies, Code, Maps, etc. Our Comments primarily deal with items where we offer recommended changes and provide supporting rationale. In general, we have not provided comments on those items we consider good and, thus, approve.

In general, what we see in the ERP is very good, but we do have issues in several areas which we document herein. The County has many very good Policies—although there still remain too many “*shoulds*,” which we would like to see changed to “*shalls*”—and strong Code language. However, all too often, either through poor interpretation, spotty followthrough, poorly funded and not-prioritized enforcement, and myriad exceptions / special considerations, the County does not give justice to or uphold those Policies and Code in practice on the ground to serve its residents.

Unfortunately, the County often violates its own codes and policies, forcing rural residents to have to fight their own government in efforts to protect their neighborhoods and property rights. (e.g., Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries; Mining and extended reclamation; Pacific Raceways continual expansion; Cedar Hills Regional Landfill continual expansion (outward and upward); Asphalt Facility along the Cedar River (*without* an EIS); Keesling property development; etc.). Consequently, the County's failure to uphold and enforce its own Policies and Code has cost Rural Area residents hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal costs, untold hours of effort, and immense frustration in

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having to fight these battles. Our message is simple: If the County truly supports the Policies and Code in the KCCP, then it must uphold and enforce them!

There are several major *Themes* we developed as we conducted our review:

- The County's *Guiding Principles* are well developed, but some are poorly followed.
- There are good Policies defining "*Rural Character*," but the County's followthrough is wanting.
- The County has excellent Policies to protect and enhance the environment.
- The County has excellent Policies to protect and enhance parks and open space.
- The financial system for County roads is broken, needs of unincorporated areas are neglected, and city-to-city traffic uses Rural Area roads excessively.
- Urban or urban-serving facilities should not be sited in the Rural Area.
- The rural economy is endangered by allowing urban-serving businesses in the Rural Area.
- Mining sites, upon resource exhaustion, must revert back to the rural forest resource land base, as intended by County Code and KCCP Policies, not to *non-resource* uses.
- The County's permitting and code enforcement function is broken and fails to perform its essential duties to uphold County policies, codes, and laws; consequently, implementation of many great policies and codes is inadequate regarding permitting, land use, code enforcement, and other issues impacting development and uses on Rural Area parcels.
- The current Growth Target and Allocation system is badly flawed and, by ignoring those flaws, we perpetuate them *ad infinitum*. Unfortunately, Growth Targets cannot be enforced to keep *irresponsible* cities, such as Black Diamond, from grossly overgrowing and directly impacting County roads and burdening rural residents, while not paying for mitigation.
- Changes to Code are needed, e.g., Special-Use Permits (SUPs), Temporary-Use Permits (TUPs), Conditional-Use Permits (CUPs), etc., must be focussed and limited.
- Permit exceptions should be just that—exceptions for a very specific purpose meeting very specific, temporary, and non-recurring situations or conditions, not the rule.
- Multi-family housing should not be allowed outright in Rural Towns.
- The "*fee in lieu*" concept encourages market rate housing *without* equivalent creation of affordable housing.

Our Joint Team endeavors to review, consult, develop, and offer solutions on issues of interest to people who live in a wide expanse of King County's unincorporated Rural Area. Each of our organizations considers its work on the KCCP one of its most important duties and responsibilities. Indeed, our Joint Team has been through multiple successive KCCP Major Updates (including the *2020 KCCP Mid-Point Update*) with some of our member organization's work on same going back nearly 20 years to the *2004 KCCP Major Update* and others further back to the pre-Growth Management Act (GMA) days, when there were no formal KCCPs.

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Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage and, hence, is *not* included in the approval “*signatures*” below. We have encouraged the V-MCC to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included comments herein on the following sections/subsections of the ERP that warrant *specific V-MCC* comment:

Chapters:

2—URBAN COMMUNITIES

4—HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES

Appendices

B - Housing Needs Assessment (Attachment C)

[Part of] Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments (Attachment I)—[NOTE: We do include Comments from the rest of the Joint Team]

CSA Subarea Plans

Vashon-Maury Island CSA Subarea Plan Amendments (Attachment H)

Reports

Vashon-Maury Island P-Suffix Conditions Report

Vashon Rural Town Affordable Housing Special District Overlay Final Evaluation

The V-MCC intends to fully participate at the King County Council Local Services and Land-Use Committee's *Special Meeting* to be held at the Vashon Center for the Arts on April 4 at 5:30 PM.

We intend to continue an open dialogue with the Council and engage with its staff as the **Update** proceeds through various sets of Public Comment opportunities including Public Briefings / Hearings at which we will offer multiple Oral Testimonies up to final approval in December of this year.

Please contact us should any questions arise during the review of our Comments herein. Thank you.

(*) Joint Team: Enumclaw Plateau Community Association (EPCA), Friends of Sammamish Valley (FoSV), Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council (GMVUAC), Green River Coalition (GRC), Green Valley/Lake Holm Association (GV/LHA), Hollywood Hill Association (HHA), Soos Creek Area Response (SCAR), Upper Bear Creek Unincorporated Area Council (UBCUAC), and Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC).

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**2024 King County Comprehensive Plan
Major Ten-Year Update**

Executive's Recommended Plan

***Joint Rural Area Team
Public Comment***

Submitted February 6, 2024

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Chapters

[KCCP](#)

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1 - REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Theme

- Although the County's *Guiding Principles* are well developed, we see several issues in which they are poorly followed.

Specific Comments

((H-)) King County Planning Framework

((A-)) Public Participation in Planning

pp. 1-5 and 1-6:

((R-102)) **RP-103a** *King County ((will)) **shall** continue to support the diversity and richness of its rural communities and their distinct character by working with its rural constituencies through its Community Service Areas program to sustain and enhance the rural character of Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.*

This new policy is meant to replace policy **R-102** removed from **Chapter 3 - RURAL AREAS AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS**, which it does. We agree with it; however, there was introductory text *also* removed from Chapter 3, but *not* replaced in any fashion:

~~"In order to implement its goals, objectives, and strategies for broader public engagement, King County has created several Community Service Areas that encompass all of unincorporated King County, including areas without representation by any Unincorporated Area Council. The Community Service Areas provide a conduit for greater participation by all residents in unincorporated King County and increase opportunities for residents to inform county decisions relating to programs and capital projects within each Community Service Area."~~

We find this also was *not* included in **Chapter 11 - COMMUNITY SERVICE AREA SUBAREA PLANNING**, especially any discussion of the Unincorporated Area Councils. We recommend it be added back in, either here in Chapter 1, possibly under ((B-)) **Multicounty Planning** policy **RP-104**:

RP-104 *King County's planning ((should)) shall include multicounty, countywide, and subarea levels of planning. Working with planning partners, such as residents, **unincorporated Area Councils/Associations**, special purpose districts ((and)), cities, and Indian tribes ((as planning partners)), the ((c))County shall strive to balance the differing needs identified across or within plans at these geographic levels.*

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~~((G.))~~ Countywide Planning

p. 1-7:

RP-106 ***Except for Four-to-One proposals, King County shall not amend the Urban Growth Area prior to the Growth Management Planning Council taking action on the proposed amendment to the Urban Growth Area.***

We don't know why this has not been caught over the years, but this seems to *imply* that Four-to-One proposals are *exempt* from GMPC actions. The wording should be changed for better clarification.

~~((D. Sub-Regional))~~ Subregional Planning and Partnerships

p. 1-8:

RP-109a ***Upon notification from a city that abuts the Rural Area or Natural Resource lands regarding proposed large, mixed-use developments, King County shall coordinate with the city to ensure that the development review process mitigates impacts on the surrounding Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.***

This new addition is a good first start, as it tries to “reverse-mirror” Countywide Planning Policy **DP-11**, but the County has “coordinated” with such cities and, in the case of Black Diamond, testified (both orally and in writing) during its 2010/2011 Master-Planned Development (MPD) Hearings—all to no avail, as we bore witness, all KC concerns, specifically traffic impacts on KC roads, were completely ignored. Until such cities are *required* (probably through State action through clear interpretation of or strengthening the *Growth Management Act*) to provide mitigation of their direct impacts to KC roads, such “coordination” will continue to be fruitless. Also, please note the word “with” needs to added to policy **RP-109a**.

~~((F.))~~ Subarea Planning

p. 1-10:

RP-115 . . .
 I. Identification of locations and conditions for special overlay districts.

We disagree with Council Committee Policy Staff's comments that “*P-suffix conditions and demonstration project areas could be added.*” The County's poor history with both—that can best be labeled “*loopholes*”—should give the Council pause.

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~~((I. Managing Performance))~~

pp. 1-14 thru 1-15:

We see that this entire section has been removed along with its two policies. We understand it was deemed “*duplicative of (policy) I-301.*” We provided extensive comments on King County’s *Performance Measures* in our [PRD Comments](#) where we discussed the most recent (March 2022) [Comprehensive Plan Performance Measures Report](#), which looked at many good *Performance Measures*. We provided specific concerns with the following *Performance Measures*:

5: Peak hour travel is not degrading faster than growth: *Change in corridor peak hour travel times on major routes, compared to population and job change*

12: Non single occupant vehicle modes are increasing and per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is decreasing: *Change in percentage of residents using alternatives to the single occupant vehicle, and per capita VMT*

13. Farms and forest lands are protected: *Change in total acreage of Agricultural Production District and Forest Production District, including acreage permanently privately protected or in public ownership*

Further, the *Performance Status* discussed in the March 2022 report did not appear to address departmental performance or any changes contemplated to improve such performance when or where necessary.

~~J. King County Strategic Plan~~

pp. 1-15 thru 1-16:

We suppose the *King County Strategic Plan* has been replaced by several individual subject-related Strategic Plans ([Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#), [Strategic Climate Action Plan](#), [Clean Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan](#), [Strategic Information Technology Plan](#), [Strategic Plan for Public Transportation](#), and [Strategic Plan for Road Services](#)) and that is why this section has been removed?

~~((III.)) King County Guiding Principles~~

Guiding Principles

pp. 1-19 thru 1-25:

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We fully support all *six* Guiding Principles. However, we too often see the County making decisions directly affecting the Rural Area that seem to circumvent the following *three* of those principles:

**Preserving and Maintaining Open Space and Natural Resource Lands
Directing Development Toward Existing Communities
Achieving Environmental Sustainability**

Examples of such decisions (or non-decisions)—listed alphabetically—include, but are not limited to:

- Cedar River Asphalt Facility (Determination of Non-Significance; *no* Environmental Impact Statement [EIS])
- Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (piecemeal footprint and height expansion)
- Code Enforcement (poor to none; violators routinely win and citizens who seek to uphold County codes and policies are forced to spend enormous sums trying to protect their own property, the rural area, and the environment, often AGAINST King County!)
- Illegal Clearcutting
- Illegal Event Centers allowed to continue
- Illegal “Recycling” Centers that violate multiple codes
- Pacific Raceways (piecemeal expansion without conduct of an EIS)
- Permits routinely granted for development that violates zoning laws and the principles underlying them
- Wineries / Breweries / Distilleries; Tasting Rooms (allowed to continue in the RA)

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2 - URBAN COMMUNITIES

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment.

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3 - RURAL AREAS AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS

Theme

- Although there are excellent Policies defining “*Rural Character*,” the County’s decision-making followthrough is wanting including its continuing breakdown in code enforcement.

Overall Comments

Establish a Rural Area Advisory Commission/Committee

Like the *Rural Forest Commission* and the *Agricultural Commission* described in section **VI. Natural Resource Lands** starting on p. 3-42, the County should consider establishing a *Rural Area Advisory Commission/Committee* comprised of rural residents from across the County, so that any proposals, policy changes, or code updates that affect the Rural Area may first be discussed with members and feedback provided to County staff, Council, and the Executive, as necessary. Our ten Rural Area Organizations and multiple Rural Technical Consultants would offer very qualified and experienced people to serve on such a *Rural Area Advisory Commission/Committee*.

Establish a Rural Landowner Incentive Program

There are *Forestry* and *Agricultural Incentive Programs* as described in Policies **R-206** and **R-209**, respectively, and Policy **R-609**. We seek a **new** Policy for a *Rural Landowner Incentive Program*, such as:

R-xxx *King County shall expand and improve existing programs and explore new programs to incentivize rural landowners to enhance their land by creating new or expanded forestlands, farmlands, or other uses that can benefit climate change goals, the environment, and wildlife.*

With such a program Rural Area landowners would be eligible to obtain property tax breaks for enhancing their land which do not fall under the *Current Use Taxation* program.

Specific Comments

p. 3-4:

~~((The purpose of the zoning and land use designations in the Rural Area is to provide services and limited goods that satisfy rural residents' and local businesses' daily needs))~~

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We are glad to see this has been removed, as Rural Area residents do nearly all their shopping, etc. to meet their needs, in urban cities, possibly, some Rural Towns, and, to a far lesser extent, in Neighborhood Business Districts. However, we are unsure if it was removed for those reasons???

I. Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands

pp. 3-5 thru 3-6:

((A-)) Rural ((Legacy)) History and Communities

R-101 King County ~~((will))~~ shall continue to preserve and sustain its rural ~~((legacy))~~ history, character, and communities through programs and partnerships that support, preserve, and sustain its historic, cultural, ecological, agricultural, forestry, and mining heritage through collaboration with Indian tribes, local and regional preservation and heritage programs, community groups, rural residents and business owners including forest and farm owners, ~~((rural communities, towns, and c))~~ Cities in the Rural Area, and other interested ~~((stakeholders))~~ parties.

While we applaud the enhancements made in this policy, especially the change to “*shall*,” we wonder if the “*Cities in the Rural Area*” change will necessitate King County to “*collaborate with*” the City of Black Diamond, a “*City in the Rural Area*,” that is on its way to quintupling in population. This will result in peak-hour congestion (more likely, gridlock) on every King County road in and out of the city and no obligation whatsoever to mitigate that congestion or fund improvements on those roads.

pp. 3-6 thru 3-7:

((B-)) Rural Character

We support the description of “*rural character*” in this subsection and throughout the ERP. However, we have found throughout the decades that the County does not value this definition, nor follow its own Policies to protect and preserve “*rural character*” as well as it could and should. For a recent example, there is nothing in the entire problem surrounding the County Council’s Adult Beverage Ordinance (ABO) (i.e., Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries—WBDs) that honors “*rural character*,” nor “*agricultural preservation*.”

II-)) Rural Area Designation

((B-)) Forestry and Agriculture in the Rural ((King County)) Area Geography

p. 3-10:

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R-205 *Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries, such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, creating value-added products, and sale of agricultural products; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational and small-scale tourism uses that rely on a rural location.*

This policy clearly states: "Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries, such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, creating value-added products, and sale of agricultural products; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational and small-scale tourism uses that rely on a rural location." However, there are cases where the County doesn't abide by this. Again, as but one example, the ABO's WBD's do not meet any of these criteria unless one wants claim they "create value-added products" or provide the "sale of agricultural products." Which they don't. While we strongly support such Policies as **R-205**, the County all too often fails to follow them. Also, the phrase "cottage industries" is obsolete. The relevant phrase "**home occupations and industries**" should be used instead.

((III.)) Rural Densities and Development

((A.)) Rural Growth Forecast

pp. 3-17 thru 3-18:

We fully support the Policy **R-301** below, but cannot emphasize enough that one of the most important tools King County has at its disposal is adequate enforcement of its Policies and Codes, which it simply does not do.

R-301: *King County shall use all appropriate tools at its disposal to limit growth in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, such as land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives, to:*

- a. Retain ((A)) a low growth rate ((is-desirable for the Rural Area, including Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, to));*
- b. ((e))Comply with the State Growth Management Act((;));*
- c. ((continue preventing)) Prevent sprawl, the conversion of rural land, and the overburdening of rural services((;));*
- d. ((r))Reduce the need for capital expenditures for rural roads((;));*
- e. ((m))Maintain rural character((;));*
- f. (p))Protect the environment, and*
- g. ((r))Reduce ((transportation-related)) greenhouse gas emissions. ((All possible tools may be used to limit growth in the Rural Area. Appropriate tools include land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives.*

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B.)) Residential Densities

pp. 3-20 thru 3-31:

We have concerns with the Policy **R-309** and call for the following **addition**:

R-309 The RA-2.5 zone has generally been applied to Rural Areas with an existing pattern of lots below five acres in size that were created prior to the adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. These smaller lots may still be developed individually or combined, **provided they satisfy the minimum lot dimensions provided in King County Code, or combined to satisfy those requirements, and provided** that applicable standards for sewage disposal, environmental protection, water supply, roads, and rural fire protection can be met. A subdivision at a density of one home per 2.5 acres shall only be permitted through the Transfer of Development Rights from property in the designated Rural Forest Focus Areas. The site receiving the density must be approved as a Transfer of Development Rights receiving site in accordance with the King County Code. Properties on Vashon-Maury Island shall not be eligible as receiving sites.

The above addition would preclude further problems that currently exist with interpretation of “*these smaller lots.*”

((G-)) Transfer of Development Rights Program

p. 3-24:

We proposed adding to the following policy:

R-316 ~~g. Lands ((identified as important according to the Washington State Department of Ecology's Watershed Characterization analyses))~~ **in the RA zone with conservation values related to farming, forestry, carbon sequestration, environmental protection, or open space; or**

pp. 3-25 thru 3-26:

Policy **R-319** on TDRs has had significant changes made, many with which we agree. However, the following has been removed:

~~**Transferrable Development Rights may be used on receiving sites...**~~

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~~d. Rural Areas zoned RA-2.5, unless they are on Vashon-Maury Island, may receive transfers of development rights, but only from the Rural Forest Focus Areas.~~

and essentially replaced with the following (on p. 3-26):

King County should prioritize Transferable Development Rights uses for residential density in urban areas. King County may also allow Transferrable Development Rights:

a. In limited instances for development in the Rural Area, except for Vashon-Maury Island; and ...

While this fails to define “*limited instances*,” the “Rationale for the proposed change” does describe this: “*Intent is ... (2) to acknowledge the limited rural use of Transfer of Development Rights (currently for concurrency and proposed for duplexes in a Rural Town),...*” We understand there are only one and maybe two “*limited instances*” and they should be stated, but not simply in the unbinding Rationale, as this leaves the impression this is open and more limited instances could be added at any time. We prefer Policy language that more accurately states the intention and is specific and truly limiting. Since, from a legal standpoint, all that matters is what is contained in the Policy, *not* the supporting rationale, we call for the following changes:

R-319 King County should prioritize Transferable Development Rights uses for residential density in urban areas. King County may also allow Transferrable Development Rights:

- a. In limited instances for development in the Rural Area, such as increasing the size of an ADU in the RA-5 zone or to allow duplexes in the Rural town of Snoqualmie Pass, except for Vashon-Maury Island; and ...**
- b. To provide incentives to developers for uses other than additional residential density.**

D-)) Nonresidential Uses

p. 3-28:

While we agree with the spirit of Policy **R-324** below, we have big concerns with subparagraph **e.** and *what criteria* are used to determine whether “*recreational or tourism opportunities*” are “*compatible with the surrounding Rural Area*.” Such criteria need to be laid out either in Policy or Code along with details on who it is that determines if any activity or proposal is compatible. The Rural Area is *not* intended to be a playground for urban residents, it is in fact the “*rural residential area*.” There already are several examples (Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries; Event Centers; etc.) that cater to urban residents, while creating severe problems related to noise, illegal/dangerous parking, congested roads, and nuisance impacts to neighbors. These facilities and venues already violate county codes,

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yet are allowed to continue operations. The county needs to crack down on violators and should *not* be encouraging any more of these or similar activities.

- R-324** ***Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be limited to those that:***
- a. Provide convenient local products and services for nearby residents;***
 - b. Require location in a Rural Area;***
 - c. Support natural resource-based industries;***
 - d. Provide adaptive reuse of significant historic resources; or***
 - e. Provide recreational ((and)) or tourism opportunities that are compatible with the surrounding Rural Area.***

Because non-residential uses in the Rural Area can and do have disproportionately large impacts on rural character, County road use, and safety, we propose the following **addition** to Policy **R-324a**:

- R-324a** ***((These)) Nonresidential uses in the Rural Area shall be sited, sized and landscaped to complement rural character as defined in policy R-101 and R-201, prevent impacts to the environment, limit burden and maintain safety on rural roads, and function with rural services, including on-site wastewater disposal.***

We propose the following **addition** to Policy **R-325**:

- R-325** ***Golf facilities shall be permitted as a conditional use in the RA-2.5 and RA-5 zones and when located outside of Rural Forest Focus Areas, Regionally Significant Resource Areas and Locally Significant Resource Areas((, as a conditional use, in the RA-2.5 and RA-5 zones)). King County will seek willing sellers to buy out Golf facilities already located in Rural Forest Focus and Regionally and Locally Significant Resource Areas with appropriate and available funds to convert into farmland, salmon habitat, new river channels, or other environmental improvements compatible with their location and resource potential.***

p. 3-30:

We propose the following **changes** to Policy **R-328**:

- R-328** ***Large airports, as well as, sSmall airfields beyond those already established in the Rural Area shall should not be permitted, due to their large and/or cumulative impacts on air traffic and nearby uses.***

p. 3-32:

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We call for using the word “*shall*” in Policy R-336b:

R-336b ~~((Adoption of such codes may result in an increased use of r))~~ Renewable energy technologies ~~((that))~~ may be sited in the Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands, as appropriate. Development standards ~~((will seek to))~~ **should shall** ensure that the siting, scale, and design of these facilities respect and support rural character.

p. 3-32:

((IV.)) Rural Public Facilities and Services

The ERP shows the opening paragraph of this section to be completely removed—most likely due to duplication found in paragraph 2 (the new paragraph 1). However, the removal of the phrase: “~~provide guidance for siting those facilities that require Rural Area location~~” with no suitable replacement, eliminates the concept that only those facilities that *require* a Rural Area location can be so located.

p. 3-33:

We proposed the following **changes** for policies R-401 thru R-403. We believe the KCCP should reflect the very *real* concern we enunciated immediately above regarding the opening paragraph on p. 3-32.

R-401 *King County shall work with cities and other agencies providing services to the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands to adopt standards for facilities and services in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands that:*

...
d. ((d)) Do not **require an urban level of infrastructure or** encourage urban development.

R-402 *Public spending priorities for facilities and services within the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands should be as follows:*

- a. *First, to maintain existing facilities and services that protect public health and safety;*
- b. *Second, to upgrade facilities and services when needed to correct ~~((level of service))~~ level-of-service deficiencies without unnecessarily creating additional capacity for new growth; and*
- c. *Third, to support **rural-serving** sustainable economic development that is sized and scaled at levels appropriate for Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands and does not foster urbanization.*

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R-403 *In the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, standards and plans for utility service should be consistent with long-term, low-density development and resource industries. Utility facilities that serve the Urban Growth Area but must be located in the Rural Area or on Natural Resource Lands (for example, a pipeline from a municipal watershed) should be designed and scaled to serve **primarily** the Urban Growth Area. Sewers needed to serve previously established urban “islands,” Cities in the Rural Area, Rural Towns, or new or existing schools pursuant to R-327 and ((F-264)) F-262a shall be tightlined and have access restrictions precluding service to other lands in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands... [Note: The use of the word “primarily” in the second sentence is not firm and is superfluous, since the policy already refers to “facilities that serve the UGA.”]*

V. Rural Commercial Centers

((B-)) Rural Towns

p. 3-37:

We proposed the following **deletion** in policy **R-506**. Since Black Diamond is considered a “City in the Rural Area” (see p. 3-38 and various maps) and is in the process of *quintupling* (not a typo!) its population and its overburden on State and King County roads, the development density in Rural Towns should not approach that achieved in Cities in the Rural Area.

R-506 Rural Towns may contain higher-density housing than permitted in the surrounding Rural Area, and should provide affordable and resource-worker housing ((if utilities and other services permit)). **Development density in Rural Towns may approach that achieved in Cities in the Rural Area, when appropriate infrastructure is available.**

((G-)) Cities in the Rural Area

p. 3-39:

While we agree with the following policy:

R-510 King County should work with Cities in the Rural Area to:

...

b. ((m)) **Minimize the impacts of new development on the surrounding Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands;**

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...when it comes to Black Diamond, a City in the Rural Area growing at an extremely rapid rate and slowing through its agreed-to Growth Targets, King County is completely helpless to implement this policy in any meaningful way.

((D-)) Non-Resource Industrial Uses and Development Standards in the Rural Area

p. 3-40:

While we requested some of the following changes to Policy **R-513**:

R-513 **Rural Public Infrastructure Maintenance Facilities, and agriculture and forestry product processing should be allowed in the Rural Area. Other new industrial uses in the Rural Area shall be permitted only on existing Industrial zoned properties in Rural Towns and ~~((in the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of))~~ the Preston Industrial Area.**

...we still have some concerns. While we understand KC Code **Title 21A.06.1014F** allows Materials Processing Facilities and Composting Facilities such as Cedar Grove Compost, etc., we also note that according to KC Code Title 21A08.080--MANUFACTURING LAND USES, Materials Processing Facilities are permitted (Condition 16) "*Only [on] a site that is ten acres or greater and that does not use local access streets that abut lots developed for residential use*" or subject to a Conditional Use.

Given the history of Wineries / Breweries / Distilleries (WBDs) which claim to do "*agricultural processing*," we recommend clear definitions be established for what is meant by "*agriculture and forestry product processing*." Specifically, we recommend a definition that states: "*Processing applies to agriculture or forestry products grown/produced within King County. It does not apply to raw materials that are trucked in from other locations to be processed at industrial facilities in the King County Rural Area.*" If definitions are *not* tightened up, potatoes grown in Eastern WA could be shipped to a potato chip factory in the Rural Area.

p. 3-40:

We support the following Policy and its proposed modifications:

R-515 ***Existing industrial uses in the Rural Area outside of Rural Towns*~~((, the industrial area on the King County-designated historic site along State Route 169 or the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center of Preston))~~ without Industrial zoning currently shall be zoned rural ((residential)) area but may continue if they qualify as legal, conforming and/or nonconforming uses.**

We thank the Executive's Office for making the above changes, which we specifically requested, but to *complement* them and to *reinforce* other Rural Area policies herein—that seek to protect fragile

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ecosystems and, especially, those in which the County has invested much money, effort, and time, we recommend adding the following new Policy:

R-515a To protect the Cedar River ecosystem, King County should pursue elimination of all Industrial Zones along the Cedar River by requiring redesignation of the Industrial Zones either upon sale of the properties or upon agreement of the property owners.

((VI.)) Natural Resource Lands

D.)) Agriculture

((1.)) Protecting Agricultural Lands

pp. 3-72 to 3-73:

We support the following ERP-proposed changes (Policies **R-656a** and **R-656b**). However, we urge that the *exception* for removal of land from one APD and replacement in another APD should *only* be exercised by a governmental entity for purposes of public/resource benefit or for essential utility needs and should not be used by private entities (individuals or non-utility businesses) for any purposes that would enable increased development on APD lands. This stipulation is particularly important to protect the APDs under the most risk of urbanization such as Lower Green Valley, Sammamish Valley, etc.

R-656a King County may only approve the removal of land from the Agricultural Production District if it is, concurrently with removal of the land from the Agricultural Production District, mitigated through the replacement of agricultural land abutting the same Agricultural Production District that is, at a minimum, comparable in size, soil quality, and agricultural value. As alternative mitigation, the County may approve a combination of acquisition and restoration totaling three acres for every one acre removed as follows:

- a. A minimum of one acre (~~(must)~~) shall be added into another Agricultural Production District for every acre removed; and**
- b. Up to two acres of unfarmed land in the same Agricultural Production District from which land is removed shall be restored for every acre removed.**

Replacement land to comply with the requirements of this policy may be acquired added to the Agricultural Production District in advance of removal of land from the Agricultural Production District, rather than concurrently, if the criteria in R-656b are met.

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- R-656b Replacement land required under R-656a may be acquired and added to the Agricultural Production District in advance of removal as follows:**
- a. The mitigation is for a public agency or utility project consistent with R-655;**
 - b. Property proposed to be added to the Agricultural Production District is approved by the Department of Natural Resources and Parks to ensure compliance with R-656a;**
 - c. The subsequent map amendment to remove the Agricultural Production District land identifies the previously added land being used for mitigation; and**
 - d. The Department of Natural Resources and Parks tracks the acreage of advance additions of replacement land and subsequent removals to ensure that the requirements of R-656a are met.**

pp. 3-81 thru 3-87:

((E.)) Mineral Resources

We see an issue with mining uses being converted to *non-resource* uses (such as hobby farms, clustered housing, etc.), rather than what the County Code and KCCP Policies intend, i.e., those lands, on completion of mining, are to revert back to the rural forest resource land base. This has resulted in *permanent* loss of our rural resources land base. It also further fragments habitat for both plants and animals and decreases our ability to respond and adapt to climate change. In fact, mining resource land conversion to *non-resource* uses conflicts with both some of our oldest and some of our newest land-use policies for the Rural Area.

Below we have copied and pasted the *text* of this section (for easy reference we identify pages and line numbers of same) with the ERP-proposed changes intact and provide our recommended additions/strikethroughs **highlighted** and supporting rationale included in **[COMMENT]**.

Please note we recommend adding ten new policies **R-6aa** through **R-6jj**.

ERP Text (p. 3-81, Lines 3116 thru 3127):

King County contains many valuable mineral resources, including deposits of sand, rock, gravel, silica, clay, and metallic ores. Mineral extraction and processing these deposits is an important part of King County's economy, currently providing hundreds of jobs and producing materials used locally, regionally, and nationally. ((Mineral extraction also has historic significance, in that it provided the impetus for past development in many parts of King County, including Black Diamond and the Newcastle area.))

*King County is required by the Growth Management Act to designate and conserve mineral resource lands and plan appropriately to protect them. **The County shall prioritize sites with the least impact to the environment, public health and safety, and current adjacent land uses. The focus should be on***

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~~sites outside of sensitive areas, with the least environmental impacts and reasonable access to infrastructure to get the minerals to where they will be used. King County shall convene a process to develop selection or de-selection criteria and do a comprehensive review of all the designated and potential mine sites in King County. This should be completed in the next 5 years. The criteria should include the highest collective impacts based on Best Available Science, risks to public health and the environment, and risk and wear to public resources such as roads, water, rivers, and parks. The last time this was undertaken was 1994. The process should identify sites that have never been active, are active, or are in reclamation. Once this is complete, a process of removing inappropriate sites should be undertaken. This should use Best Available Science and current location information. Sites that are in Sensitive Areas and undeveloped, should be re-designated or considered for a conservation purchase. Established, working sites closer to where materials are used should be encouraged and preserved. In doing so the County must assure that land uses adjacent to mineral resource lands do not interfere with the continued use of mineral resource lands in their accustomed manner and in accordance with best management practices. ((The policies in this section explain the steps taken to designate and conserve mineral resource lands and provide direction on the comprehensive review needed before additional sites are designated for mineral resource extraction.~~

[COMMENT: Most of the potential surface mineral resource sites were designated three decades ago (1994), and now residential development, as well as climate change and other factors, including updated policies, have made these sites less viable for development of surface mine sites. The sites that have the highest negative impact, such as those on CARAs, in/near river corridors or next to established neighborhoods should be reevaluated on a schedule possibly along with KCCP updates. If impact is now deemed to have additional adverse consequences, as compared to the date of designation, or in light of current standards and policies, then those sites should be considered for removal from the list of potential surface mineral resources (yes, we understand that a number of actions must be taken to permanently remove mining sites from the resource site list). This helps the public and potential mineral site owners have greater transparency and certainty for future land-use decisions and investments. In support of the new text above regarding adjacent land-uses, we recommend adding the following new policy.]

R-6aa The County shall focus of conservation of proven mineral resources in the Forest Production District, as adjacent land uses are generally more compatible with mineral extraction than siting mines in the Rural Area.

ERP Text (pp. 3-81 thru 3-82, Lines 3129 thru 3151):

~~Four main steps are necessary to support and maintain local availability of mineral resources. First, mineral resource sites should be conserved through designation and zoning. Second, land use conflicts between mineral extraction, processing and related operations and adjacent land uses should be prevented or minimized through policies and assessment and mitigation of environmental impacts. Third, operational practices should protect environmental quality, fisheries and wildlife, in balance with the needs of the industry. Finally, mineral extraction areas need to be reclaimed in a~~

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~~timely and appropriate manner, recognizing adjustments to the mine plan and revisions to permits can no longer be used to delay the reclamation process.))~~

The Mineral Resources Map identifies three different types of Mineral Resource Sites – Designated Mineral Resource Sites, Potential Surface Mineral Resources, and Nonconforming Mineral Resource Sites and Existing Mineral Resource Sites in the Forest Production District. The sites were identified in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan or in subsequent annual updates. Before the Mineral Resources Map is a table that contains information on each Mineral Resource Site parcel.

~~((The Designated Mineral Resources Sites on the Mineral Resources Map satisfy King County's responsibility to designate and conserve mineral resources consistent with requirements of the Growth Management Act. All Designated Mineral Resources Sites have Mineral zoning. Most of the Designated Mineral Resources Sites shown on the map contain sand and/or gravel; however, a few contain other mineral resources such as silica, rock, stone, shale, and clay. The criteria used in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan called for designation of properties that at the time were either zoned outright for mining or those operating under an approved Unclassified Use Permit.))~~ In addition to the designated Mineral Resources Sites, the Forest Production District and Forest (F) zone preserves the opportunity for mineral extraction, but recognizing mining takes land out of forest production, and reclamation is not fully effective to restore it to the same forest productivity that existed before the surface mining. Further, maintaining a critical level of ~75% forest cover in a specific watershed basin helps to maintain proper rainfall and supply of cooler water for areas designated as important for salmonoid habit per the Basin Planning process. Sites further away from watershed basin resources should be prioritized for development over sites that have greater impact on watershed resources. Mineral extraction is a permitted or conditional use in the F zone. Because forestry does not preclude future mineral extraction, King County considers the Forest Production District as part of its strategy to conserve mineral resources.

[COMMENT: In support of the new text regarding forest cover that we recommend adding above, we recommend adding the following new policy.]

R-6bb The County shall prioritize protecting forest cover, working forests, salmon habitat and watershed health when siting mining and mineral and gravel extraction. Sites further away from watershed basin resources shall be considered for higher priority for development over sites that have greater impact on watershed resources. When mining ends, a high priority shall be given to mining site forest restoration to the fullest extent possible.

[COMMENT: Mine reclamation is a big expense and if done correctly and safely, does not generate the same revenue to owners as the extraction phase. Mine operators have typically used mine plan changes and permit updates to delay the reclamation process, and often work to go out of business/bankrupt before full reclamation phase takes place. County Code needs to be implemented to discourage and, if possible, prevent this. Consequently, we recommend adding the following new policy.]

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R-6cc The County shall permit mineral extraction sites to size mines only as large as needed, not necessarily using all the acreage available; reclamation plans shall be defined before development; and any subsequent changes to the permit or plan shall not delay reclamation by more than 25% of the period allowed on the original permit.

Below we recommend adding *new* ERP text and six *new* Policies (on the ten we are proposing). All to be inserted on p. 3-82, at line 3161.

Recommended New ERP Text:

The majority of the potential mining sites in King County are defined for sand and gravel or rock. The geology of King County is such that these types of resources are extremely plentiful, and there is not a need to preserve every potential site that has some sand and gravel or rock potentially available. However, we do need to define and preserve where these resources are plentiful, closest to where they are consumed, least expensive to extract, where impacts current and future are lowest to the environment, public health & safety and adjacent land uses.

[COMMENT: In support of this *new* text above regarding *preserving sites*, we recommend adding the following *new* policy.]

R-6dd The County shall define and preserve sites where key resources, such as sand, gravel, and rock, are plentiful, and closest to where they are consumed.

Recommended New ERP Text:

Transport of these heavy materials uses a lot of diesel fuel and is extremely carbon intensive. In the selection of these sites the County shall provide more consideration to minimizing haul distances and employing more cost- and energy-efficient modes of transport, such as barge and rail, over road transport, etc. Siting future mineral extraction closer to consumption will have a positive impact on meeting the County's climate goals, as mining is one of the most carbon-intensive industries in the County. Siting closer to consumption or to use rail or barge facilities more effectively, will also increase public health and safety, as well as reduce the expenditure of public funds to maintain the County's road network, by reducing haul truck road miles.

[COMMENT: Please note that an efficient example of using conveyers to barge transport is Glacier's large Dupont sand and gravel mine that delivers aggregate materials to downtown Seattle or West Seattle at a low cost per ton. There will be other benefits to reducing haul truck road miles, such as much less rubber dust from tires polluting our waterways and threatening

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what remains of our salmon and orca populations. Consequently, in support of the *new* ERP text above, we recommend adding the following *new* policy.]

R-6ee To help achieve the County's Climate goals and to positively affect public health and safety, transport of heavy mineral-extracted materials, both to where they will be consumed, and to deliver materials for fill and reclamation, shall be considered in planning.

Recommended New ERP Text:

Clustering of mineral extraction operations of same or similar materials is another issue that needs to be better managed. The result is inefficient distribution of sites across the County or region – where again, the geology suggests these materials are present, even plentiful over most of our County and region, particularly as you get closer to the Cascade mountains. This clustering, tends to put more impacts on certain communities – impacts not equally distributed.

[COMMENT: The current process puts industry in the driver's seat and favors the big international major players such as LafargeHolcim (France/Switzerland), Martin Marietta (United States), LSR Group (Russia), HeidelbergCement AG (Switzerland), CEMEX S.A.B de C.V. (Mexico). The County needs to be more involved in deciding where and, especially, when to develop a new mine, rather than waiting for the chance that someone who happens to own land in a certain area decides to apply for the rigorous permit process. It makes more sense for the County to define when and where new sites are developed for mining aggregate materials, so that supply can be phased in when and where needed, and without excessive land resources being devoted to mineral extraction—at the expense of other land uses—at any one given time. Consequently, in support of the *new* text above regarding *clustering/distribution of sites*, we recommend adding the following *new* policy.]

R-6ff The County shall project the amount of mineral resources needed for medium and longer term growth, and where these materials are expected to be consumed. Such information shall be shared with affected communities for an informed discussion of which mines are targeted for expansion, which can be targeted to close, and approximately where more new mines are needed to meet future growth.

Recommended New ERP Text:

Complementary industrial activities, such as limited landfilling of inert materials, as part of mine operations, should only be allowed on an exceptional basis with separate permits and specific regulation and oversight. Only a small portion of the mines should be allowed to accept inert materials, as to reduce regulatory resources needed, and to discourage permitting new mines as a pretext for landfilling or similar commercial activities.

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[COMMENT: Current practices encourage overfilling or excessive disposal activity during site reclamation. This has included acceptance of off-spec and contaminated materials that present future potential impacts and threats to human health and the environment. As a result, permit requirements to restrict off-spec and contaminated materials and limiting fill to pre-existing contours should be strictly enforced with substantial penalties for violations. In addition, reduction in fill to something less than original contours should be considered where that will meet the underlying goal of returning the site to its *pre-existing* zoned use, in most cases as forest resources land. In support of this *new text* above regarding landfilling on sites, we recommend adding the following *new policy*.]

R-6gg The County shall prohibit the importing wood waste from land clearing (e.g., tree stumps), construction & demolition waste, or any toxic substances at any mineral extraction site.

Recommended New ERP Text:

The mining/industrial-specific public complaint and monitoring process should help facilitate information gathering related to such activities. More effective alerts, and rapid sharing of information between County departments (e.g., Permitting, Public Health), as well as State Department of Resources and Ecology are needed to prevent illegal activities.

[COMMENT: In support of the *new text* above regarding *monitoring and complaint processes*, we recommend adding the following *new policy*.]

R-6hh The County shall offer a monitoring and complaint process specifically designed for review of mineral extraction or rural-industrial activities. This shall include public access to tools available to County inspectors, such as recent aerial imagery, LIDAR, test well reporting, and NASA TEMPO air pollution monitoring.

[COMMENT: The long-term impacts of such violations are so great, and allowing such parties to continue to apply for additional permits consumes an extraordinary amount of public resources, and distracts County and public from other issues and opportunities that also need attention. Consequently, we recommend adding the following *new policy*.]

R-6ii The County shall prevent and limit the privileges to apply for permits of owner/operators of mineral extraction who repeatedly fail to comply with permit conditions, county code, or state and federal laws and rulings.

ERP Text (p. 3-82, Lines 3162 thru 3160):

We recommend adding a sentence to the end of the following ERP paragraph:

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The Mineral Resources Map also shows Potential Surface Mineral Resource Sites. These are sites where King County may allow some future surface mining to occur or where the owner or operator indicates an interest in future mineral extraction. ((The Potential Surface Mineral Resources Sites shown on the map do not indicate the material. Because of the geology of King County, most valuable metallic mineral resources are located in the Forest Production District, and are therefore already protected from urban development.)) Identification of Potential Surface Mineral Resources Sites satisfies the Growth Management Act requirements to not knowingly preclude opportunities for future mineral extraction and to inform nearby property owners of the potential for future mineral extraction use of these areas in order to prevent or minimize conflicts. The County will endeavor to inform affected communities in advance of set public comment periods and permit decisions.

Recommended New ERP Text to immediately follow the text above (insert at line 3161):

Non-conforming sites need to be reviewed to latest science as they often have greater potential negative impacts. Efforts should be made to define sunsets for each of these sites with well-defined and funded reclamation plans, that cannot be delayed.

[COMMENT: Owners/operators of these sites have benefited from these sites for longer periods with less regulation to start up, so should not also be rewarded with the privilege to sell or transfer these as a mineral extraction operation. Instead, the considerable impacts of these non-conforming sites is best mitigated by full and proper reclamation of the site to the original/previous use and zoning of each property. Consequently, in support of the new text above regarding *non-conforming sites*, we recommend adding the following new policy.]

R-6jj The County shall review non-conforming sites based on the latest best available science so as to reduce their potential negative impacts. Sunsets for each of these sites shall be defined. Funded reclamation plans shall not be delayed.

ERP Text (p. 3-82, lines 3162 thru 3169):

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Nonconforming Mineral Resources Sites. These are sites on which some mining operations predated King County zoning regulations without appropriate zoning or other land use approval. Mining for these sites has not been authorized through a land use designation or zoning classification. These sites are shown for informational purposes only. Mining can occur on an identified site only if mining has been approved as a nonconforming use by the Department of Local Services - Permitting Division, and mining activities have received all other necessary permit approvals. Because the sites have not undergone formal review to be designated on the Land Use Map or zoned for mining, the sites do not have long-term commercial significance, and for which ownership cannot be transferred or sold as an on-going mineral extraction operation. Active reclamation for these non-conforming sites cannot be delayed with additional permits or changes, to bring clarity for owners and community of when each site will conclude/sunset. However, they can continue to serve mineral supply needs.

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[COMMENT: Our immediate prior COMMENT on *non-conforming sites* provides our supporting rationale for the *new* text we recommend above.]

End of our comments and recommended Text and Policy additions/deletions for the **E. Mineral Resources** subsection.

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4 - HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment.

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5 - ENVIRONMENT

Theme

- The County has excellent Policies to protect and enhance the environment.

Overall Comments

We find some strong policies herein, but they depend on how they are implemented, if and how periodic monitoring is funded and staffed, and that enforcement, when needed, happens. Our experience has been that each of these have been problems for many years and that structural changes will need to be considered before the County can truly honor the good policies herein. We are pleased to see the Climate Action Plan permeates every aspect of this chapter. Almost all Climate Actions are “*shall*” making the intent strong. The language throughout is updated to match current practices and the Climate Action Plan. New to the Climate Plan is Climate Equity and equity language is added throughout and strengthened with “*shall*.”

Specific Comments

p. 5-3:

This contains examples of very good overarching strategies:

Individual species protections under the Endangered Species Act continue to play an important role. At the same time, both nationally and internationally, many governments are initiating multi-species approaches aimed at conserving biodiversity. Biodiversity refers not only to plants and animals but also to their habitats and the interactions among species and habitats.

Protection of biodiversity in all its forms and across all landscapes is critical to continued prosperity and quality of life in King County. In fisheries, forestry, and agriculture, the value of biodiversity to sustaining long-term productivity has been demonstrated in region after region. ~~((With the impending effects of climate change, maintaining biodiversity will be critical to the resilience of resource-based activities and to many social and ecological systems. The continued increase in King County's population and the projected effects of climate change make conservation a difficult but urgent task.))~~ The protection and restoration of biodiversity and of a full range of supporting habitats is important to King County. King County will incorporate these considerations in its operations and practices, ranging from its utility functions (such as wastewater, solid waste and storm water management) to its regulatory and general government practices.

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p. 5-4:

This contains another example of very good intentions that will need strong *implementation* through rigorous permitting and enforcement:

Untreated stormwater runoff remains the largest source of pollution to Puget Sound. Stormwater management requirements and practices continue to evolve, with greater emphasis on low impact development and green stormwater infrastructure that can mimic the natural functions of soil and forest cover in slowing and filtering stormwater runoff by infiltrating or dispersing stormwater onsite, or by capturing and reusing it. Modifying stormwater facilities, or building new ones in previously developed areas, is very expensive. The County continues to develop, apply, and update evidence-based tools to identify and prioritize actions to achieve the best outcomes for reducing pollution to Puget Sound.

We have been bothered for some time about the *single-species approach* (e.g., Chinook); however, there is strong language throughout to emphasize a *multi-species approach*, including on p. 5-5 below:

I. Natural Environment and Regulatory Context

A. Integrated Approach

p. 5-5:

Environmental protection efforts need to be integrated across species, habitats, ecosystems, and landscapes. Efforts to reduce flooding or protect water quality and habitat cannot work successfully in isolation from management of land use across the larger contributing landscape. Efforts to protect one particular species or resource type could be detrimental to another if such efforts are not considered in an ecosystem context. Protection and restoration of natural ecosystem processes provide the best opportunity to conserve native species.

We support this, but, as with all of this, *implementation* is key. As an example, in the Bear Creek basin, all the first properties bought under Waterways 2000 were inventoried by a biologist hired by the County (the Basin Steward hired and accompanied). These surveys were wonderful and were used as the basis of the Management Plans for the property and future restoration plans. Unfortunately, it lasted a very short time and many of the restoration suggestions have not been implemented. So how do we make this happen over a much bigger scale and longer time frame? Also, the Basin Stewards as originally conceived, were watershed based and strengthened and involved local private groups. Now they are primarily grant writers – great ones but a different role.

((H.)) Climate Change

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((B-)) Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

p. 5-21:

It appears the word “not” was inadvertently omitted below:

Government Operations

((E-205)) E-201 *King County shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ((all facets of)) its operations and actions, including but not limited to those associated with construction and management of ((e)) County-owned facilities, infrastructure development, transportation, and environmental protection programs to achieve the emissions reductions targets set in ((E-206)) E-202 and to work towards the carbon neutral goal in F-215b.*

IV. Land and Water Resources

A. Conserving King County's Biodiversity

1. Biodiversity

p. 5-38:

E-403 *King County should develop a biodiversity conservation framework and conservation strategy to achieve the goals of maintaining and recovering native biodiversity. ~~((This framework should be coordinated with the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy where applicable.))~~ King County should collaborate with other governments and private and nonprofit organizations on the creation and implementation of this strategy.*

The underlined addition (moved from E-404) has been a good Policy, but, again, it is another thing that will not happen without a commitment to *funding* the work

3. Biodiversity Conservation Approaches

b. Habitat connectivity

p. 5-41:

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E-410 ***Habitat networks for threatened, endangered and Species of Local Importance, as listed in this chapter, shall be designated and mapped. Habitat networks for other priority species in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands should be identified, designated and mapped using ecoregion information about the county and its resources and should be coordinated with state and federal ecosystem mapping efforts as appropriate.***

During the very first meeting of the Bear Creek Basin Plan Citizen Committee the public came to ask how to deal with beavers—and that was 1987! Again, funding and real help is necessary.

D. Aquatic Resources

7. Beavers and Beaver Activity

p. 5-83:

E-499ii ***King County supports the coexistence of beavers and people in rural King County. ((King County should prepare a beaver management strategy to guide a program on issues such as where and how beavers and humans can co-exist with or without engineered solutions and where beavers should be excluded or removed.))***

We support this Policy and the proposed changes, but, again, we remain concerned there will be adequate *funding* and Staff to do it?

p. 5-85:

With respect to Water Resource Inventory Area salmon recovery plans the subject not policies **E-499K** and **E-499I**, we would prefer these to be “*shall*” rather than “*should*.” We are unsure what the criteria, other than intent is, for when to use which.

p. 5-97:

E-708 ***King County should implement a framework for effectiveness monitoring of critical areas regulations, and use monitoring data to inform the future review and updates of its critical areas policies and regulations.***

We again have concerns about *implementation* and adequate *funding* to do so.

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6 - SHORELINES

We see very few changes to Policies proposed herein with the exception of:

Environment Protection Policies

Shoreline Critical Areas

Geologically Hazardous Areas (Policies **S-624**, **S-626**, and **S-627** on p. 6-49)

Shoreline Use and Shoreline Modification

Shoreline Modifications

Shoreline Stabilization (Policies **S-774**, **S-774a**, **S-775**, and **S-776** on pp. 7-75 thru 7-76)

As these primarily represent *consolidation*, we have no comments.

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JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

7 - PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Theme

- The County has excellent Policies to protect and enhance parks and open space.

Overall Comments

As with Chapter 5 - ENVIRONMENT, we find some strong policies herein, but they depend on how they are *implemented* and *funded*.

As far as public involvement, King County seems to not be adequately staffed. As an example, Tina Miller used to organize, in partnership with the community, Restorations, etc. However, with her retirement, we are not aware of these continuing. Again, we remain concerned about implementation.

Another concern is funding sources, as King County Parks relies almost totally on the voter-approved Levy every six years and entrepreneurial events like concerts at Marymoor Park. It has not received General Fund funding for a very long time. Although we have confidence in the voters of King County, we still see Parks as vulnerable.

*** PLEASE NOTE THE REMOVAL OF ROMAN NUMERALS, LETTERS, NUMBER, ETC. FOR SECTION / SUBSECTION TITLES WAS NOT FOLLOWED IN THIS CHAPTER AS IT WAS THROUGHOUT ALL THE OTHER CHAPTERS, ETC.

Specific Comments

I. Parks, Recreation and Open Space

B. Components of ~~((the Regional))~~ King County's Open Space System

3. Regional Trails ~~((System))~~ Network

pp. 7-6 to 7-7:

P-109 *King County shall complete a regional trails ~~((system))~~ network, linking trail corridors to form a countywide network. King County will continue to primarily own the land necessary for the operation and management of the trail ~~((system))~~ network and pursue public-private funding opportunities for development and maintenance, while ensuring opportunities for access for all King County residents, both urban and rural.*

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

We believe the current system of regional trails is extensive, but unlike our neighboring counties of Snohomish and Pierce, the network primarily located in urban areas, within the UGA. There is an increasing need for the County regional trail system to further expand to fulfill the objectives of the Leafline Trails Coalition, in which the County is a major part:

- Provide more equitable access to safe places to walk and bike
- Offer reliable and healthy transportation options
- Grow the region's economy by adding jobs, connecting businesses to customers and employees, and providing millions of dollars in healthcare savings

Yes, Eastrail (see Policy **P-110**) is important and will be increasingly important for active transportation and commuting. Although, now and not later is the best time to renew efforts to complete connections in the rural areas of the County. Choices for right-of-ways are still available in the Rural Area, but residential development and increasing cost of land will soon make routing of new trails much more difficult. Further, now with e-bikes and other mobility options, these more rural trails can better serve dual use as active transportation infrastructure, as well as preferred recreation destinations for people from our more urban areas and tourists. Trails and Open Space passive recreation tourism is and will increasingly be important for sustainable small-scale economic development in the Rural Area. The value of this tourism, both in public interest and dollars, builds environmental awareness and advocacy that will help us as a community to conserve our natural resources, such as river corridors.

Travel by bicycle and similar micro-mobility will become increasingly important as the population of our region grows, but inevitably roads and public transport cannot meet the demand. Commuting and travel by bicycle and micro mobility will become more convenient as the regional trail system builds out, and as road transport becomes overcrowded and less reliable. Trail are an important way people can connect to public transit, without the need or reduced need for a car, or for land for parking.

We encourage the County to shift its near-term focus on land acquisition, then planning and construction of lower-cost unpaved surface trails, then later, as budgets allow, upgrade these to higher specifications with pavement and bridges. The typical e-bikes and now popular gravel bikes allow greater use unpaved trails.

Consequently, we recommend the following *new* Policy:

P109a King County shall plan and further develop the Snoqualmie Valley Trail and Foothills Trail to enhance connectivity between cities in the Rural Area, as well as to trail systems in adjacent counties, and to facilitate statewide and national trail connection transportation routes. This effort includes partnering with Seattle Public Utilities to find a solution to extend the Cedar River Trail to Cedar Falls.

II. Cultural Resources

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

We recommend **additions** to the following *three* Policies in this section:

A. Relationships

p. 7-17:

- P-208** *King County shall pursue its cultural resource goals by working with residents, property owners, cultural organizations, public agencies, Indian tribes, schools and school districts, **media** and others.*
- P-209** *King County shall provide leadership in pursuing its cultural resource goals by actively advancing the protection, enhancement, and ongoing use of county-owned and other cultural resources, and by promoting intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships for the preservation and use of cultural resources. **King County shall reach out to citizens/organizations within their purview to facilitate cultural/heritage projects/goals.***

C. Historic Preservation

p. 7-19:

- P-217** *King County shall acquire and preserve historic properties for use by ((e))County and other public agencies and shall give priority to, **and support efforts involved in, occupying historic buildings whenever feasible.***

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

8 - TRANSPORTATION

Theme

- The financial system for County roads is broken, needs of unincorporated areas are neglected, and city-to-city traffic uses Rural Area roads excessively.

Overall Comments

Here we elaborate on our Theme, in general, below and suggest in our Specific Comments (further below) how to implement improvements throughout **Chapter 8**. Separately, in **Appendices C** and **C1**, we offer suggestions for supporting technical changes. Additional technical work by the County would be needed to implement those suggestions.

We are pleased overall with the many improvements to Chapter 8 that were added since June 2023 Public Review Draft. Many of our general concerns have been acknowledged, but the much updated version still does not adequately serve and protect the unincorporated areas, both rural and urban. The unincorporated areas may contain “*only*” 11% of the countywide *population*, but they contain 100% of the *road system* over which King County is responsible. More must be done. We comment in particular areas below.

Structural Funding Problem:

The Executive’s “*Recommended Plan*” (ERP) properly identifies the severe structural problem of inadequate funding for its road system – a long-standing issue brought about as an unintended consequence of vigorously implementing the state’s Growth Management Act in areas of housing and land-use planning, along with the 1% cap on revenues, particularly property taxes. The ERP properly commits the county to seek regional and state level solutions, but previous efforts along those lines have been unproductive. Therefore, it is time for the county to take new actions it can control to address the real crux of the problem – the large volumes of urban commuter traffic using rural roads without paying for them to any real extent. Commuter travel between cities drives the unfunded need for maintenance now and total reconstruction later, as the transportation appendices clearly demonstrate.

We strongly encourage that, while still seeking state and regional solutions, the county immediately change its philosophy of road system management to:

- (a) Manage the existing road system so as to deflect *through-commuter travel* from lesser county arterials toward state highways and designated regional arterials, and
- (b) Increase the priority for use of *regional transit funds* to divert more commuter travel to transit.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

While every change involves overcoming technical problems, it is imperative the county, at least, establish policy now to encourage and enable such changes.

Areas Needing New Direction

Road standards, level-of-service standards, and the transportation concurrency system are presently biased toward support of through-travel on county arterials. But rural county arterials are simultaneously the “*neighborhood streets*” of the rural area and should be managed as such rather than facilitate urban commuter use of rural area “*neighborhood streets*.” Road standards and operational practices should therefore focus more on preserving the local access function of county arterials in rural areas, and deflect more commuter travel toward state highways and selected regional arterials.

Nationwide, new directions are gaining momentum that broaden the focus of all transportation programs to serve more goals than just moving cars and trucks. Such initiatives as “*traffic calming*,” “*Complete Streets*,” “*Target Zero*,” and “*Safer Streets*,” among others, are popular in cities, but can be adapted to serve rural/unincorporated areas as well, to better support the population in those areas. The ERP vaguely acknowledges such initiatives. The KCCP should be more articulate with respect to stronger actions in rural/unincorporated areas that would help *maintain* rural roads for rural residents and *discourage* commuter traffic between cities from using rural roads.

Technical appendices document the funding shortfall quite well, and provide some guidance on how the county will prioritize road system management. Chapter 8 should include a summary of principal actions such as road closures that may be necessary in the near future, based on current law and assumptions.

We applaud and support efforts to measure travel in terms of *vehicle-mile-of-travel (VMT)*, and to support actions to reduce VMT for reasons of climate impacts as well as other more traditional reasons of regional planning. We believe that a VMT-based methodology could be the key to enacting new funding mechanisms on a *regional* basis, since VMT impacts are easily measured and forecast both regionally and locally. The state is moving toward a VMT-based road user-fee system to replace the outdated gas-tax system. Locally and regionally, VMT can be applied to create an equitable multi-modal and inter-jurisdictional impact fee system, as well as a simple and systematic concurrency system. The regional travel forecasting model of the Puget Sound Regional Council is the logical tool to utilize for such a system, by all jurisdictions. King County could be the leader in adopting such a system.

Specific Comments

Our recommendations appear as **red** when recommending changes to Text and **bold red** when recommending changes to Policies.

p. 8-1:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

This chapter's opening paragraph should add words to acknowledge that the county road system increasingly serves travel between cities, on roads built for low-volume rural conditions, and the financial system for maintaining county roads is no longer viable for a number of reasons.

pp. 8-3 thru 8-5:

**Creating an Integrated, Sustainable, and Safe
Transportation System that Enhances Quality of Life**

Introduction

Add this bullet point (with matching changes in supporting documents):

- Preserve and protect the Rural Area(s) and Natural Resource Areas from the impacts of increasing commuter traffic flows between cities, by such means as prioritizing the local access function of most county roads for residents of rural areas rather than serving through-traffic, by increasing transit service between cities, by seeking improvements on state highway corridors for intercity travel, and by implementing corresponding performance measures.

Conclude the Introduction with this additional sentence:

As elaborated in *Appendix C1 (Transportation Needs Report)* the projected shortfall of road funds will reaches a crisis point by 2029, when the funds available fall below the need to sustain existing operations. If new funding sources are not established by then, some bridges may be taken out of service, some roads may not be maintained and/or may be closed, and the scope of other road services will be curtailed.

Transportation System, Services, and County Responsibilities

p. 8-10:

Road System

Conclude the opening paragraph of this section with one additional sentence:

However, if additional funding sources are not found within the next few years, it will be necessary to reduce the number of bridges, miles of roads, etc., the county maintains using the revenue sources available under current law.

p. 8-11 to 8-12:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Air Transportation

This discussion of airports is quite incomplete and lacking consistency. The region's two largest commercial airports are not even mentioned. Some, but not all, of the small general-purpose airports in the county are identified. GMA requires accounting for all facilities countywide regardless of ownership and operating authority. The prospect of an additional airport to relieve Seattle-Tacoma International Airport by 2050 must be recognized as a current issue. Great detail is not required, but locations and issues should be accounted for.

Add the following paragraphs and follow this pattern to account for other general purpose airfields and private airfields, such as those in Enumclaw, Auburn, and Vashon Island and possibly others.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is the ____-busiest commercial airport in the nation and a significant asset for the region's economy. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is owned and operated by the Port of Seattle.

Renton Municipal Airport is owned and operated by the City of Renton and used by the Boeing Company and general aviation.

King County is not responsible for the operation of those airports.

End this section with the following at least the following information concerning a possible new airport:

The ability of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport to serve the region's air travel demand has been projected by the Puget Sound Regional Council to reach full capacity by 2050. The *Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC)*, a state agency, researched potential locations for a new airport and found no suitable location, based on ground-side suitability factors. The state legislature in 2023 authorized a new *Commercial Aviation Work Group* to further evaluate increasing capacity at existing airports throughout the state, before considering siting a new airport.

A suggested policy on locating a new commercial airports in King County appears in the next section.

General Policy Guidance

p. 8-13:

Policy **T-106**, and the Strategic Plan to which it refers, should be amended to include:

As the provider of road services to residents of the unincorporated area, King County shall prioritize its limited funds to maintain local access and mobility for the residents of that area ahead of providing capacity for commuter travel through the Rural Area(s) and Natural Resource Areas, while pursuing regional strategies for funding of regional travel needs.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

A new Policy **T-xxx** should be added, as follows:

T-xxx. A new commercial airport, when and if needed for statewide travel purposes, should not be located within the boundaries of King County because the airport capacity of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is more than adequate to serve the needs of King County's total population, the land area needed would severely impact existing land uses, and the airspace needed would conflict with existing airports and/or nearby mountains.

At the bottom of this page, after the introductory paragraph under the next section (**Providing Services and Infrastructure that Support the County Land Use Vision**), add the following sentence:

This may include city-to-city transit service beyond existing plans, for the purpose of reducing commuter travel from outlying cities in the rural area. This multi-modal strategy is needed to reduce growth impacts on the rural area between the cities. Transportation actions of this kind would also comply with requirements of climate action legislation passed in 2023.

p. 8-15:

Providing Services and Infrastructure that Support the County Land Use Vision

Land Use and Growth Strategy

At line 468, for clarity and focus add the word “*unincorporated*” so the paragraph begins with “*The county’s **unincorporated** urban areas, Rural Areas, and ...*”

At line 472 add to the sentence that ends with: “*providing safe and adequate roadways*” these additional words: “***and also preserving the rural lifestyle and character.***”

At line 474 add a new sentence after:

The vast majority of traffic growth on county is actually due to rising commuter traffic from cities at the outer edge of the region (and adjacent counties) passing through the Rural Area(s).

At line 475 follow the sentence ending “safe and efficient travel” with this additional sentence:

Additional transit resources may also be allocated to reduce vehicle-miles of travel in these corridors.

At line 477 add to the last sentence in this paragraph:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

“...and to maintain adequate local access to existing land uses in the Rural Area.”

Policy **T-202** is good for its emphasis on preserving rural character. At the end add the following words to provide more tools: *“including increased fixed-route transit service to outlying cities and adjacent counties so as to reduce commuter travel through the Rural Area(s).”*

p. 8-16:

Travel Forecasts

Add to end of first paragraph:

The regional travel forecasting model does not consider growth in excess of the targets. Thus, while the City of Black Diamond has adopted much higher growth targets in its own comprehensive plan, the impact of that higher growth is not represented in the forecast volumes on state highways and county through the affected Rural Area.

pp. 8-16 to 8-17:

Public Transportation System

Add to policy **T-204** (or add a *new* policy?):

In addition, King County should seek to reduce traffic growth on county arterials through the Rural Area by increasing express transit services between the Cities in the Rural Area and the core cities of the Urban Growth Area.

p. 8-17:

Road System

Add at the end of Policy **T-207**:

“...and to decrease the use of county rural arterials by trips between Cities in the Rural Area and the core Urban Growth Area.”

p. 8-18:

Airports

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

This section needs expansion. It should account in some fashion more airports than just the three small airfields now mentioned. At least expand this list of rural general-aviation airports affected by King County land use actions to also include Enumclaw Airport, Crest Airpark and Evergreen Sky Ranch, and possibly others. Ideally, also add a policy to address King County land use policy affecting Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Renton Municipal Airports, and take a pro-active position regarding a possible new regional airport.

Also, why are ferry operations inventoried in the appendices, and addressed later with policies T-301 and T-302 under Effective Management and Efficient Operations, but not accounted for in this section of chapter 8 relating to Services and Infrastructure that Support the County Land Use Vision? The later section assumes the county operates passenger-only ferries, but where is the policy in the T-200 series that spells out what the county's goals are for such service or why the county is investing in such services?

p. 8-19:

Level of Service Standards

Line 637 To the paragraph ending "*Level of Service C or lower*," add the following text to better account for rural-area traffic operations and to comply with HB1151 which requires enactment of multi-modal policies:

To better account for conditions in rural areas affecting rural residents' mobility, an expanded multi-modal level of service method should be developed that accounts not only for congestion of through traffic, but also access delay to/from side streets and driveways, shoulder facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, and transit availability. Each of those additional factors is more affected by high volumes of through traffic than by low volumes, and a level of service scale for each can be devised with a high LOS at low through volumes and a low LOS at high through volumes.

Broadening the definition of level of service to include all modes is both necessary and overdue. Appendices describe the "*Minor Arterial*" road classification as having a strong component of service to local access, making such roads more like Collector Arterials than Principal Arterials. Yet current county standards treat Minor Arterials and Principal Arterials interchangeably in terms of capacity, and show almost no differences in the County Road Design Standards. Rural conditions are not properly addressed by current design standards and a change to level of service standards is needed to bridge that gap.

p. 8-20:

Policy T-215

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JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Finally, in all the unincorporated urban areas, we suggest “D” for the level of service standard, as LOS E amounts to capitulation to extreme congestion and fails to support local access and mobility.

Policies T-216, T-217, and T-218

We recommend a simplification to **apply the same LOS** (again, we prefer “D”) to all the designated urban and quasi-urban areas now given different LOS ratings. The distinctions among these subtly different types of quasi-urban land use are just too complex with little benefit.

Also add **Ravensdale** to the list of Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers in policy T-218.

In our view, existing LOS practices sweep many issues under the rug and prevent proper planning to preserve the rural character. There is much to gain by creating level of service standards in the multi-modal fashion required by HB 1151. This will support local access and mobility as befitting rural character, provide support for regional approaches to traffic impact mitigation and concurrency, and support state funding for highways through the rural area. It would justify impact mitigation from new developments in adjacent cities that contribute traffic to rural arterials. It would also encourage the planning of corridor improvements that support local access turns rather than through capacity (turn pockets, roundabouts, etc.).

Revising the level-of-service standards will also not harm the prospects for construction of a single home on a single lot in rural areas, because the concurrency ordinance exempts developments of up to nine dwelling units.

pp. 8-20 to 8-22:

Concurrency

We object not to the policy *per se* but to the manner of measurement as defined in the concurrency ordinance. The current ordinance blunts to nothingness the very tool GMA prescribed to address congestion issues, and thwarts the county's ability to negotiate any kind of multi-modal mitigation from other jurisdictions for their impacts on county roads. The ordinance should be revised to be consistent with typical traffic engineering methodology by focusing on the speed of travel in the peak direction that is most congested, rather than take the average of peak and off-peak directions. The ordinance should then also account for level of service for multiple modes of travel as just detailed above.

For the KCCP Update we propose only to set the stage for that ordinance revision by adding some words (in **red**) to Policy T-222:

T-222 The concurrency test shall be based on the Level of Service on arterials in unincorporated King County using the County's adopted methodology, which shall account for multiple modes of travel including transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians as well as motor vehicles.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

pp. 8-23 to 8-26:

Active Transportation Program

The discussion of Active Transportation is good for elevating the importance of this component of a complete transportation system. That is a good step toward implementing the “complete streets” philosophy of serving all travel modes together. But it is incomplete and misleading about the actual status of Active Transportation in unincorporated King County, especially the rural areas thereof. It gives the false impression that King County’s work program will actually deliver significantly toward the lofty goals of the policies. As well, policies can be improved for greater clarity as we itemize below, after some textual comments.

The Active Transportation Text consists of four paragraphs, which need reorganization. We recommend placing the second paragraph first, so the text defining Active Transportation comes first. Follow that with the paragraphs that discuss the Regional Transportation Plan’s emphasis on Active Transportation as an overarching policy, then the county’s emphasis to comply with that, and finally the county’s organizational roles and responsibilities. The entire text should be reorganized to address the topic separately for each of three systems separately:

- (1) County road system
- (2) Regional trail system
- (3) County transit system

Overall, we are disappointed by the urban-centric tone of the entire text, as it discusses both the regional trail system and the county road system. The scope must be broadened to account for the needs of rural residents, as well urban dwellers.

The regional trail system in rural areas is exalted as the centerpiece of county support for Active Transportation. And we who live in the rural area support the regional trail system. But our interest is not just for its recreational benefits, which accrue to both rural and urban residents. We value the regional trail system also (and perhaps even more) for its provision of safe routes for rural residents to commute long distances by bicycle! Lamentably the text describes that system only as a recreational service and fails to even mention the commuting aspect. Sadly, the text then has the chutzpah to justify the recreational system on the basis of providing a choice of modes – which only makes sense for the commuter function!

Next, the text describes the county’s role and responsibility for active transportation in unincorporated areas as if the matter was being properly covered, but fails to address how the unsafe conditions that now apply for active transportation on most rural arterials can or will be addressed. Reference is made to Road Design and Construction standards as if that ends the discussion. The reality is much less encouraging:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

- (a) Most rural arterials are carrying high volumes of commuter traffic between cities, a traffic condition not expected to occur on rural roads, and both pedestrian and bicycle activity is commonly seen on all such roads.
- (b) The absence of shoulders in the presence of high traffic volumes, usually at high speeds as well, creates an unwelcome danger for active transportation in unincorporated areas, whether rural or urban in nature.
- (c) Most rural arterials lack the shoulders needed to support pedestrian and bicycle activity with effective separation from traffic, having been built decades ago to less complete design standards than now apply.
- (d) Future reconstruction to current standards is described in the text as the county's main "*solution*" to the present lack of facilities for active transportation.
- (e) The county lacks road funds to do more than maintain existing facilities, as clearly explained in the transportation appendices. Few if any improvements to add shoulders to rural roads can be expected in our lifetime.
- (f) There is no county policy, and no program, to identify and address this failing component of service to active transportation.

We therefore recommend that additional text be added to spell out the magnitude of the problem of missing shoulders on county arterials, and a policy be established to support efforts to better serve active transportation on county roads (see Policy T-233f below).

Candidly, we understand that funds will remain limited for a long time. But we believe that real progress could be made soon if policy direction authorized the Roads Division to consider interim improvements adhering to less than full design standards, at selected high priority locations. That can provide immediate benefits, long before total reconstruction of an arterial will be possible.

To be practical we propose that priority for interim improvements for active transportation be limited to locations of greatest concern to active transportation as measured by high traffic volumes, and lack of safe sight distance – i.e., blind curves and hillcrests, and known activity by pedestrians and bicyclists. It is at such blind spots that pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists encounter each other without warning and without ability to take evasive actions.

A strategy of interim improvements would provide real support to active transportation in rural areas long before any rural arterials could be reconstructed to current standards. And policy support is necessary so the Roads Division can execute the strategy.

Policy **T-230**. Good improvements so far, but add at the end a clearer articulation of the underlying principle:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

"... consistent with the "Complete Streets" principle that a road is not "complete" unless it serves all user groups."

Policy **T-233**. Since most road improvement projects are likely to remain unfunded for many years due to the well-known road funding issue, the premise of previous policies to include active transportation in project design rings hollow. Add one more criterion to provide for a lower-cost strategy of small improvements where most needed:

"f. Interim projects to improve safety of active transportation using low-cost designs that deviate from the Road Design and Construction Standards, so as to allow meaningful improvements at short sections of road long before reconstruction to standards can be foreseen for the entire road. Interim projects may be considered for sections of arterial roads where traffic volumes are high, sight distance is below design standards due to horizontal or vertical curves in the road, and pedestrian and/or bicycle activity exists at any level."

Policy **T-236**. To further support the "Complete Streets" principle, add after "rural levels of service" the words **"... for all users."** This implies furthermore that rural levels of service will be defined and adopted by ordinance, in order to identify, prioritize, and execute actions suggested by policy T-233(f) directly above.

Policy **T-240**. Here emphasize again the evolving multi-modal nature of standards by adding at the end **"... for all users."**

Policy **T-243**. Add at the end: **"including the development of level of service standards for all modes."**

p. 8-27:

Transportation Demand Management

We are pleased by the mention of "active transportation" in several policies under this section. The concerns we raised just above are supported and accentuated by such mentions.

III. Ensuring Effective Management and Efficient Operations

p. 8-30:

Public Transportation Policies and Service Guidelines

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

The scarcity of text and policies for a program as large as Metro Transit is alarming. More guidance may exist in Metro's Strategic Plan, but shouldn't there be an *over-arching* policy in this Comprehensive Plan? Just one umbrella policy (**T-301**) is offered for transit, and that policy is so broad and all-inclusive as to be meaningless. It is ironic that three times as much verbiage is provided for the rather small element of passenger-only ferry service.

T-3xx. Please add enough distinct policies to guide the broad outline of how Metro provides public transit, and in particular to address particular requirements for transportation planning in compliance with the Growth Management Act.

Some particular issues require further discussion, next.

Responding to climate change is a particular concern of Metro's Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, according to the text. We assume that includes using transit to reduce vehicle-miles of travel by cars regionwide, but the sparse text doesn't make that clear.

T-3xx. Please add a policy here regarding Metro's response to climate change.

We would especially desire coverage of a particular way to implement that theme - by increasing transit service between outlying cities like Duvall, Carnation, and Enumclaw and job centers in the urban core. To our knowledge those areas receive low priority for transit based on maximizing system ridership, supporting equity, and other traditional concerns. But if the goal is to reduce carbon emissions, more attention should be given to commute patterns from outlying cities, a type of "low hanging fruit" from the emissions point of view. And we think that the goal of equity also applies, since the housing growth in outlying cities tends to be in that lower price range that serves "working poor" people who work in the urban core but can't afford to live in the urban core.

Commute trips from outlying cities are very long, obviously. Therefore each trip shifted from a car to transit removes an above-average number of vehicle-miles of travel, and with that the associated carbon emissions. This is not an appeal for more transit to rural areas in general. It is a call for targeted service between concentrated residential areas (outlying cities) and the job centers of the urban core. That kind of relatively fast express service could divert many commuters from cars. While initially directed at reducing road traffic and reducing carbon emissions for climate action, it would also primarily serve lower-income working families and thus relate to equity goals.

T-3xx. Please add a policy here regarding increasing Metro service to outlying cities because their growth is part of the region's growth policy, tends to serve lower-income populations, and the county's rural arterial network is not able to serve the resulting commuter pattern at present nor in the foreseeable future.

We understand that Metro's Strategic Plan must satisfy many priorities. If Metro cannot adequately address this environmentally critical commuter issue directly, then why not let others try? A policy framework could be adopted that permits innovative entrepreneurial efforts to supply what Metro cannot.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

T-3xx. Please add a policy here that recognizes Metro's limited fiscal ability to serve all travel patterns in the region, and authorizes innovation by other entities, public and private, to experiment, innovate, and implement additional transit services of a targeted nature for specific travel patterns and rider populations for which Metro cannot for whatever reason prioritize adequate services to meet the need. Include of course "guardrails" to disallow services that directly compete with Metro by providing parallel services, and only allow services that attract additional ridership by reducing car travel, not by taking passengers from Metro.

p. 8-31:

Road Services Policies and Priorities

The first paragraph of this section references the fiscal issue but gives the false impression that the Roads Program has a handle on it. The looming financial catastrophe that is spelled out in the details of the **Strategic Plan** and the **Transportation Needs Report** should be directly incorporated. Remove weak language such as *"if sufficient revenue is not available then...."* Replace the sentence that begins *"if sufficient revenue is not available then...."* With the following:

As identified in the Transportation Needs Report, under current law and funding sources only 12% of the projected 20-year needs of this plan are assured. If new revenue sources are not found, then by 2029 all capital investment will cease and thereafter the maintenance and operating programs will shrink as well (Appendix C1 page 45). Strategies to address this fiscal shortfall are discussed in the next section of this chapter, "Financing Services and Facilities....".

p. 8-32:

First new paragraph, at line 1113, beginning *"While new streets..."* gives the impression that the County will make much needed improvements when the fiscal reality is that no funds exist to do such things. A more balanced presentation requires the following changes.

Replace the first half of the second sentence (*"Over time.....the County strives"*) with: ***The goal of upgrading roads is.*** Add thereafter this new sentence:

Upgrading this aging road network to current standards meeting the needs of all modes of travel will take many years. Without new financial resources almost nothing can be done. Within available resources the Roads Division will follow the priorities of the Strategic Plan and make such upgrades only where safety and preservation needs are highest.

Keep the last sentence about shared responsibilities, but add this new sentence right after it:

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

For its part, the Roads Division will monitor safety conditions continually and close any road or bridge that cannot be maintained in safe condition according to adopted standards and constrained by available funding.

Next new paragraph, at line 1122, describes arterial classifications.

A discussion of our rationale follows:

The current classification scheme contains a number of changes from lower to higher classifications that were adopted in 2018 based on the Regional Transportation System Initiative report. The avowed purpose of that report was to address regional system capacity deficiencies. That study was under the auspices of the PSRC with participation of all four member counties; however, nearly all changes were made in King County at the county's sole request. The result was heavily biased toward using county rural roads to carry through traffic, regardless of adverse consequences on rural residents for whom those roads are their local access system. It blurs the distinction between Principal Arterials and Minor Arterials, to the detriment of preserving local access to rural areas. In hindsight a better outcome would have been to endorse upgrading state highways to carry the forecast burdens of future traffic growth between cities and through rural areas. Five years later, it is time to reverse some of those classification decisions in favor of the broader comprehensive plan and GMA goal of preserving rural character. This is also a compelling need due to the fiscal crisis facing the county road program. Therefore, completely replace this paragraph with the following three paragraphs:

Arterial Functional Classifications are established in Appendix C of this plan. The adopted King County Road Design and Construction Standards establish how design details differ for each road classification. While most county roads are currently in the Rural Area, some roads are urban in character yet still in unincorporated areas, generally close to the Urban Growth Boundary.

The current arterial classifications in unincorporated King County should be revised in order to elevate the primary GMA goal of preserving rural character against the growing adverse impact of through traffic between cities. Principal Arterial designations should be removed from roads that historically serve significant amounts of local access. The Principal Arterial designation should be limited to those few county roads that are main thoroughfares connecting cities and function in many ways the same as state highways. The Principal Arterial designation includes certain roads designated elsewhere in this plan as Rural Regional Arterials. Minor Arterial designations should be removed from roads that historically serve mostly local access, in favor of Collector Arterial status. The adopted King County Road Design and Construction Standards should similarly be updated to emphasize the priority on local access for rural Collector Arterials and Minor Arterials and include design concepts that discourage unwelcome through movements. Particular emphasis should be on shifting the design standards for Minor Arterials closer to those of Collector Arterials in keeping with the established definition of Minor Arterials that emphasizes a balance of local access and through movements.

Road standards should also be updated to acknowledge the multi-modal aspects of such initiatives as "traffic calming", "complete streets", "Target Zero" and "Safer Roads", and to provide

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guidance for low-cost interim improvements that may be desirable long before a road can be reconstructed to full standards. Revisions should be completed within two years after the adoption of this plan.

Replace the first sentence of the next new paragraph, at line 1126, concerning Heritage Corridors with the following, to lend greater emphasis on preservation of these historic routes:

King County recognizes eight designated Historic Corridors where travelers can still experience a sense of the county's rich transportation history. Management of the County's road network should give priority to preserving the rural character and use of these roads and discouraging their conversion to commuter corridors between outlying cities and the urban core.

p. 8-34:

Policy **T-306a** about decisions regarding road closures and abandonments should include this additional priority: **"preservation of local access to adjacent property."**

Policy **T-310** should be revised to emphasize the primary role of Principal Arterials as service to through travel, versus all other classifications accommodating local access to various degrees. Replace the phrase "local roads" with **"local roads, Collector Arterials, and where possible Minor Arterials"** and replace the phrase "highways or arterials" with **"state highways and Principal Arterials."**

p. 8-35:

Policy **T-313** should add the following words after the word "infrastructure":

...and consider concepts of the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission's Target Zero initiative and the Federal Department of Transportation's Safer Roads initiative, so as to...

Policy **T-315** should add the following clause to the end of the first sentence:

...and by the design of access to and traffic operations within these historic corridors so as to discourage through movements and direct such traffic to other arterials.

p. 8-36:

Air Transportation

Recent studies by state agencies clearly indicated that it was not feasible on technical grounds to develop a new airport to augment Seattle-Tacoma International Airport after 2050 anywhere within King County. But agricultural land in the Enumclaw area that the county values and wants to

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preserve by various other land use policies may remain attractive to some aviation interests due to its comparatively low purchase cost. Policy T-317c should be more clear about this, by adding to the end of that sentence: "...provided that new capacity will be located outside King County."

p. 8-37:

Climate Change, Air Quality, and the Environment

The opening sentence is grammatically distorted. Begin the sentence with a verb ahead of "Clean air" that is the object of the verb, to match the form of the second phrase "eliminating greenhouse gas emissions."

That detail aside, this section provides a good discussion and good policies.

The existential nature of responding to climate change cannot be overemphasized. But the ongoing conversion from petro fuels to electric battery power for vehicles will not meaningfully alter the amount of travel on county roads. It just changes the fuel that powers the vehicles.

Therefore management of the county road system to serve traffic movements is not directly altered by climate change concerns. In that context, it remains true regardless of fuels involved that any actions to reduce vehicle-miles traveled will have positive benefits, for reducing congestion, reducing road system maintenance costs, and reducing various other environmental impacts of vehicular travel. In fact such actions will be required for implementation of HB1181 enacted last year.

Financing Services and Facilities that Meet Local and Regional Goals

pp. 8-42 to 8-43:

Public Transportation Revenue Sources

This is a good discussion of Metro's financial status. It suggests that our proposal at p. 8-30 to increase Metro commuter bus service to outlying cities has little chance of being funded, however desirable the idea. That only accentuates the need for a flexible policy to encourage innovation by others, such as private sector commute buses, for any function that Metro is unable to fund with foreseeable resources.

pp. 8-43 to 8-45:

Road-Related Funding Capabilities

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This is a good overview of the funding crisis affecting the county road program, but it lacks mention of ways to resolve the crisis that might follow from re-thinking what the county's operating policy should include. We are chiefly alarmed that county policy continues to support serving all traffic that comes to use all roads, when it is well known that the majority of users of county rural arterials are commuters between outlying cities and the urban core, passing through the rural area. These users pay ZERO for the use of county roads, but cause the deterioration of county roads which underlies the need to reconstruct arterials in the future at great expense, as shown in the Transportation Needs Report.

That situation calls for correction via regional funding. The regional growth plan allocated "urban" growth to outlying cities without considering the consequences for county roads. The region needs to mitigate those impacts on county roads, not King County. But history shows no progress in that direction after a full decade of efforts by King County to find funding solutions.

Without a *regional* solution to mitigate, it is time for the county to adopt a new policy direction consistent with that reality. We propose:

T-3xx King County will manage the rural road system primarily for the benefit of rural residents. King County will expect that commuter traffic between cities passing through the Rural Area will remain predominantly on state highway corridors plus a limited number of designated county Principal Arterials. County Road Fund resources should predominantly provide services to county residents and only minimally serve through travel by residents of cities.

T-3xx. King County will seek to develop regional and state partnerships to provide for the design, maintenance, and financial needs of city-to-city commuter travel through the Rural Area on designated county Principal Arterials and State Highways, and including therein actions to provide express transit service and implement demand management strategies.

That approach may seem radical, but is actually just a fiscal balancing act made necessary by the lack of alternatives. If the future reconstruction of the existing Rural Regional Arterials plus one or two other Principal Arterials were taken off the county's books, then the contents of the Transportation Needs Report would be significantly reduced, the looming fiscal deficit of the county would be greatly reduced, and road and bridge closures on roads serving county residents might be eliminated. Regional and State authorities would have greater visibility of the need to support those regional commuter arterials, and the elusive goal of finding new regional funding would be more clearly recognized by others.

We understand this change of direction will be hard to implement, but such policy shifts do take place from time to time when the need is clear. Now is the time for such a change.

p. 8-44:

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Add to the end of the first paragraph (*“Regional Transportation System Initiative identified...”*) including the underlining of the paragraph:

That report used the capacity of many existing county arterials through the rural areas to provide capacity for through travel needs as the region grew. It elevated some Minor Arterials to Principal Arterials, and some Collector Arterials to Minor Arterials, to identify additional capacity for through travel. That was in hindsight not consistent with the goal to preserve the rural character, as discussed elsewhere in this plan. Going forward, the need to support through travel between cities should remain with State Highways and a few Principal Arterials designated as Rural Regional Arterials. The functional classification of other roads should be returned to lesser classifications, so as to emphasize preservation of rural character by elevating the priority for Minor Arterials and Collector Arterials to serve the needs of access to/from local streets and driveways rather than through travel. Principal Arterial corridors should also be managed to emphasize transit and travel demand management strategies related to long-distance commute travel.

After the third paragraph (*“Financial viability...”*) add this new paragraph:

In addition, a sober and realistic assessment should be undertaken and completed by December 2024 of what road closures and other changes will inevitably occur without new revenues. The Strategic Plan will be updated to include a prioritized list of specific actions at specific locations that will be taken, in four five-year increments, to manage the road system within the limits of current funding for the next 20 years.

Revenue Shortfall

p. 8-46:

Policy **T-405**, in the first sentence, change **“should consider”** to **“shall identify.”** At the end of this paragraph, add **“...and include a schedule for road and bridge closures and other service reductions based on the limitations of current funding.”**

We suggest adding a new Policy as follows:

T-4xx King County shall manage the road system in rural areas so as to first serve rural residents at an acceptable rural level of service based on access to/from local streets and adjacent properties, and use traffic management methods to encourage most long-distance through traffic between cities to use State Highways and designated Principal Arterials.

Regional Coordination

p. 8-48:

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Policy **T-501**, change to

"King County shall advocate for regionally consistent financial strategies, coordination and partnership to address county-wide transportation issues, especially to protect the unincorporated area of King County from the adverse impacts of regional travel growth and to obtain new sources of road finance."

Policy **T-502**, change *"highways and arterial roads"* to ***"State Highways and Rural Regional Arterials in order to preserve lesser county roads in rural areas primarily for use by rural residents."***

Policy **T-504**, add ***"state agencies and"*** in front of *"Puget Sound Regional Council."* At the end add:

"...and do not adversely impact the valuable and limited agricultural resources of the county's Rural Area – especially the Enumclaw Plateau."

p. 8-51:

Public Involvement

We support vigorous efforts to engage all county residents for public input to the county's planning processes. All unincorporated area residents are directly affected by county decisions about rural roads. This population group merits clear identification in Policy **T-511** using words like ***"residents of the rural and urban unincorporated areas"*** instead of the *indirect* allusion to *"affected community members."*

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9 - SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND UTILITIES

Theme

- Urban or urban-serving facilities should not be sited in the Rural Area.

Overall Comments

In general, we seek County Policies that are consistent with *not* siting urban or urban-serving facilities in the Rural Area. Such Policies would be consistent with those in **Chapter 3-RURAL AREA AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS**.

Specific Comments

((H.)) Facilities and Services

p. 9-5:

B.)) Urban and Rural Services

We recommend the **change** to the Policy below:

- F-209a** *King County ((will)) shall provide or manage local services for unincorporated areas, which include but are not limited to:*
- a. ((Building)) development permits and code enforcement;*
 - b. District Court;*
 - c. Economic Development;*
 - d. Land use regulation;*
 - e. Law enforcement;*
 - f. Local parks;*
 - g. Roads;*
 - h. Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands management assistance; and*
 - i. Surface water management.*

Permitting and code enforcement are closely intertwined. Thus, code enforcement is a local service that King County provides its residents to protect and preserve public health and our shared environment.

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Also, please note that item “c. *Economic Development*” is not a “service” to be provided. The County provides services to obtain development permits, business licenses and permits, etc. that are *part* of economic development.

((G.)) Essential Public Facilities

pp. 9-13 thru 9-15:

We recommend **changes** to the following *three* Policies in this section:

F-227 *King County and neighboring counties(~~(, if advantageous to both,))~~ should share essential public facilities to increase efficiency of operation(~~(. Efficiency of operation should take into account))~~, including consideration of the overall value of the essential public facility to the region and the county and ((the extent to which, if properly mitigated,)) that does not further impact the community where the facility is located whether expansion of an existing essential public facility ((located in the county)) might be more economical and environmentally sound.*

We also question *why* the “*if properly mitigated*” is proposed to be removed?

F-228 *King County should strive to site essential public facilities equitably so that no racial, cultural, or socio-economic group, or currently impacted community is ((unduly)) disproportionately impacted by or benefits from essential public facility siting or expansion decisions. No historically and currently impacted single community should absorb an inequitable share of these facilities and their impacts. An assessment of existing facilities should be conducted when siting new facilities. Siting ((will)) shall consider equity((,)); environmental justice; environmental, economic, technical, and service area factors. Communities with a disproportionate share of existing facilities should shall be actively engaged in the planning and siting process for new facilities or the expansion of the existing site. The net impact of siting new essential public facilities should be weighed against the net impact of expansion of existing essential public facilities, with appropriate buffering and mitigation. Essential public facilities that directly serve the public beyond their general vicinity shall be discouraged from locating not allowed in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.*

F-230 *Siting analysis for proposed new or expansions to existing essential public facilities shall consist of the following:*
a. An inventory of similar existing essential public facilities in King County and neighboring counties, including their locations and capacities;

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- b. A forecast of the future needs for the essential public facility;
- c. An analysis of the **historical, current and** potential social, equity, health, and economic impacts and benefits and burdens to ~~((jurisdictions and local))~~ communities receiving or surrounding the facilities;
- d. An analysis of the proposal's consistency with policies F-226 through F-229;
- e. An analysis of alternatives to the facility, including decentralization, conservation, demand management, and other strategies;
- f. An analysis of economic and environmental impacts, including mitigation, of any existing essential public facility, as well as of any new site(s) under consideration as an alternative to expansion of an existing facility;
- g. An analysis of potential climate change impacts on the essential public facility, including consideration of sea level rise, and options for reducing climate change impacts on the facility, including locating the facility outside of the mapped 500-year floodplain along the marine shoreline (unless water-dependent, such as wastewater treatment facilities and associated conveyance infrastructure):
- h. Extensive public involvement which strives to effectively engage a wide range of racial, ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic group, including communities that **have been or will be** the most impacted;
- ~~((h-))~~ i. Consideration of any applicable prior review conducted by a public agency, local government, or ~~((stakeholder group))~~ interested parties; and
- ~~((i-))~~ j. To the extent allowable under the Growth Management Act, the locational criteria in policies R-326 and R-327.
- k. An analysis, using recommendations from qualified agencies, such as the EPA, for sites appropriate for the public facility.**
- l. An analysis of historical regulation violations and public complaints filed with regulatory agencies, frequency, and resulting fines and/or mitigations (if any) of existing facilities where expansion is being considered.**
- m. A cumulative impact analysis to include all other facilities, public or private, that may pose exposures of chemical and/or non-chemical stressors, located near the proposed facility.**

Please note there is a "typo" in Policy **F-230a** below: "considerer."

F-230a For existing essential public facilities, King County should considerer potential impacts from climate change and identify and implement actions to improve resiliency and mitigate for impacts, including consideration of potential long- term relocation of facilities that are in the mapped 500-year floodplain along the marine shoreline (unless water-dependent, such as wastewater treatment facilities and associated conveyance infrastructure).

J-)) Solid Waste

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p. 9-33:

We are glad to see the Executive has proposed improvements in the following Policy based partly on our July 2023 PRD Comments, but we recommend changing the “*should*” to “*shall*”:

F-270 *King County **shall should** maximize the capacity and lifespan of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill and plan for future disposal when Cedar Hills Landfill closes to ensure no gap in service, subject to environmental constraints, relative costs to operate, ((stakeholder)) partner and public interests, and overall solid waste system optimization. A replacement landfill shall not be located in King County.*

However, we recommend the following additions:

F-270 *King County **shall should** maximize the capacity and lifespan of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill **seek and plan for closure of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill in as timely manner as possible.** and plan for future disposal when Cedar Hills Landfill closes to ensure no gap in service, subject to environmental constraints, relative costs to operate, ((stakeholder)) partner and public interests, and overall solid waste system optimization. A replacement landfill shall not be located in King County.*

The *current F-270* does not represent a policy to achieve closure of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. The County is in the business of representing its people, which involves taking care of its land as a resource and protecting its people's health. Further, a statement, such as “*maximize the capacity*” — What does that really mean? This philosophy has led the County to increase the landfill's height over the originally designated 800 ft. It also could allow push back on the 1000-ft buffer. In fact, the County continually has tried to move into that buffer. “*Capacity*” is defined by footprint and airspace—and it's all subject to engineering. The County could decide to build large retaining walls to increase the height and, thus capacity—this had been proposed at one time—and could be again. “*Maximizing the capacity*” is far too *open-ended* and, thus, should be removed from this Policy, as we have recommended above.

The County needs to give greater attention and focus to the issue of closure of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. In past *decades*, deadlines have been unmet and *promises not kept*. A firm plan of action needs to be put into place in the near future. This plan, or legal vehicle, must provide residents in the greater Maple Valley area with not only transparency, but with a sense of confidence toward King County governance.

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10 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Theme

- The rural economy should not be endangered by allowing urban-serving businesses in the Rural Area.

Overall Comments

There are many instances where the County seems to be pushing “*rural economic development*” for the sake of rural economic development. We believe the County should follow the intent and the letter of the State’s Growth Management Act (GMA) and PSRC’s *VISION 2050* (our highlighting below).

WA —Chapter 36.70A RCW calls for:

Comprehensive plans—Mandatory elements—36.70A.070

(5) Rural element. Counties shall include a rural element including lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. The following provisions shall apply to the rural element:

(b) Rural development. The rural element shall permit rural development, forestry, and agriculture in rural areas. The rural element shall provide for a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governmental services needed to serve the permitted densities and uses. To achieve a variety of rural densities and uses, counties may provide for clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques that will accommodate appropriate rural economic advancement, densities, and uses that are not characterized by urban growth and that are consistent with rural character.

(d) Limited areas of more intensive rural development. Subject to the requirements of this subsection and except as otherwise specifically provided in this subsection (5)(d), the rural element may allow for limited areas of more intensive rural development, including necessary public facilities and public services to serve the limited area as follows:

(ii) The intensification of development on lots containing, or new development of, small-scale recreational or tourist uses, including commercial facilities to serve those recreational or tourist uses, that rely on a rural location and setting, but that do not include new residential development. A small-scale recreation or tourist use is not required to be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population. Public services and public facilities shall be limited to those necessary to serve the recreation or tourist use and shall be provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl;

PSRC’s VISION 2050 calls for:

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MPP-RGS-13 Plan for commercial, retail, and community services that serve rural residents to locate in neighboring cities and existing activity areas to **avoid the conversion of rural land into commercial uses.**

MPP-DP-37 **Ensure that development occurring in rural areas is rural in character and is focused into communities and activity areas.**

Throughout every document—GMA, RCWs, *VISION 2050*, *Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs)*, and the *KCCP* there is a strong *consistency* in requirements, goals, policies, language, etc. to “conform with the rural character of the area,” “preserve rural character,” “consistent with rural character,” etc.

Consequently, we strongly urge the County to follow its very good policies when considering expanding so-called “*rural economic development*” beyond its identified rural economic clusters: Agriculture, Equestrian, & Forestry.

Specific Comments

((I-)) I. Overview

B-)) General Economic Development Policies

p. 10-6:

ED-102 *The focus for significant economic growth ((will)) shall remain within the Urban Growth Area, concentrated in a network of regionally designated growth centers. ((while within)) In the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, ((the focus will)) economic development shall be focused on sustaining and enhancing prosperous and successful rural and resource- based businesses, as well as encouraging **innovation and** new businesses that support and are compatible with the rural economic clusters.*

We support these changes and wish to emphasize their implementation by County departments. New businesses in the Rural Area are to be “*compatible with the rural economic clusters.*” As identified in this chapter, these are: Agriculture, Equestrian, & Forestry. Consequently, the County should not allow such businesses as so-called “*Tasting Rooms,*” etc. in the Rural Area. We recommend adding the word “*innovation,*” as it is an important seed for new business development.

((H-)) Business Development

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p. 10-10:

ED-203 *King County shall **proactively** support and participate in programs and strategies that help create, retain, expand, and attract businesses that export their products and services. Exports bring income into the county that increases the standard of living of residents.*

We recommend adding the word “*proactively*” to convey that respondent County departments shall seek contact and contacts, be responsive and accountable in problem-solving activities, and create problem-solving tools (e.g., videos and publications), and offer collaborative human networking communication skills.

VI.))VI. The Rural Economy

pp. 10-20 thru 10-21:

ED-602 *King County should **identify and implement** (~~the Rural Economic Strategies Plan to guide future~~) rural economic development (~~and will modify and add~~) strategies (~~as needed to~~) **that** reflect the evolving nature of the rural economy, while protecting the traditional rural economic clusters.*

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

e. *King County is committed to ensuring that all economic development, including the provision of infrastructure, within the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands shall be compatible with the surrounding rural character, be of an appropriate size and scale, and protect the natural environment.*

This “*commitment*” rings hollow as there literally is no money for the “*provision of infrastructure*” in the Rural Area. Consequently, we recommend the following changes:

e. *King County is committed to ensuring that all economic development, **including the provision of infrastructure**, within the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands shall be compatible with the surrounding rural character, be of an appropriate size and scale, and protect the natural environment.*

- f.

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- g. King County ((will)) shall explore opportunities to support agricultural tourism and value-added program(s) related to the production of food, and flowers and specialty beverages (including beer, distilled beverages, and wine) in the RA and A zones of the county. Partnership venues should be educational and include information on the diversity of products available in the county and the importance of buying local, should seek to unify regional tourism efforts, and should encourage development of new markets for agricultural products and value-added goods.**

We are wary of the phrase “*agricultural tourism*,” which is ill-defined with unknown ramifications for the Rural Area. For example, who decides what is value-added and how? This must be defined. Further, if a product is brought in from outside the county, to what “*value-added programs*” is item **g.** above referring and how can imported products be considered beneficial to county production of food or flowers?

It is especially *inappropriate* for the County to once again be promoting “*specialty beverages*” production as part of the rural economy! This battle has been ongoing for over 20 years with continued attempts to open the Rural Area to *urban-serving* businesses that have no connection to agriculture or any production of food, flowers, or agricultural products that *require* a rural location. Such businesses clearly are *not* an element, nor should they be, of the rural economy. Any promotion of Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries in the Rural Area directly violates the intent of Policy **R-324**, which clearly defines that “*no urban-serving facilities*” are allowed to operate in the rural area. Thus, to avoid a direct conflict within the KCCP, we urge removal of any reference here to “*specialty beverages*.”

h.

i.

j.

Please note we no comments on items **a.**, **c.**, **d.**, **h.**, **i.**, and **j.**

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11 - COMMUNITY SERVICE AREA SUBAREA PLANNING

Overall Comments

We are pleased to see our previous requests to reduce the *overlap* between Community Service Area (CSA) Subarea Plans and KCCP Major Updates have been accepted and are proposed to be implemented as shown in the *Schedule of Community Service Area (CSA) Subarea Plans* table.

However, we do have a concern some Subarea Plans are now pushed out as far as a 2039 adoption —15 years from now! We recommend the King County Council provide additional funds to allow DLS-Permitting hire sufficient Planners (currently, we believe there only are two and they might have other duties) to conduct two CSA Subarea Plans *simultaneously*.

If this were done starting in 2024, subarea planning for the:

Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River CSA and the Fairwood Potential Annexation Area (PAA) could be run simultaneously (e.g., 2024-2026)

Bear Creek/Sammamish CSA and the Southeast King County CSA could be run simultaneously (e.g., 2025-2027)

Four Creeks/Tiger Mountain CSA and the East Renton PAA (e.g., 2028-2030)

This would represent up to a 5-yr change (i.e., sooner).

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12 - IMPLEMENTATION, AMENDMENTS, & EVALUATION

Theme

- Implementation of many good County Policies and Code is inadequate regarding permitting, land use, code enforcement, and other issues impacting development and uses on Rural Area parcels.

Overall Comments

We have seen over the years many problems with *implementation* of County Policies and Code—we have touched upon this in our Comments herein on other Chapters as well. Although the County, in general, has strong Policies and Code language, all too often implementation has been wanting. Either through poor interpretation, spotty followthrough, poorly funded and not-prioritized enforcement, and myriad exceptions / special considerations, the County does not give justice to those Policies and Code in practice on the ground to serve its residents.

Specific Comments

IV.)) Land Use Designations and Zoning Classifications ((and Codes))

p. 12-12:

In the **Land Use Designation Table** (Note: it has no given title) for the “*Urban Growth Areas for City in the Rural Area (rx)*” designation under “**Zoning Classifications**” we see that following “*UR*” the sentence in parentheses regarding the City of North Bend UGA is proposed to be removed, as we requested in our PRD Comments. However, we still question why the “**Zoning Classification**” of “*Urban Reserve—UR,*” even exists?

~~V. Other)) Implementing King County Codes~~

p. 12-13:

Why is the following *text* proposed to be removed and apparently not replaced?

~~*Other development approvals include commercial or industrial construction permits. Review of land segregation, substantial development permits and other development proposals are key parts*~~

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~~of the development process for making sure facilities and services to support potential development are adequate and for evaluating environmental impacts.))~~

Clearly, the process used to ensure facilities and services to support potential development are adequate and to evaluate environmental impacts is critical. Although the newly added paragraphs direct the reader to specific County Code Titles (i.e., “*Surface Water Management (K.C.C. Title 9), Water and Sewer Systems (K.C.C. Title 13), Roads and Bridges (K.C.C. Title 14), Building and Construction Standards (K.C.C. Title 16), Fire Code (K.C.C. Title 17), Land Segregation (K.C.C. Title 19A), Planning (K.C.C. Title 20), and Zoning (K.C.C. Title 21A)*”) that address various aspects of such a process, we find this process so important to helping to maintain the integrity and character of the Rural Area that it should remain and be further discussed here in Chapter 12.

p. 12-15:

We have never heard of the “*King County Zoning Atlas*” referenced in the following Policy (immediately above Policy **I-501**). It also does not appear when we search the County website.

~~((I-401))~~ **I-500a** *The King County Zoning Code’s ((zone)) zoning classifications and development standards and the ((official zoning maps)) King County Zoning Atlas shall be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan ((and functional plans)).*

As an example of our earlier discussion above, we see far too many instances where the following Policy simply is ignored, especially related to road infrastructure, for which the County has *insufficient* funds to keep up with needed maintenance:

I-501 When needed infrastructure and facilities are not available in a timely manner, development approvals shall ((either)):
a. ((b))Be denied ((or)):
***b. ((d))Divided into phases((, or the project proponents should)):* or**
c. ((p))Provide the needed facilities and infrastructure to address impacts directly attributable to their project((, or as may be provided by the proponent on a voluntary basis)).

p. 12-15:

We recommend the following changes to Policy **I-504**, as the Code Enforcement function currently is failing in its work, has broken processes, and cannot simply rely on complaints from the general Public. We cannot emphasize enough that the entire Permitting Division (both Permitting and Code Enforcement sections) requires revamping. This need should be reflected in KCCP goals underlying Policy **I-504** and elsewhere herein. The failure to effectively enforce and uphold County Policies and Code is a root cause of many of the major problems in the Rural Area facing both residents and government alike.

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I-504 *King County shall enforce its ~~((land-use and environmental))~~ development regulations by periodically assessing whether imposed permit conditions are being met. ~~((pursuing))~~ responding to code enforcement complaints and by providing ~~((oversight))~~ inspection services during the process of site development on all sites for which it issues permits.*

We remain very concerned about the lack of code enforcement and the resulting impacts open people, property, health and safety, and our shared environment. Consequently, we reject, as unacceptable, the supporting rationale given for Policy **I-504**:

“Updated to reflect current practice: the County is required to enforce all development regulations, not just land use and environmental ones; K.C.C. Title 23 and associated resources does not allow for the County to proactively “pursue” complaints – the County responds to complaints; oversight implies more than what actually occurs, which is just inspections and monitoring of certain permit conditions when required.”

~~((VI.2016))~~ Comprehensive Plan ~~((Workplan))~~ Work Plan

pp. 12-32:

Action 1: Comprehensive Plan Performance Measures Framework Update.

As we described under our Comments in **Chapter 1-REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING**, we fully support such an activity, but were not even aware it existed and produced a *Performance Measures Report* in 2022! We request more Public Notice and followup distribution of such reports. As we stated in Chapter 1, the items being measured should be reviewed *prior* to the next cycle described here.

pp. 12-32 thru 12-33:

Action 2: Comprehensive Plan Public Participation Code Update.

We support this effort. We have been pleased with the *Public Participation Plan* being followed during the **2024 KCCP Major Update**. We have fully participated in that effort and will continue to do so.

pp. 12-34 thru 12-35:

Action 5: Old Growth Corridors Strategies

We support this effort.

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However, we do want to state the words “*Old Growth*” are misleading and would be better to use “*Old and Established Forests*.” The words “*Old Growth*” only should be used if the forest in question is *permanently designated as protected forest* and there is a plan in place to create a reference state of function, values, and diversity of species that will allow the subject forest to return to an *old growth* state after a couple hundred years or so. It is definitely not something that can be done on a five-year plan, or even a single human generation, and it would be misleading to have the Public under the impression that could be done.

Particularly in situations where, again, you have a drinking water supply in a forested area, they should also be taken out of commercial forest. In the long term it is much cheaper to let the forest and related soils filter and store the water while it is released to surface water, rather than trying to fix problems *after* the fact.

Further, the growth of a mono-species versus a diverse forest are very different things. We must improve the management and permanence of our established forests, especially along the waterways. Unlike the Douglas Fir monoculture areas (essentially, “*plantations*”), which are planted with harvest in mind, “*Old and Established Forests*” are those that have been left largely intact and provide buffers to clean water. That is the issue. These must be protected. We need to preserve our remaining “*Old Growth*” forests and restrict logging to second- or third-growth forests to be managed for forestry. We suggest the State Department of Natural Resources and, perhaps the KC Department of Natural Resources and Parks, look into increasing the target rotation from the current 40 years to at least 80. Then, institute *selective-cut* methods, as clearcutting is an anachronistic habit.

*** On January 11, 2024, we did meet with County Staff on this particular action and wish to thank them for a very fruitful conversation. We expressed our concerns as detailed above. We now better understand why the County is using certain terminology. We are on the same page. ***

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Appendices

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A - Capital Facilities and Utilities (Attachment B)

[Appendix A – Capital Facilities and Utilities \(Attachment B\)](#)

No comments.

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B - Housing Needs Assessment (Attachment C)

[Appendix B – Housing Needs Assessment \(Attachment C\)](#)

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment such as the *Alternative Housing Demonstration Project* [[KC Council Ordinance 19119](#)] and the *Inclusionary Housing Program* on Vashon Island.

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C - Transportation (Attachment D)

[Appendix C – Transportation \(Attachment D\)](#)

Overall Comments

The ERP's Appendix is updated from the summer 2023 Public Review Draft, *but only superficially*. For many topics, a sentence has been added pointing to a website for more information on the topic at hand. No new information has been directly added to the document itself.

We consider that an inadequate response to our request last summer for more substantive information on many topics - both in Chapter 8 and this supporting appendix. In order for the Comprehensive Plan to work as an effective guide to the county's work program for the next ten years, much more information needs to be expressly present in these documents. Most users of the Comprehensive Plan expect to find explicit information and guidance, not a link to another website that provides information created by others in a different context and not directly addressing the plan's actual policy issues.

Hoping for a better outcome in the final version when adopted, we are re-submitting hereafter the same comments we provided last summer, updated with more clarifications and specific recommendations and examples. There is an overarching need for King County to chart a new direction for managing its transportation resources. We think that better compliance with the Growth Management Act provides a good foundation of information to build on.

GMA anticipates the presentation of existing and future needs in a consistent manner, with analysis to show how future growth will be managed, balancing future needs with financial resources and level of service standards. To be perfectly clear, the pattern is:

- A. Existing conditions (supply and demand)
- B. Future conditions with growth (supply and demand)
- C. Future deficiencies (vs. level of service standards)
- D. Financial analysis (financial supply and demand)
- E. Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan to achieve financial balance

The level of detail should be simplified and summarized in the plan for brevity, supported by technical appendices. We do not call for massive documentation of arcane technical details in the plan itself. Appendix C-1 (Transportation Needs Report) is a useful start but more information is needed for roads alone. And to cover all modes, not just roads, all information needs to be summarized here and in Chapter 8 in a consistent manner that addresses the GMA outline.

Transportation plans in many jurisdictions are long on technical minutia and short on sensible high-level summaries that the public and elected officials alike can grasp and evaluate. But the fault may lie with the *tools of measurement* as much as any lack of effort. We encourage King County to explore ways to evaluate transportation systems with less attention to complex tools of traffic

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engineering and more use of tools that require only a spreadsheet to tote up a series of parts that make the whole.

We recommend specifically, where roads are concerned, that an inventory of system usage be compiled in terms of vehicle-miles of travel (VMT) and system supply in similar terms as capacity-miles. That is a measure quite similar to the direction the state is taking for a future road user charge based on VMT that will replace the outmoded and failing gas tax as its main revenue base. The VMT method is simple to use for inventory and analysis of a large road system, in a spreadsheet. This is much easier than the complex analysis tools that traffic engineers use to evaluate road conditions one location at a time. The implementation of GMA in the 1990's innocently went the direction of traffic engineering, despite some early warnings against it. Time has shown that approach was a big waste of time and energy as far as system planning is concerned. The issue of growth management is a macro-level problem and needs macro-level tools for management purposes. The VMT concept satisfies that need. Ironically, even traffic engineers have historically used VMT when making high-level reports to policy makers. See for example the Highway Performance Monitoring System reports annually submitted by WSDOT to the Federal Highway Administration)

For other modes similar approaches can be worked out. Transit supply and demand is for a system is commonly described by bus-miles, seat-miles, and passenger-miles. Air travel for a system is also summarized in mileage-based terms.

Recent state legislation now requires local comprehensive plans to be multi-modal in scope (see RCW 36.70A.070(6)(A)), with multi-modal level of service standards. What we propose meets that need. But there is no effort made in this draft plan to provide multi-modal level of service measures, standards, nor analysis of future needs on that basis. That is a major deficiency.

To support the policy changes we recommended in the body of Chapter 8, supporting materials in Appendix C – Transportation need to be updated or expanded. We cannot provide the details of such technical work, but more attention is needed to the three topical areas of interest we suggested for Chapter 8:

- Needs of unincorporated areas are neglected
- City to city traffic uses rural roads excessively
- Financial system for county roads is broken

Some suggested adjustments follow under Specific Comments:

Specific Comments

I. Requirements of the Transportation Element

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pp. C-3 thru C-4:

This section, *(I) - Requirements....*, is understood to be just a concise listing of how and where the Comprehensive Plan satisfies the requirements of the Growth Management Act per RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a), and not a presentation of that actual substantive information. Working within that understanding, we therefore point out below what additional information is needed to fulfill that intention. We understand that the actual delivery of such information will occur elsewhere in Chapter 8 or Appendix C or Appendix C-1. And since the county's purpose for this section is to show compliance with the RCW, we are obliged to list below several areas where the draft plan fails to account for a required RCW item or only meets a portion of a RCW requirement.

To that end, the following discussion is ordered strictly according to the RCW list of required elements. The ERP is ordered differently, and in our view not very logically. The RCW outline would be more effective.

- **(i) Land Use Assumptions used in estimating travel.**

The RCW plainly defines in its first line *"a transportation element that implements, and is consistent with, the land use element."* Therefore, please add here a summary table of the growth targets discussed in Chapter 2, Land Use. That is the foundation for the transportation analysis throughout the transportation chapter and appendices.

To be complete, please also include the forecast growth assumption for the unincorporated areas of the county as well as those city-by-city growth targets, whether that is an adopted target or just a forecast.

Because it has a great impact on county roads, please also include a statement about the City of Black Diamond's blatant disregard for its assigned growth target per the countywide policies, and indicate whether and how that reality is, or is not, accounted for in this transportation element. The traffic distribution of such growth is available in published documents of the City of Black Diamond, and that extra overlay on otherwise planned growth should be demonstrated in this plan.

- **(ii) Estimated Traffic Impacts to State-Owned Facilities.**

First re-label this section to comply with the actual RCW: *"Estimated multimodal level of service impacts to state-owned transportation facilities"*. Then expand the information to match that level of service objective rather than just provide a travel forecast of future volumes on state highways. That figure is only a start toward the larger discussion of level of service outcomes required by the RCW.

To fulfill that expanded requirement, add a matching figure of existing volumes (both as modeled and per actual traffic counts) from the same PSRC modeling source. Then provide a discussion of the amount of forecast growth that affects each state highway (e.g. in percentage terms). Then show exactly where level of service deficiencies are forecast that will lead to future demands on state highways. To avoid distorted analysis also make clear how you

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account for the difference between base year modeled volumes and actual count volumes, when interpreting the future forecast volumes from the traffic model.

This is not a large effort, if organized and summarized by state routes, and use is made of available information at PSRC and WSDOT. There are just 13 state routes shown in Figure 6 that serve any unincorporated areas of King County. For each route just provide one line in a table showing the most heavily loaded location on each route now and in the future, and the level of service standard that applies. Then address the adequacy of that existing facility in the future, including any planned improvements that WSDOT considers fully funded and certain to be completed soon. All other details within the entire corridor are secondary to that major assessment of capacity, and can be summarized verbally. If necessary, divide a long corridor such as I-90 into two or three segments.

A table of that sort would serve the GMA end result to be an informative report to the state about future capacity needs in each corridor, and help shape the long range statewide system plan.

- **(iii) Facilities and Service Needs, including**

- (A) inventories of air, water, and ground transportation facilities and services, active transportation facilities, and general aviation airport facilities**

These inventories are nominally accounted for by name in the ERP but are seriously lacking in the detail needed to be useful as a basis for analysis of future needs. We note that existing Metro Transit services and facilities are documented in quantitative detail, but other modes are sadly lacking in that respect. A standard approach for all modes would be most helpful. Less words, but more useful facts.

- Air**

The inventory of commercial aviation facilities (ERP pp C-9 and C-10) needs to provide a quantitative measure that shows existing capacities and usage, as the basis for further discussion of future needs. This information should be available in various PSRC and state studies. Additionally, this section should be reduced in scope to address only commercial aviation and account for general aviation facilities in a separate section, if only to conform to the RCW outline, but also to give greater clarity to the separate needs of commercial and private aviation.

- Water**

The inventory of marine transportation (ERP pp C-10 to C-15) is internally inconsistent, showing much more detail in some parts, and too little in other parts. No data is provided showing current or future demand, adequacy of current facilities and services, nor financial analysis. Standardization of the outline is needed, along the same lines previously described. See additional comments under the related section further below.

- Roads and Highways**

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The discussion of roads and highways (ERP pp C-16 to C-19) amounts to a lengthy description of the work program of the Road Services Division, with heavy emphasis on current maintenance workload rather than responding to future growth. It fails to provide any discussion of the existing and future supply and demand situation of county roads, as GMA requires. For GMA purposes the context is mostly about providing new capacity for new growth, according to adopted standards for level of service. It is not about maintaining existing facilities, including reconstruction projects, however important that function is.

We understand the dire financial condition of the county road system, and consider that there is ample reason to use the comprehensive plan to document the number of deficiencies now existing, and the future projections, and the abject inability of the County Road Fund as currently structured to meet existing and future needs. We don't understand why this is not documented in the manner that GMA prescribes, showing the grave deficiencies just around the corner.

Transit

The inventory of transit systems (ERP pp C-19 to C-28) is more detailed than the discussion of other modes, including some text references to existing operations measured by service hours, and existing ridership numbers. It is somewhat overdetailed in its lengthy descriptions of every part of the Metro operations, and reads somewhat like a sales brochure proclaiming all the accomplishments of the system. We would prefer fewer words and more analysis comparing supply and demand for the existing operations and future projections of same. Surely such information exists within the organization and could be made public here.

Active Transportation

The inventory of active transportation (ERP pp C-28 to C-29) describes in considerable detail how Metro provides for bicycle parking at transit facilities, but those words contain no useful information for purposes of the comprehensive plan. We do appreciate how that service, rendered mostly in cities, as it can be helpful to residents of rural areas and the outlying cities as well for accessing the transit system to commute into the urban area without using a car. Unfortunately, this section has no discussion of supply and demand now and in the future, for that modal interface.

The Regional Trails System (which we also support) appears next with a similarly uninformative list of miles of trails. We know that funding to complete the planned trail system is not certain, so it would be helpful to have an additional discussion of the future financial prospects, as GMA expects. We suspect the funding of future project is not well established. So we ask, what are the impacts of not completing the system?

Roadside Active Transportation Facilities are a matter of great concern to the rural area, because of the great exposure on county arterials of pedestrians and bicyclists to high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds. This section should provide a great deal more information about that exposure, inventorying the road system according to

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degree of exposure, and discussing existing and future deficiencies, using the GMA supply and demand outline we offered above. We know the situation is bleak. We want more honest presentation of the issues in this plan. GMA provides the framework to show a progression from existing to future needs, standards to apply, and balanced solutions. We offer more detailed comments in a later section below and in the related appendix C-1.

General Aviation

No section by this GMA-mandated title is found in the ERP. Some references to general aviation are found in the current draft section on Air Transportation, and those items should be separated into a separate General Aviation section, and then further detail added to provide a complete listing of all such facilities countywide.

Rail and Freight

Interestingly, the GMA outline does not include this heading, but the ERP does address it at pp C-29-30. Much of it pertains to passenger rail service, which might be better addressed in the Transit section. Then this section would discuss only freight issues. Overall, the coverage is again lacking in factual information along the GMA supply and demand outline we stated at the start. A few simple facts obtained from others (Amtrak, Sound Transit, WSDOT) might suffice to touch on those points.

(B) Multimodal level of service standards for locally owned arterials, local and regional transit, and active transportation facilities [heading paraphrased for brevity]

The GMA now requires multimodal attention in the level of service standards. We see no attempt to meet that requirement. See additional comments in a later section.

(C) Multimodal level of service standards for state highways.

This has also not been discussed.

(D) Specific Actions and requirements [to satisfy Level of Service Standards]

This has also not been discussed.

(E) Forecasts of multimodal transportation demand and needs, for at least ten years, for cities, urban growth areas, and outside of those places.

This has also not been discussed.

(F) Identification of state and local system needs to meet current and future demands.

This has also not been discussed.

G) A transition plan for transportation per the Americans with Disabilities Act... to identify and remedy accessibility deficiencies.

This has also not been discussed.

- **(iv) Finance, including**

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(A) Analysis of funding capability

(B) A multiyear financing plan

(C) If probably funding falls short, a discussion of [changes] that will be made to assure that level of service standards are met.

This has also not been discussed.

- **(v) Intergovernmental coordination efforts**

- This has also not been discussed.

- **(vi) Demand management strategies**

- This has also not been discussed at a useful level.

- **(vii) Active transportation component**

This has also not been discussed at a useful level.

- **Level of Service Standards including Standards for State Routes.**

A brief list or table of the standard that applies to each category of road would be much appreciated here. This table should provide the framework for the previous topic of estimated traffic impacts. We also comment elsewhere on how level of service standards should be re-stated for various reasons.

- **An Inventory of Transportation Facilities and Services**

A brief list or table of the standard that applies to each category of road would be much appreciated here. This table should provide the framework for the previous topic of estimated traffic impacts.

Actions to Bring Facilities into Compliance

Much more work needed here to implement recommendations re: Chapter 8.

- **State and Local Needs to Meet Current and Future Demands**

Clarify that funding needs have been identified but are NOT provided. Show the shortfall.

- **Intergovernmental Coordination**

The City of Black Diamond's lack of cooperation with the region is NOT accounted for.

- **Active (Nonmotorized) Transportation**

Add discussion of adequacy of service to such modes; add multi-modal level of service accounting for lack of shoulders on rural roads, add inventory of facilities throughout rural area not just designated trail system.

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II. King County Arterial Functional Classification

p. C-4:

If the GMA outline used in part (I) above is followed, this section and subsequent sections would be relocated elsewhere. We do not attempt to trace that relocation, and only comment here on the material provided, as it is presented.

The given definition of Minor Arterials emphasizes the dual role of Minor Arterials with significant emphasis on local access; however, in practice the county manages Minor Arterials effectively the same as Principal Arterials, with respect to capacity. The rural area is not preserved or protected by this practice. Minor arterials are used instead as extra capacity for urban travel between cities, rather than to support access to rural areas.

This must change, by re-thinking what the system is about.

First establish the multi-modal level of service policy that GMA now requires. Consider concepts such as traffic calming, Complete Streets, Target Zero, and Safer Roads, and especially our discussion above and elsewhere regarding level of service based on roadside active transportation features present or absent. Based on that approach, significantly lower the level of traffic that would be permitted where active transportation is at risk. Recognize the full engineered capacity of Principal Arterials only when the needs of Active Transportation and Transit modes are actually present; i.e., when the facility meets all design standards.

Most of the arterial system today lacks roadside facilities for active transportation. Roadside facilities are presumably going to be provided when reconstruction projects take place, but at present, the level of service for active transportation is clearly not good (however it may be defined). That deficiency should mean that the allowable level of road traffic should be reduced, to be consistent with safety for active transportation. That is the change in thinking that needs to occur, to devise a meaningful multi-modal level of service policy. We offer more details about that in another section.

A level of service policy for rural areas should also limit through volumes on arterials so as to protect local access turning movements, where appropriate, with major distinctions between Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, and Collector Arterials, to express their different levels of provision for local access. Road design standards would be revised as well to account for various ways that rural character can be protected in road design. To be blunt, we consider that the acceptable through volume for each class of arterial should work out (by whatever analysis method) to be approximately as follows for the typical two-lane road with complete roadside facilities for active transportation:

- Rural Principal Arterial – about 15,000 daily vehicles
- Rural Minor Arterial – about 10,000 daily vehicles
- Rural Collector Arterial – about 5,000 daily vehicles
- Rural Local Street – about 1,000 daily vehicles

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Where the roadside facilities for active transportation are reduced or totally absent, the multi-modal level of service standard should show appropriate reductions in allowable traffic volumes. We discuss that further in another section.

Four specific Principal Arterials are currently recognized as Rural Regional Arterials, to recognize that they serve unavoidably high volumes of commuter traffic between outlying cities and the core of the urban area. Those cities include Duvall, Carnation, Black Diamond, and Enumclaw, plus other cities in Pierce and Snohomish Counties). These four arterials serve more or less the same city-to-city travel as state highways.

One other Principal Arterial may warrant designation as a Rural Regional Arterial in the near future between Black Diamond and Kent. That city has approved developments that grow beyond its regionally approved growth target by several thousand dwelling units, but that city accepts no responsibility to mitigate their traffic impacts on the county road system. That lack of responsibility is a gross violation of the principles of the Growth Management Act, but also demonstrates a failure of King County government to obtain effective mitigation from Black Diamond. Properly classifying this route would be useful to document the needs in that corridor, and seek mitigation from Black Diamond.

We urge King County to address such mitigation issues through a totally revamped regional approach to traffic impact mitigation, implementing a regional impact fee system that works across borders to involve the cities that cause the problems.

p. C-6 (map):

Preservation and protection of rural character demands reconsideration of this map. Some classifications shown in this map were adopted by ordinance in 2018 as a result of the Regional Transportation System Initiative (RTSI). Many of those changes should be reversed to protect the rural area. The RTSI project was ostensibly a PSRC regional endeavor but the study report consisted largely of changes proposed by King County to upgrade many routes so as to serve intercity travel purposes while downplaying their original and ongoing role as rural access roads. We recommend that some **Principal Arterials** be returned to their original status as **Minor Arterials**, and some **Minor Arterials** be returned to their original status as **Collector Arterials**.

The following routes should be reclassified downward to increase the protection of access to rural areas. In many cases these routes also fail to meet the criteria of the Federal Highway Administration for the classifications they now hold:

Revert from Minor Arterial to Collector Arterial

West Snoqualmie River Road NE

NE Carnation Farm Road – Ames Lake Carnation Road

NE Union Hill Road

208th Ave NE

196th Ave SE

276th Ave SE/Landsberg Rd

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Ravensdale – Black Diamond Rd SE

SE Lake Holm Road

SE Green Valley Road

218th Ave SE

212th Ave SE

284th Ave SE / Veazie-Cumberland Rd / Cumberland – Kanaskat Rd / Retreat – Kanaskat Rd SE

Revert from Principal Arterial to Minor Arterial

May Valley Road SE

SE 228th St

Petrovitsky Road SE

Auburn-Black Diamond Road SE (west of Kent-Black Diamond Rd)

SE 400th St

The benefit of downgrading these classifications is to elevate the importance of preserving rural character and upholding the need of rural residents to have relatively less difficulty with access between the arterial system and their homes. Roads carrying high volumes of traffic would be flagged as deficient by the new multi-modal level of service. Road improvements to preserve access would be prioritized higher, and future deficiencies would be related to future growth and thus could be mitigated by a robust impact mitigation policy. In addition, the attention would be raised for the need to manage the future demand for intercity travel using transit and focusing on the state highway corridor and the Rural Regional Arterials. See additional comments in Appendix C-1, the Transportation Needs Report.

III. Regionally Significant State Highways Level of Service Standards

Figure 2 Highway Level of Service Standards continues to show a gross anomaly in that only one “rural” section of a Highway of Statewide Significance (HSS) in all of King County shows an “urban” Level of Serve (LOS) of “D.” That section is SR-169 that proceeds east of the Renton Urban Growth Boundary to ~ 196th Ave SE/SE Jones Rd in the Rural Area. WHY ???

That section of SR-169 is treated as “urban,” when it should be “rural.” We recognize the LOS standards for regionally HSSs are determined by others, not King County. The standards given in *Figure 2* make sense overall, but there is this one rather egregious exception. On SR 169 east of Renton, the Tier 2 segment assigned LOS D extends too far eastward into the Rural Area, and should be redesignated as Tier 3 with a corresponding standard of LOS C. The appropriate location to terminate the Tier 2 segment would be at the Urban Growth Boundary line just east of 154th Place SE, a major signalized intersection. The ~two-mile section from there to 196th Ave SE all is within the Rural Area by definition, and parallels closely the Cedar River, a major salmon migration route where King County has invested millions of dollars in recovery efforts for salmon. Adjacent land uses are almost non-existent and consistent with rural character. It is inappropriate for this section of SR-169

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to be designated Tier 2 and be given an urban LOS standard, as no other rural section of any state highway in Figure 2 has an urban designation.

Getting the tier categories correct is important to the entire Rural Area, to preserve the rural character as GMA requires. We note with great dissatisfaction that an asphalt facility was recently approved at a location within this two-mile section of SR 169, despite its lack of compatibility with the Rural Area. If the rural LOS standard of "C" had been applied instead of the urban standard of "D," the proposed asphalt facility would have failed to meet that standard, and approval of the plant would have had to be reconsidered with the attendant transportation mitigation.

IV. Transportation Inventory

B. Air Transportation System

pp. C-9 thru C-10:

If GMA is to be followed, all of section **B. Air Transportation System** needs a more comprehensive accounting of all commercial airports regardless of ownership. The ferry operations of several other agencies are inventoried under Marine Transportation System. The same level of inventory should be provided under Air Transportation.

A later section on future needs due to growth should provide a discussion of the issues currently being investigated by a new state commission that pertain to needs for new airport capacity statewide, to augment SEATAC after its capacity is reached.

See our earlier comments above and in Chapter 8 on same.

C. Marine Transportation System

p. C-10 thru C-15:

This section needs greater internal consistency and additional information to satisfy GMA requirements.

A map is shown of the entire state ferry route network, but there is no supporting numerical inventory, nor any description of King County specific operations, such as is provided next for ferry services operated by other entities. No user ridership data is provided for any of the services described, nor any discussion of future needs related to growth.

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Missing from this section is any quantitative description of the state ferry system, such as is provided the next page for the Kitsap Transit Fast Ferry, the Port of Seattle Marin Facilities and Services, and the Northwest Seaport Alliance Marine Facilities and Services. A count of average ferry runs per day and ridership would suffice to document the ferry operations pertinent to King County by all operators. These statistics are surely as available from the operators.

Current shortages of state ferry vessels are in the news, and that crisis is reported to be long-lived as it takes years to design and build replacement vessels and to date the state legislature has not yet funded anything. Such deficiencies must be accounted for, along with future growth projections. Surely the state has ample information on the subject which can be reported here to satisfy GMA requirements.

To be more specific, only three state ferry routes exist in King County: Fauntleroy-Vashon-Southworth, Seattle-Bremerton, and Seattle-Bainbridge Island. To fully document the cross-sound supply/demand situation it is worthwhile to also include the Edmonds-Kingston route, since that route is barely north of King County and serves many King County residents in tandem with the Seattle-Bainbridge Island route.

There is no discussion anywhere in Appendix C of future growth needs for any of the ferry systems addressed. This is a clear deficiency that must be corrected, largely by reference to information from the operators themselves or from PSRC sources.

From the rural/unincorporated perspective, only the Vashon Island service is of direct interest. The role of ferry service to that island is huge, and needs to be maintained on a par with intercity highways in the road system. The relationship of Vashon Island ferry service to future Vashon growth needs to be addressed.

D. Land Transportation System

pp. C-16 thru C-30:

As a general comment on organization, we recommend that this topic be divided into a separate section for each of six modes of travel, rather than group diverse land transportation modes under this umbrella heading. There is only superficial logic to the current environmentally-based scheme of three levels using air, water, and land as the major headings. Better would be a mode-based scheme that places air, water, roads, transit, active transportation, and rail/freight on equal footing as headings, and follow the GMA outline more closely.

Roads and transit are the two most dominant systems requiring the most attention. Active transportation and ferries have significant interactions with roads and with transit. The air travel and rail/freight systems are arguably least interactive with other systems.

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While this section purports to account for all forms of land transportation, the inventories are not even complete and there is no discussion of system performance, current conditions, adequacy and deficiency. The whole section provides no basis for establishing future needs as GMA requires, for any of the modes discussed. This is disappointing to say the least.

Some information about roads is found in **Appendix C-1**, but more should be provided there and summarized here in summary tables and analysis, such as the following. It should be tabulated geographically by Community Service Area and the rural and urban subsets of each unincorporated area:

- Road miles on each functional class of road
- Vehicle-Miles of travel on each functional class of road
- Average daily volume on each functional class of road
- Population of each community service area by rural/urban subsets
- Vehicle-miles per capita for each functional class of road

For context provide the same statistics on the same road classes statewide and countywide, using data from WSDOT's annual Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reports which is accessible online.

Such comparisons will show that rural roads in King County serve about three times the volumes found on similar arterials anywhere else in the state. That information alone will support directing future system management priorities toward serving the goal of preservation of rural areas, and underscore the need for new funding sources for truly regional system needs. The current management system is more oriented to asset management rather than to system performance, and so does not serve the goals of the comprehensive plan.

We understand the county's current financial crisis with road funding, and we do not wish for any facilities to fall apart for lack of maintenance. But as rural area taxpayers we are continually perplexed that the road taxes we pay are used by the current road management system to reconstruct arterials used primarily by through traffic between cities, thus serving primarily the commuters between cities who do not pay any taxes to pay for such improvements.

Priority should be instead to maintain and improve roads that serve local residents who pay the Road Tax, and to manage the rural road system through various strategies that would discourage through traffic from using such roads, except for a few designated regionally significant arterials that should be regionally supported. Please work toward reorienting road system management toward goals that serve county residents first. That is a direct application of the GMA goal of preserving and protecting the rural area.

We request in particular three specific changes in methodology for the evaluation of rural roads in unincorporated King County. Similar logic may apply to the urban unincorporated areas as well.

(A) Emphasize the access needs of rural residents first

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Rural residents are seriously affected by through traffic from other areas. They have difficulty entering or exiting the arterial serving their neighborhood because of the high volume of through traffic. This situation is actually a violation of the county's rural level of service standard (B), if the traffic engineering methods are applied properly. When through traffic volumes are high but still running at the speed limit, access to and from side streets may be seriously reduced, and the level of service for such movements is at D, or E, even F in the worst case.

To account for that situation, the level of service analysis must actually look at the access movements as affected by the through movements. On that basis, the level of service for many side-street access intersections currently violates the LOS standard and should be mitigated - now. That is all according to standard traffic engineering methods.

Unfortunately the county has instead adopted a concurrency method by ordinance that only applies the LOS standard to a broad average of all through traffic in both directions and ignores all access conditions. That broad averaging method sets the level of service criterion so loosely that there are currently no deficiencies at all. This does not serve rural residents properly, and is blatantly disrespectful of the GMA policy to preserve and protect rural areas. This must change.

To be practical about implementing such a change and minimize new analysis work, we suggest to start that access issues arise chiefly on roads carrying more than about 5,000 daily trips. Rural arterials statewide almost never carry more traffic than that – that only happens in King County. And somewhere between 5,000 and 7,500 daily trips for through traffic, access delays become highly frustrating for local residents.

(B) Revamp Concurrency

The existing concurrency method is so weak as to be meaningless. It appears designed to avoid ever finding a level of service failure. That reduces the workload for county staff but does not serve the goals of GMA nor this comprehensive plan.

Most egregiously, it does not apply to the new developments that cause the road capacity problems we are concerned with – the growth in outlying cities that leads to commuter traffic through rural areas. It applies only to new developments in the unincorporated areas within King County. Also, embedded within the concurrency ordinance is an exemption for developments of under ten homes. That covers most new home building on existing or future lots in rural areas, since large subdivisions are not allowed by the rural land use code. So in effect most new home construction in rural King County would never be subject to concurrency. We must ask, why even bother with this ordinance?

Concurrency should be resigned to make it an effective instrument to highlight the problem of through travel growth between cities, with two parts. The current method of areawide averaging of travel speeds across all roads in a subarea should be abolished, in favor of a method targeting a selected few locations, as follows.

Part 1 should directly monitor only designated Rural Regional Arterials, and state highways. Those four Rural Regional Arterials and four state highways carry most of the traffic between cities through the rural area. We understand the need to treat these few regional arterials as quasi-highways. For

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that matter, why not ask the state to take them over and make their function perfectly clear! In any case devise a multi-modal level of service standard (which GMA now requires!) that encourages a focus on increasing transit service between cities and applies the state highway LOS standard to the county's designated Rural Regional Arterials.

Part 2 should monitor all other county arterials. These all have lower volumes than the Rural Regional Arterials, but some carry so much through traffic that local access is significantly affected by through traffic volumes.

Through traffic cutting through neighborhoods is not tolerated in cities. Why should it be tolerated in rural areas where traffic is supposed to be light anyway?

Since these are all two-lane roads with only stop sign controls, there is no need for tedious detailed traffic analysis one location at a time. Instead adopt a simple traffic volume threshold as the LOS standard for all two-lane county arterials. That volume threshold can be identified by applying the county's rural LOS standard (B) just once, to a prototypical access situation to/from any side street or private driveway. That is where local residents experience daily the frustration of delays in accessing their own neighborhood. We expect that volume threshold will be between 5,000 and 7,500 daily vehicles. Elsewhere we suggested upper volume limits of 5,000 for collector arterials and 10,000 for minor arterials. The latter difference versus 7,500 would be reconciled by considering the lower number to apply with simple two-lane designs, and the higher level to apply with the addition of turn pockets or other access improvements.

For comparison, the county's four Rural Regional Arterials carry in excess of 15,000 daily trips. Congestion is high and side-street access is severely restricted, but that has been tolerated in view of the important intercity function these four routes serve. Such tolerance should not be true on other county roads where access movements should have higher priority than through movements. Applying an access-based level of service standard would immediately identify several county arterials as deficient, and call for remedies.

Typical solutions would range from installing turn pockets at key intersections to reducing speed limits and applying other travel demand management techniques to lower the attractiveness of these routes. It may even make sense to disrupt the continuity of some lesser routes to keep through traffic on the main routes designed to serve through trips. As well some of routes are on steep hillsides with a risk of landslides, so demand management actions to reduce through traffic on those routes helps minimize future hazards and reduce future costs for the county.

Demand management actions will inevitably shift some through traffic back to the Rural Regional Arterials and State Highways. That will in turn increase the need to upgrade those facilities to handle that additional traffic. But the funding of such regional needs should then come from regional sources. That will help reduce the county's financial shortfall with respect to its own road system serving mostly access needs not intercity commuters.

(C) Support active transportation in rural areas

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Start by implementing a level of service standard for active transportation so as to monitor the degree of exposure for pedestrians and bicyclists of sharing a two-lane road with fast moving cars. Such a standard is needed for the rural area because roadside facilities for pedestrians and bicycles are generally absent, unlike in cities. But the reality is that the need for such facilities is seen everywhere. A few walkers and joggers and bikers are seen on virtually every county road, and they have no choice but to use the same pavement the cars do. On a low-volume "country lane" that is not a problem. On a county arterial used by thousands of commuters every day, it is a problem.

The prototypical "country lane" was in fact the "complete street" solution for rural areas in prior times. Think Amish country, where horsecars, bicycles, pedestrians, and cars all share the road. That worked because volumes were low and everyone had time to adjust to the presence of others. Not so in King County - not any more.

When traffic volumes rise, the inevitable result is diminished availability of the road for the walkers, joggers, and bikers, let alone Amish horse carts. Therefore, it makes sense to devise a level of service standard based on the degree of exposure to traffic for active transportation. The standard should consider the volume of traffic, the speed of traffic, the absence of paved shoulders or other facilities for active transportation, and also sight distance limitations at curves and hillcrests. Typically, the volume of walkers, joggers, and bikers is low everywhere but rarely zero. Their exposure to vehicles on the road must be recognized as a basic concern everywhere, regardless of their actual frequency of appearance. But recognize the popularity of certain routes for bicycle touring, and the increased pedestrian movements at neighborhood activity centers.

We suggest as one possible approach a point system to prioritize county roads according to total deficiencies, such as the following. Such point systems are commonly used by governmental agencies to prioritize many programs. Points could be assigned as follows:

- Each increment of 1,000 daily vehicles
- Each increment of 5 mph above 30 mph for average traffic speed
- Each two feet of paved shoulder (or pathway) missing from the arterial standard of eight feet.
- Each reduction of 100 feet of sight distance below a reference standard of 500 feet
- Active transportation activity above the norm

Using this scheme, the level of service standard would be defined as a maximum allowable point score. For example, a road with four feet of paved shoulder width, 35 mph speed, and 5,000 daily traffic would have a score of 8. That situation seems acceptable intuitively. Removing all shoulders would raise the point score to 10. That situation seems marginally tolerable at 5,000 daily traffic but unacceptable at 10,000 (score = 15). It also seems intolerable at 5,000 daily traffic if speed were 45 mph with no shoulders (score = 12). If sight distance were impaired by a sharp curve that would raise the score but only for the 500 feet each way from the center of the curve. The score would also be raised all along a corridor if that is a popular route among bicycle clubs, or a short portion of a route that is adjacent to a county park, local businesses, or other activities that generate pedestrian movements.

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Some experimentation with alternative scenarios should be done before choosing a particular score for the LOS standard. Note that below about 2,000 or 3,000 daily vehicles, there won't be enough points from other deficiencies to rise to a matter of concern. Most of the 1500 miles of county roads is in this low-volume category, and such roads would not have to be monitored. The attention would be focused on the Principal and Minor Arterial systems.

The result of applying such a level of service standard to active transportation would be to identify those few locations on the county road system where exposure and conflict between vehicles and walkers, joggers, and bikers is highest, and suggest priorities for roadside improvements to remove such deficiencies. That would meet the intent of GMA for a multi-modal level of service that is relevant to rural areas. It furthers the cause of "complete streets" as well as state and federal priorities to improve safety on all public roads.

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C1 - Transportation Needs Report (Attachment E)

[Appendix C1 – Transportation Needs Report \(Attachment E\)](#)

Overall Comments

This document provides an exhaustive inventory of roads and projected needs based on maintenance and asset management criteria, rather than GMA-oriented service needs. Also the approach is only countywide, not accounting for Community Service Areas nor rural and urban distinctions within the unincorporated area. It also does not suggest timing for any of the needs listed. The list simply accounts for (almost) all the miles of road under county control, and assigns various types of improvement to each road based on an ultimate future condition. This foundational list needs some discussion of when and why each improvement will be needed, to relate it to GMA.

To support the deficiency analysis we recommended in Chapter 8 (for the broken financial system for roads), the inventory of conditions should provide summary tables of the road system according to such key measures as functional classification, lanes, traffic volumes, shoulder width and other measures of support for active transportation, transit, and pavement condition. Summarize issues with findings like *X percent of Minor Arterial miles lack shoulders wide enough for pedestrians.* A summary table should be presented for each community service area, and countywide, all based on the future horizon year (PSRC's *VISION 2050*).

Such a methodology also would support the hard decisions needed to justify future road closures due to lack of funding.

Specific Comments

Chapter 1. Planning Context and Introduction

pp. C1-3 thru C1-9:

This chapter introduces and to some extent summarizes the following chapters. It should be updated as following chapters are revised.

Chapter 2. Unincorporated King County Road and Bridge Assets

pp. C1-10 thru C1-33:

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The entire scope of this chapter is geared to asset management, rather than system performance. While asset management is import and directly related to the fiscal crisis before the county, GMA requires a discussion of system performance.

We suggest an additional section to be called “2.7 Multi-Modal Level-of-Service Standards and Deficiencies” that will provide the data we requested in the discussion of Chapter 8. This would include an inventory of roads with shoulders suitable for active transportation (or not), segregated by functional classification, traffic volumes, sight distances and other factors related to safety of pedestrians and bicyclists in particular, indicators of pedestrian and bicycle activity, and other factors related to a future multi-modal level of service measuring a system for how it meets rural needs, more than how it serves through travel.

The following presents a discussion of our rationale:

The goal is to establish a baseline of current conditions so as to monitor future changes and prioritize future actions to mitigate the impacts of growth. For the purposes of this report, such data could be summarized into tables that quantify the number of road-miles meeting various criteria, by class of road, by community service area, etc. Future conditions could be similarly summarized.

Obviously many county roads do not meet current road design standards, and those standards generally don't distinguish between urban and rural environments. Rural residents generally oppose sidewalks and other urban features, but do use their roads to walk and bicycle. Managing rural roads for multiple user groups is the issue, one that is addressed by “complete streets” philosophy. We anticipate that an improved level of service methodology would take into account that for low-volume roads missing or narrow shoulders are OK, but for high volume roads that is not OK. Higher volume roads in rural areas have transitioned from their historic rural character into a quasi-urban nature that demands some adjustment of standards.

This change from rural to urban is confronted in some suburban cities by a level of service approach that measures suitability for active transportation by the width of shoulders, and relates that to traffic volumes. See our discussion of a point system methodology for an active transportation level of service in our comments on Appendix C – Transportation.

We envision an improved Transportation Needs Report that would show an inventory of road-miles by level of service, in each community service area, for existing conditions and future conditions. A policy should establish what amount of deficiency is acceptable in each category, in a multi-modal framework as GMA now requires.

That would be a more useful approach to concurrency management for unincorporated areas (separating rural and urban parts too) than the existing system that only measures the speed of through traffic. It would establish a basis for separating existing deficiencies from future deficiencies due to growth, which could be mitigated by a regionally uniform impact fee on new developments anywhere in the county, such that developments in outlying cities would contribute toward their impacts in rural areas too. That is the power of a regional impact fee based on VMT, with proceeds directed wherever the VMT occur.

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Chapter 3 Transportation Modeling

p. C1-33:

PSRC's regional traffic model has been used to identify future traffic volumes based on adopted growth targets. This information should be presented in some form in the TNR. Traffic volume maps are customarily used in comprehensive plans to document existing and future conditions. Volume growth trends are a useful tool for scheduling growth-related future improvements, at least in five-year increments over 20 years. We anticipate that in rural areas, only roads with volumes higher than perhaps 5,000 daily vehicles need to be so documented.

There is a need to also address violations of the adopted growth targets, specifically Black Diamond's refusal to abide by regional protocols. The current approach fails to address the worst case now before the region. That city's comprehensive plan anticipates well over 6,000 new dwelling units versus the region's target allocation of 2,900 units, and master planned development agreements to that effect are now being implemented with over 1,000 units already on the ground. Traffic impacts on county roads to/from Black Diamond are already in evidence, but under current law there is no way to prevent continuation of this trend. A start would be to run the PSRC traffic model with those additional growth assumptions so as to document the extent of traffic impacts.

The PSRC model has all the elements needed to quantify regional traffic impacts on the basis of VMT for any development anywhere. Such a powerful tool deserves to be used to fairly allocate regional funds of any kind to where VMT impacts occur, and do so across all jurisdictional boundaries. King County's financial dilemma would benefit greatly from such a system, but all jurisdictions would derive some benefit.

Chapter 4 Drivers of Change Affecting Transportation in Unincorporated King County

pp. C1-34 thru C1-37:

This section contains much useful information, but could provide much more by carrying out the thoughts expressed above with application to future year projections. This is what GMA anticipates. We are especially alarmed by the information on pages 38:

“congestion-related delay is expected to increase most significantly for urban unincorporated and rural areas” and “annual delay per capita in urban unincorporated areas is expected to increase to 53 minutes (a 20 percent increase) and to 63 minutes in rural areas (a 26 percent increase).”

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These trends are quite the opposite of what a balanced GMA plan would entail, and especially far from preserving rural character. On page 40 (top) it is reported that

“Since 2006, less than 3 percent of new housing in King County has occurred in the rural area.”

Clearly, congestion in rural areas is an impact of city-to-city travel through the rural area, and not due to growth within the rural area. As the rest of page 40 makes clear, this growth is occurring without commensurate financial resources to offset the impacts. Something must change.

This section concludes with a bland statement that “*King County Roads will continue to...achieve scaled-up, regional funding solutions.*” This is not enough, neither to obtain solutions when nobody else has wanted to meet the challenge for the last several years that Roads has been documenting its fiscal plight, nor to satisfy GMA which calls for a demonstration of a fiscally balanced solution within the Comprehensive Plan. We call for satisfying GMA by demonstrating *tangibly* in the Comprehensive Plan what Roads will do in coming years to operate within its existing financial means. See Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. TNR Project Needs and Cost Analysis

pp. C1-37 thru C1-40: ???

This is a **chapter title** shown in the Table of Contents in the Transportation Needs Report (Attachment E), but not found in the body of the text. We believe it starts on p. C1-37 with the following paragraph:

“The 2024 Transportation Needs Report represents King County’s contemporary thinking regarding transportation needs across its system of unincorporated roads and bridges. The underlying approaches taken to identify needs and evaluate road and bridge assets are summarized within Chapter 2 of this report. This chapter provides the cost analysis associated with the 488 identified transportation project needs, organized using ten TNR categories:...”

and includes Figures 4., 5., and 6. Our comments follow:

The ten categories of projects listed on pp. C1-37-38 and summarized in Figures 4. thru 6. make sense as *management* categories, but there needs to be a clarification as to how these categories relate to the issue of growth. For compliance with the Growth Management Act only the projects that provide *new capacity needed for growth* are of interest. We do not wish to diminish the importance of structural reform of county road finance, a topic addressed in Chapter 6. But there needs to be a clarification here and in Chapter 6 as to which needs are related to growth - and paid for by growth in an ideal world – and which needs are related to ongoing system maintenance, ADA compliance, equity considerations, or other policy mandates apart from growth management. We know it is complex. But don’t ignore the growth management mandate which is the paramount purpose of the comprehensive plan regarding transportation.

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As we view the ten categories, it appears that only one or two relate to the purpose of managing growth: Capacity-Major obviously, and some portion of Intersection and Traffic Safety Operations. Viewed that way, about 20%-25% of the total \$2.4 billion program relates to growth by providing capacity improvements on specified roads and intersections, and 75%-80% relates to operating and maintaining the system. With that clarification in this chapter, matching adjustments would follow to the financial analysis in Chapter 6, so as to point toward regional intergovernmental solutions for the problem of regionally caused traffic growth on county roads. Since the county has no revenues to spare, new capacity projects of a regional nature must be left undone until the region finds resources to fund them and should be clearly identified (in a separate chapter) to make the issue crystal clear.

Taking the numbers at face value, we conclude that if only \$288 million is available over 20 years, then most of the ten categories of projects will not be funded; i.e., the projects will not happen. Clearly preservation of the system takes priority over other desirable but optional projects. On that basis, we could surmise that bridge projects and vulnerable road segments should get most of the funds, but those categories alone total \$664 million, or twice the available funds. Clearly about half those needs must then be funded from other sources yet to be found, and virtually all of the other eight categories would be totally unfunded. This is indeed a dire situation. We call for a clearer demonstration of the situation by setting forth in this document an allocation of known funds to specific projects, scheduled by five year increments by Community Service Area, and show the remainder as unfunded. We spell that further in our comments on Chapter 6.

High-cost versus low-cost projects is another area of confusion. With just a casual glance through the long project list we see that a great amount of the \$2.4 billion program cost relates to a few high-cost projects that are clearly beyond the ability of the known \$288 million resources to be provided for. Perhaps the remainder of the road program would appear closer to fiscal balance if some high cost projects were placed in a separate high-profile category that must be funded separately from the County Road Tax. The most obvious examples are as follows, listed in the order found by browsing through *Exhibit A — 2024 Transportation Needs Report Project List*:

Project ID	Description	Cost (millions)
RC-10 &ff	Three Seawall replacement projects on Vashon Island	\$ 75
BR-1136B	The Woodinville-Duvall Road bridge at Duvall Slough	\$ 105
CP-12 &ff	Seven capacity projects in Bear Creek/Sammamish area	\$ 262
CP-15-1 & OP-RD-5	Two capacity projects in Bear Creek/Sammamish area	\$ 38
CP-15-2 & RC-118	Issaquah Hobart Rd two congestion relief, reconstruction projects	\$ 56
OP-RD-22 & -24, -26	May Valley Road lane widening projects	\$ 55

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CP-15, CP-15-4, & OP-RD-25	Three capacity projects east of Renton	\$ 43
BR-3085	Covington-Sawyer Rd Bridge replacement at Jenkins Creek	\$ 17
BR-3086OX	Berrydale Bridge on Kent Black Diamond Rd, replacement	\$ 15
BR-3015	Patton Bridge on Green Valley Road, replacement	\$ 46
INT-TSO-20-10	Kent Black Diamond Rd / Auburn Black Diamond Rd Intersection	\$ 14
BR-2133A	Sikes Lake Trestle replacement in Snoqualmie Valley area	\$ 22
BR-3032	Green River Gorge Bridge replacement	\$ 32
BR-1221	North Fork Rd Bridge replacement, near North Bend	\$ 31
VRS-20-21	SE Middle Fork Road reconstruction	\$ 21
BR-509A	Baring Bridge over South Fork Skykomish River, replacement	\$ 23
BR-99W	Miller River Bridge replacement, Old Stevens Pass Hwy	\$ 36
NM-(all)	80 Active transportation projects countywide, adding roadside paths, trails, etc. alongside existing county roads	\$ 350
RC-(all)	36 reconstruction projects on major county arterials, providing both repaving benefits and minor road widening and shoulder improvements providing Active Transportation benefits. Too many to list separately.	\$ 338

The 29 individually listed high-cost projects total almost \$900 million. Bridges and capacity-major projects figure prominently in this list. In addition, the Active Transportation and Reconstruction categories consist of numerous projects that are individually costly due to their long project lengths. As a group they are collectively unfundable and it seems difficult to prioritize these projects to a smaller more fundable subset, so these are listed as total groups above. They add another \$688 million. All together, the listed projects represent about two-thirds of the \$2.4 million program cost. We would argue such projects should all be put aside for future funding by other sources. Now the remaining unfunded needs are about \$800 million versus \$288 million presumed available. We invite the county to show a priority analysis of which of the remaining project categories rank highest for completion with the available funds, and which will be deferred.

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Finally, in our view, some of the projects included in the TNR do not make sense on initial inspection. But we don't have the details to review either. So we recommend, among other strategies going forward, that the contents of the TNR in each Community Service Area be reviewed with community representatives to explain the fiscal crisis and gain community input as to the highest priority needs. Perhaps that will help prioritize the program better, as well as help with community understanding and support for new funding strategies.

Chapter 6. Financial Analysis

pp. C1-40 thru C1-44:

Taking the TNR at its word, even without changing the scope of project needs to address additional needs we have highlighted before, the table on p. C1-42 gives an estimated cost to meet all needs of \$2.5 BILLION dollars, over 20 years, whereas the available revenues under current law are given as only \$288 million dollars, and over two-thirds of that amount is grant funds from other sources. We will trust that estimate of grant funds is somehow reasonable and not a dream. Even so, only 12% of TNR needs will be funded in 20 years. This is not just a broken system. It is a catastrophe.

The character of the rural area will not be preserved, it will not be maintained, it will be destroyed by such a shortfall which is born only by rural residents, not urban dwellers. The needs of through travelers will not be met either.

We recommend that a new chapter be added to this appendix, detailing how King County Roads will act to operate within its means, in five year increments from 2024 to 2044.

We expect to see a list of roads or road segments that will be shut down, bridges that will be closed, paved road not maintained and allowed to "return to gravel" as we have heard said in many public forums for several years. Other services will be reduced or terminated. Standards will not be met. These realities need to be put forth in plain language.

The simplest thing to do going forward is to stop using rural roads as surrogates for a deficient state highway system. Strategically disconnecting a very few county roads will push a number of through trips back onto state highways (and the four Rural Regional Arterials) where they belong. With minimal impact on rural residents.

That will shift the focus toward state funding of the growth problem so the legislature can deal with it. Three examples suffice to demonstrate this point:

(a) Four Rural Regional Arterials alone account for over \$500 million in construction costs in the TNR. Converting these roads to state highways and state funding would remove almost 20% of the TNR cost estimate.

(b) In Northeast King County, commuters out of Snohomish County have discovered a path around congestion on SR 203 in and near Duvall, by taking a different path through bucolic

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farmlands using country roads designed only for access to farms. The route follows Tualco Road from SR 203 to the Snoqualmie River, crossing that river at what locals call the “High Bridge” and then turn southward on West Snoqualmie Valley Road to reach the Woodinville Duvall Road (a Rural Regional Arterial). This West Snoqualmie Valley Road is very antiquated and very physically deficient. It serves historically as local access for local farms – not through travel. It is at risk for slides as it follows the steeply sloping west wall of the valley. High commuter volumes are impactful to the farms along that road, and the road will need reconstruction much sooner. The TNR lists two slide-control projects on this road costing several million dollars. The rising use of this road by inter-county commuters will soon dictate total reconstruction of this road, a cost not yet found in the TNR.

Truncating the West Snoqualmie Valley Road south of the High Bridge (at the county line would be quite poetic) would bring that future problem into immediate focus to the commuters, who would be forced back onto state highways to reach their urban King County destinations. They can choose between SR203 through Duvall, and SR 522 out of Monroe. This regional-scale problem will then be impacting regional-scale facilities, not King County's antiquated rural roads. It would also preserve the road much longer for service to local residents, most of whom would be only slightly inconvenienced by the loss of access northward, and the number of farms along that section of West Snoqualmie Valley Road is actually quite small.

(c) In Southeast King County, commuters from Bonney Lake, Buckley, Enumclaw, and Black Diamond who commute north via SR 169 currently bypass Maple Valley in considerable numbers through rural Ravensdale and Hobart and continue northward into Issaquah. They take several paths to Ravensdale then head north via Landsburg Road across the Cedar River to 276th Avenue SE which turns into Issaquah Hobart Road at SR 18. Most of that traffic through rural Hobart on 276th can and should be using SR 169 instead. This was dramatically proven in August 2019 by a real-world traffic diversion event.

That is when King County Roads reconstructed the bridge decking on Landsburg Road over the Cedar River, closing that bridge for two weeks. The result was a 75% DECREASE in traffic through Hobart on 276th Avenue SE, and traffic CHAOS on SR 169 through Maple Valley which made the TV news the morning of Monday, August 12!

What if that bridge had been simply decommissioned instead of retrofitted, saving millions of dollars? The effects would have been

- Less congested access to 276th Ave SE for rural residents in Hobart,
- minimal loss of regional connection for Hobart residents, since SE 216th Street provides a suitable alternative connection to Maple Valley, and
- a longer lifecycle for maintenance of Landsburg Road and 276th Avenue SE,
- a longer lifecycle for maintenance of Ravensdale-Black Diamond Road
- a longer lifecycle for maintenance of Retreat-Kanaskat Road, Cumberland-Kanaskat Road, Veazie-Cumberland Road, and 284th Avenue SE to Enumclaw.

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Those roads represent over 20 miles of county roads that could be preserved for rural access use for a much longer time, not to mention preserving the tranquility of abutting residences as well. Construction projects in the TNR on those road segments total \$78 million that could be avoided or greatly postponed.

The above three examples alone address almost one-fourth of the total TNR 20-year cost as it stands. Similar analysis of other routes should lead to additional savings for King County even if less dramatic.

The next thing to be done is to show concretely how King County will manage its road system on a budget of \$288 million over 20 years, with no new revenues. Show what projects will be undertaken, in 5-year increments, and show what will be consequences of not doing all the rest of the TNR's long list of needs. State what roads will be closed or reduced to gravel, what bridges will be closed, what services will not be provided. Once that information is made public, reaction by elected officials at state and regional levels is much more likely to follow.

We also recommend adding a new section on **Haul Roads**. The comprehensive plan should also discuss haul roads and the problems associated with same. Several county arterials are severely impacted by heavily loaded trucks coming from quarries, logging operations, and other resource extraction activities which are common in the rural area. The county's current methodology for determining haul road fees and assigning fees to operators through the permitting process is grossly inadequate to provide adequate compensation for the damage done to roads by heavily loaded trucks, some carrying up to 100,000 pounds gross weight. That is 10 to 20 times the weight of a passenger car. Engineers know that road damage rises versus vehicle weight in an exponential manner. But the fee methodology is based on vehicles, not weight, and thus grossly understates the damage due to heavy trucks. Truck monitoring and collection of fees is also haphazard or nonexistent in the years after the initial start of operations. A simpler, more effective system is needed. A good start would be to have an inventory of roads affected, estimate the volumes of heavy trucks involved now and in the future, and then analyze alternative tax and fee systems.

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C2 - Regional Trail Needs Report

[Appendix C2 – Regional Trail Needs Report \(Attachment F\)](#)

We offer only improvements to an excellent *King County Regional Trails System* by listing connections most needed to make the system more accessible, safe, usable and equitable:

- Connecting the **Snoqualmie Valley Trail to Snohomish County's Centennial Trail**, a rural regional trail from Snohomish north into Skagit County, thus giving commuters and tourists an active alternative to increasingly busy north-south interstate and road corridors. King County now owns the corridor to the County Line and has cleared a portion that was built over. It will need development funds in a future Parks Levy. We recommend King County partner with Snohomish County to encourage completing the corridor through *both* Counties.
- Better connection of the **Snoqualmie Valley Trail to the statewide Palouse to Cascades Trail/Mountains to Sound Greenway**, which is part of the National Recreational Trail System. This will also provide a better Northern Route for the Cross State Trail program being developed.
- Now with restrictions on the number vehicles allowed into Mount Rainier National Park (MRNP) each day, there is a greater need for a multi-use trail to connect MRNP with King County (where most visitors to the Park originate) via the **SR-410/White River Corridor**. Such a trail would allow active transportation options for county residents and visitors to reach the SE highlands of King County and MRNP. Research is needed to determine if the Weyerhaeuser Mainline logging road that runs parallel to SR410 for most of the 17 miles between Enumclaw and the county line/Greenwater can be repurposed as a trail. Tourism is an important and growing part of the local economy of SE King County, and this will help to make that more sustainable, increase road safety, and reduce the need for investments in additional road infrastructure.
- In south King County most of the regional trails are oriented on a north/south basis. Other than the **Cedar River Trail**, there are almost no east/west regional trail connectors. From a biker's perspective, this is a serious fault in the current system and is limiting both recreational and commuting opportunities. The best and easiest way to develop a needed east/west trail connector is to put a trail alongside the existing railway (there are many examples of this being done successfully). The only rail line east/west in south King County is the Stampede Pass line. It could start near the Tacoma Watershed at the Green River Headworks Road (at the site designated for the Foothills Trail—north/south, then through Ravensdale along Ravensdale Creek, Maple Valley (crossing/connecting to the **Cedar River-to-Green River Trail**), then continuing along Jenkins Creek through Covington and on to Auburn and Kent. In the valley, this can easily be connected to both the Interurban and Green River Trails.

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JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

D1 - Growth Targets & the Urban Growth Area (Attachment G)

[Appendix D1 – Growth Targets and the Urban Growth Area \(Attachment G\)](#)

Theme

- Unfortunately Growth Targets cannot be enforced to keep *irresponsible* cities, such as Black Diamond, from *grossly* overgrowing *directly* impacting County roads and rural residents and *vastly* underpaying for maintenance based on their proportional usage.

Specific Comments

p. D1-10:

Figure 5: King County Jurisdiction Growth Targets 2019-2044

We understand the numbers in *Figure 5* were adopted in the 2021 CPPs—and we offered detailed written comments at the time. However, we again want to point out the coming “*train wreck*” that primarily County roads will face that will impose additional burdens on the Roads program funded primarily by Rural Area taxpayers. The City of Black Diamond, a designated “*City in the Rural Area*,” (included in the “*Cities and Towns*” rows in the figure) has been allocated a 2019-2044 Housing Target of 2,900, which its already approved Master-Planned Development (MPD) plans show it will *grossly* exceed. It also has other permit applications under consideration, that when approved, will make this even worse.

To make matters worse, the City of Black Diamond has been allocated a 2019-2044 Job Target of *only* 690 (an *anomaly* compared to the *Housing/Job Target* ratio for every other city listed!), meaning that the *vast majority* of its 20,000+ new residents will commute on County roads to their jobs in the major cities, as they avoid the much congested SR-169, which the City is barely improving, except for the addition of some left-turn lanes and two potential roundabouts. This all amounts to a recipe for disaster, especially for Rural Area residents/commuters! All other cities listed are handling their Growth Targets in a professional and civil manner, leaving Black Diamond as an *irresponsible* city, a “*poster child*,” that is knowingly overloading County roads and imposing an unfair and inequitable financial burden on the Rural Area taxpayers to mitigate the impacts its own poorly developed policies and permit approvals are creating.

The current Growth Target and Allocation system is badly flawed and, by ignoring those flaws, we perpetuate them *ad infinitum*.

B. Land Capacity in the UGA

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JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

1. Countywide

pp. D1-11 thru D1-12:

While the following paragraph rightly states the *Urban Growth Capacity Report* finds sufficient capacity available for *total* UGA projected growth and that some cities lack sufficient capacity for their *individual* projected growth, it does not state any concern or remedy for those cities that grossly exceed their projected growth and what “*reasonable measures*” they should take to correct such inconsistencies and the resulting burdens, primarily infrastructure, they will place on their neighbors, both urban and rural. Consequently, such inconsistencies will not be addressed by these cities in their 2024 Comprehensive Plans. We call for such cities to regularly report to the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) on how they are handling such inconsistencies.

“While the Urban Growth Capacity Report found that sufficient capacity was available in the UGA for projected growth, that urban densities were being achieved, and that urban King County was on track to achieve its 2006-2035 growth targets, a small number of cities lacked sufficient capacity for projected growth or were not growing at a rate to achieve their targets. The Urban Growth Capacity Report noted the cities where inconsistencies were identified and recommended that the cities evaluate whether reasonable measures were required to be taken in the 2024 periodic update to comprehensive plans to correct for the inconsistency.”

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments (Attachment I)

[Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments \(Attachment I\)](#)

pp. 35-40:

Map Amendment 8: Countywide – King County Open Space System Expansion

AMENDMENT TO THE KING COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE MAP and THE KING COUNTY ZONING ATLAS

We support the following as part of a multi-area effort by the County to clean up land ownership maps and zoning to show "open space" for many parcels acquired to date, as well as to change those parcels owned by the WA Department of Natural Resources to RA-10 zoning.

Effect:

- ...
- ***Amends the zoning of parcels located south of Interstate-90, south of the City of Snoqualmie from RA-5 (Rural Area, 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres) to RA-10 (Rural Area, 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres), removes P-Suffix SV-P35 from the parcels, and repeals SV-P35 from the Zoning Atlas. SV-P35 requires lot clustering on a portion of the affected parcels and that the remainder of the parcels be dedicated for permanent open space.***

Map Amendments 9 thru 20: Vashon-Maury Island ...

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council* (V-MCC), due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the V-MCC to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific V-MCC comment.

We suggest consideration of adding the following **Map Amendment**:

Map Amendment XX: Countywide – P-Suffix Zoning / Development Conditions

AMENDMENT TO THE KING COUNTY ZONING ATLAS

ZONING

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

1. Remove P-Suffix zoning (EN-P01, FC-P02, SV-P37, SV-P037, SV-P11, SV-P12, SV-P13, SV-P15, SV-P17, SV-P18, SV-P19, SV-P20, SV-P21, SV-P25, SV-P26, SV-P28, TR-P09, TR-P21, TR-P22) for commercial, industrial or mining activities in the Rural Area of unincorporated King County, if the condition is not currently met and remains out of compliance for one year, then zoning reverts back to underlying/original (non-commercial) zoning. Further if the ownership changes the uses would revert to underlying zoning.
2. Repeal P-Suffix Development Conditions EN-P01, ES-P04, FC-P02, GR-P04, GR-P03, GR-P02, GR-P01, SV-P37, SV-P037, SV-P11, SV-P12, SV-P13, SV-P15, SV-P17, SV-P18, SV-P19, SV-P20, SV-P21, SV-P25, SV-P26, SV-P28, TR-P09, TR-P21, TR-P22 from Zoning Atlas.

Effect:

- ***Most of these P-Suffix development conditions are many years out of date. This would allow parcels that do not meet the commercial development conditions to revert back to underlying zoning for more clarity and transparency in zoning, provide more land for additional housing units, reduce impact of and cost to regulate commercial business in the Rural Area and restore Rural Character and help improve tourism and more sustainable economic development in the Rural Area.***

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

King County Code Amendments

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Summary of Proposed Ordinance (King County Code amendments)

[Summary of Proposed Ordinance \(King County Code amendments\)](#) [Proposed Ordinance \(King County Code amendments\)](#)

Theme

- Changes to Code are needed, e.g., Special-Use Permits (SUPs), Temporary-Use Permits (TUPs), Conditional-Use Permits (CUPs), etc., must be focussed and limited; while permit exceptions should be just that—exceptions for a very specific purpose meeting very specific, temporary, and non-recurring situations or conditions, not the rule.

Overall Comments

Although not Code specific, implementation continues to mar good Policy and Code. For example, the use of exception-based criteria to allow for a permit applicant's desire to circumvent the overall mandates of the KCCP needs to be severely curtailed (e.g., Special-Use Permits (SUPs), Temporary-Use Permits (TUPs), Conditional-Use Permits (CUPs), etc.). Historically, after an application has been found “*complete*,” the applicant has asked for and been granted exceptions to some of the parameters of the KCCP or KC Code. Exceptions should be just that—exceptions for a very specific purpose meeting very specific, temporary, and NON-recurring situations or conditions, not the rule. Additionally, upon granting of any exceptions that have become too routine, there has been little to no monitoring to ensure the conditions granted are enforced.

Specific Comments

In the following pages we provide comments on specific **Code Amendments** found in: [Summary of Proposed Ordinance \(King County Code amendments\)](#), with actual **Code Language** found in: [Proposed Ordinance \(King County Code amendments\)](#).

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.04.090
pp. 25 thru 26, Section 54

Current Code—Establishes the purposes of the Neighborhood Business (NB) zone, including: Allowing for mixed-use developments and Allowing NB zoning in areas designated as urban neighborhood business centers, rural towns, or rural neighborhood centers.

Proposed change—Limits mixed use development to the urban area and rural towns. Allows NB zoning in areas designated as UACs, community business centers, neighborhood business centers commercial outside of centers, rural towns, and rural neighborhood commercial centers.

Comments—We originally submitted this concern. We like the proposed changes, as we want to ensure that KC Code going forward no longer allows *NEW* Mixed-Use at the existing sites listed in the ERP (pp. 3-34 to 3-35). We understand some of these sites have had Mixed-Use for decades—we have absolutely no problem with those. We are concerned with sites that simply have a General Store / Gas Station, etc. and do not want to see Mixed-Use added, as it completely defeats the whole purpose of Rural Area Neighborhood Business Districts as defined in the ERP (p. 3-34):

"The Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center land use designation is used to recognize existing small pockets of commercial development, or in some cases, historic communities or buildings, that are too small to provide more than convenience shopping and services to surrounding residents. They generally do not have infrastructure or services such as water supply or sewage disposal systems any different from those serving the surrounding area."

Yes, we know some of the older such areas, like Preston, etc., are pretty large and probably were that way before the State passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) ~30 years ago.

Our research here has shown us that nearly all these Rural Area NB Districts have been in existence for a long, long time and, basically / typically have no Mixed-Use, with the exception of all those on Vashon. This strengthens our push to not allow *NEW* Mixed-Use in KC Code for Rural Area NB Districts going forward. That said, we are concerned some might seek to keep Mixed-Use here, while possibly reducing the density. We do not believe that makes sense, as Mixed-Use has no place in the Rural Area and, even if it did, low densities would render such Mixed-Use, more or less, impractical.

The other problem is that it appears King County has tried to shoehorn every one of these nearly 30 locations into *one category*: Rural Area NB Districts. However, there are vast differences within that one category not recognized in the Code. For example, some:

1. Border on the UGB (or are very nearby) and, thus, serve mainly Urban folks.
2. Consist of a Gas Station, a General Store, or a Restaurant.
3. Are very isolated, thus serving rural neighbors (or hikers, etc.) exclusively.
4. Were the original Town prior to incorporation, but were excluded.

As part of our research, we used the following list found in the ERP (p. 3-34):

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

***Rural Area—Neighborhood Business Districts
(listed by Community Service Areas)***

Bear Creek/Sammamish

Cottage Lake (no. end of Avondale Rd)—**NO MIXED USE**
Redmond-Fall City Rd/236th Ave NE—**NO MIXED USE**

Four Creeks/Tiger Mountain

Issaquah-Hobart Rd/SE Tiger Mountain Rd—**MIXED USE UNDER CONSTRUCTION**
SE Renton- Issaquah Rd and 164th Ave SE—**MULTIPLE BUSINESSES (PLUS A HOME)**
SE 128th Street/164th Ave SE—**MULTIPLE BUSINESSES**

Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River

Renton-Maple Valley Rd SE/State Route 18—**NO MIXED USE**
Ravensdale—**MULTIPLE SMALL BUSINESSES—NO MIXED USE**
Hobart—**SINGLE STORE & POST OFFICE—NO MIXED USE**
Kangley—**SINGLE PARCEL, LOOKS TO BE A RESIDENCE**
Kanasket—**TWO PARCELS, LOOK LIKE TWO HOME-BASED BUSINESSES**

Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County

Preston—**LARGE BUSINESS COMPLEX—NO MIXED USE**
Timberlane Village—**MORE OF A “DESTINATION RESORT,” RATHER THAN A NB**
Baring—**COUNTRY STORE—NO MIXED USE**

Southeast King County

Enum-BD Rd SE/SE GV Rd—**TWO PARCELS (ONE OWNER?), NURSERY (PLUS A HOME)**
Cumberland—**MIXED-USE—MULTIPLE SMALL BUSINESSES WITH HOUSING ABOVE**
Krain's Corner—**RESTAURANT—DWELLING ABOVE**
Newaukem—(If this is SR 169 / SE 416th St) **STOP & SHOP—NO MIXED USE**
228th Ave SE/SR-164—**HOMES, BUT BUSINESSES ON SW CORNER ON A-35 LAND**

Vashon-Maury Island

ALL THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS HAVE HAD MIXED USE FOR QUITE SOME TIME

Burton
Dockton
Tahlequah
Portage
Heights Dock

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Jack's Corner
Valley Center
Vashon Service Center
Vashon Heights
Maury Island Service Center

In these we did find some dwelling(s), but usually they were simply private homes. Again, other than on Vashon, which has unique circumstances, there were no Mixed-Uses consisting of businesses combined with apartments, townhouses, condos, etc.—with one glaring exception: Issaquah-Hobart Rd/SE Tiger Mountain Rd NB District where new mixed-use buildings are under construction and was the genesis of our original concern in 2017.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.06.196

p. 31, Section 71

Current Code—Defines “*clustering*” ... Clustering: development of a subdivision at the existing zoned density that reduces the size of individual lots and creates natural open space for the preservation of critical areas, parks and permanent open space or as a reserve for future development.

Proposed change—Replaces using clustering for preservation of “*parks and permanent open space*” with “*resource land for forestry or agriculture.*”

Comments—We are concerned with this change in clarification. The long-term focus should be more on parks and permanent open space to preserve the rapidly decreasing habitat and habitat corridors in KC. Yes, forestry and agriculture are good and useful, but are managed to make money for the landowners, vs. parks and open space that our collective community assets that better support wildlife habitat and natural ecosystems, which also have major benefits to the community and can also generate substantial rural economic activity, but in a more collective way, vs. benefiting only a few – in this way it is an *equity* issue.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.06.XXX
p. 37, Section 90

and

KC Code 21A.08.040
Recreational and cultural land uses.
p. 43, Section 103

Proposed change—Adds a new section to KC Code 21A.06 to define "*outdoor resource-based recreation activities*."

Intent/rationale—To support new destination resort regulations proposed in K.C.C. 21A.08.040.

Comments—We agree such resorts should not be allowed in RB and UR zones and should be resource-based, *but* we are unsure what "*resource-based*" means in this particular context ???

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.06.XXX

p. 38, Section 91 and Section 92

Proposed changes—Adds a new section to KC Code 21A.06 to define "*permanent supportive housing*." Adds a new section to K.C.C. Chapter 21A.06 to define "*recuperative housing*."

Comments—The "*permanent supportive housing*" subcategory of "*emergency housing*" needs better definition, so that it does not allow mobile homes or Recreational Vehicle camps in the Rural Area – which *already* are a big problem. "*(R)ecuperative housing*" also needs to be better defined, as many in the Rural Area have complained about a site on the Enumclaw Plateau permitted for rehabilitation of sex offenders.

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KC Code 21A.08.030—Residential Land Uses p. 40, Section 102

We offer the following changes:

Existing Code	Proposed Revised Code	Rationale
21A.08.030—Residential land uses. Condition P9. Only as accessory to the permanent residence of the operator, and: a. Serving meals shall be limited to paying guests; and b. The number of persons accommodated per night shall not exceed five, except that a structure that satisfies the standards of the International Building Code as adopted by King County for R-1 occupancies may accommodate up to ten persons per night.	21A.08.030—Residential land uses. Condition P9. Only as accessory to the permanent primary residence of the business owner and operator, and: a. Serving meals shall be limited to paying guests; and b. The number of persons accommodated per night shall not exceed five, except that a structure that satisfies the standards of the International Building Code as adopted by King County for R-1 occupancies may accommodate up to ten persons per night.	Bed & Breakfasts (B&B's) are permitted in the RA zone under condition P9. This change is proposed under the same rationale we provided in our proposed changes to KC Code Title 21A.30.085 and 21A.30.090 Home occupations and Home Industry . We are seeing an increasing trend where people set up businesses at sites where they do not live. In some cases, we see where residential use is abandoned altogether. The code's intent is to allow for people to operate businesses at their place of residence, with limitations to achieve compatibility with Rural Area zoning. Owner residency is intended to be a <i>precondition</i> for such uses in these zones. This is because people usually treat their property and neighbors differently (better) when they actually live at the site. Plus, Rural Area roads are being turned into <i>de facto</i> strip mall corridors, as businesses set up in what used to be residences because it's cheaper than being inside the UGA. This proposed change will ensure that permitted commercial uses remain secondary to the site's primary use as a residence by the business' owner/operator.

KC Code 21A.08.030—Residential Land Uses (Duplexes, Triplexes, and Fourplexes) pp. 40-43, Section 102

Proposed changes—*"Limits mixed-use developments ... in the rural area on historically designated sites."*

Comments—We do not understand why Duplexes, Triplexes, and Fourplexes would be allowed *"in the rural area on historically designated sites."* We also wonder how many National Register of Historic Places actually exist in the RA zone that would possibly qualify for such buildings.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.08.040
pp. 43-44, Section 103

Proposed change—Adds new conditions for destination resorts. Removes allowance for designation resorts in UR and RB zones.

Comments—We support *new* **Development Condition 30**; however, we request the addition of *subparagraph i.*, which was included in the Public Review Draft:

"i. A destination resort application must demonstrate that public facilities are adequate to support the proposed use in accordance with K.C.C. chapter 21A.28."

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

KC Code 21A.08.080
pp. 46-48, Section 107

Proposed change—Removes condition use permit requirements for wood products.

Intent/Rationale—Streamlines permitting process for wood products to align with existing Comprehensive Plan support in policy **R-627** to *"ensure that regulations applying to Rural Area and forest areas do not discourage the establishment of sawmills and other wood product businesses and services."*

Comments—To remove conditional-use permits for wood products is wrong and would allow stump grinding and stockpiling activities, such as had been proposed by Enumclaw Recycling Center (located on Franklin Rd north of the City of Enumclaw, just south of the Green River Gorge), and now by same owners site in Oceola that is now partially permitted because they say they produce a mix of coarse chips of bark and wood that is called "hog fuel." It would also tend to allow facilities such as Buckley Recycling Center (located in the Rural/Agricultural area just north of the City of Auburn), which, due to well over a decade of litigation between it and King County, the county is well aware of the environmental and other adverse issues of allowing large scale stump grinding, wood waste processing, and stockpiling in agriculturally zoned lands.

Proposed change—Adds new conditions for materials processing use.

Intent/Rationale—Changes to the conditions for materials processing use are proposed in response to a docket request. Materials processing uses, which can include both organic and mineral processing, often source materials from resource and rural areas. Generally, it is, and can be, beneficial, both economically and environmentally, for these types of facilities to be in the rural area when properly regulated and mitigated. By locating closer to the resources, these uses can avoid unneeded increased transportation costs and related emissions impacts by reducing the number of truck and vehicle trips and miles travelled. So, no changes are proposed to limit the locations of these sites. However, various changes are proposed to impose additional regulations for materials processing uses, such as disallowing retail sales of the materials on the site; as an accessory to a mineral use, only allow processing of onsite and/or nearby (within 3 miles of the site) materials; and additional requirements for sites in the rural area, including storage limitations (up to 3,000 cubic yards), ensuring code compliance requirements (landscaping, nonresidential land use standards, and grading permits), and requiring materials to primarily be from rural and resource lands to ensure it is a rural-dependent use.

Comments—As stated ion the *"Intent/Rationale"* above, this was in response to *our* Docket Request (2022, #8), but the proposed changes do not go far enough. Material processing needs to be better defined, and limited to Agricultural-zoned, and not Forest-zoned areas. There are really no by-product materials from forest lands that need to be processed, aside from the lumber itself. The by-products are from the industrial lumber mill and not the harvesting activities. Agricultural-zoned areas are

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

different, where there are by products taken offsite from farms. Consequently, we suggest the processing of agricultural materials stay close to the source and remain on agricultural-zoned land and be limited to scale to agricultural needs and use consistent with the character of the surrounding land use – as the valid operations would propose. Allowing material processing in Forest-zoned areas will lead to improper land use, code violations, environmental damage and increased fire risk for the forest and people living there.

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KC Code 21A.22.060

p. 61, Section 135

Proposed change—Limits uses, buildings, structures, storage of equipment, and stockpile of materials to only those directly related to an approved mineral extraction use, reclamation plan, or materials processing use.

Comments—This was in response to *our* Docket Request (2022, #9), but the proposed changes do *not* even go as far as those proposed in the Public Review Draft for the following Development Condition:

B. On sites larger than twenty acres, activities shall occur in phases to minimize environmental impacts. The size of each phase shall be determined during the review process in accordance with the following:

- 1. On sites one hundred acres or less, each phase shall not be more than twenty-five acres; and*
- 2. On sites more than one hundred acres, each phase shall not be more than fifty acres. Phases that include areas of greater than twenty-five acres shall have setbacks double those specified in subsections E and F of this section.*
- 3. A third phase shall not be initiated until reclamation of the first phase is substantially complete. No more than two phases shall be allowed to operate at a time without previous phases having been reclaimed.*
- 4. Minor variation from these standards may be requested and approved as part of the permit review process where it is demonstrated to be needed or beneficial for compliant operation of the mineral extraction based on regulations for protection of water quality, environmental conditions or safety;*

We call for items 1. thru 4. to be added to **KC Code 21A.22.060** Site design standards. B. and the following be added as item 5.:

- 5. Any significant revision of the mining plan or schedule, or ownership, will require the operation to reapply for a permit to conduct mining on the site, including the opening of a Public Comment period. If the revised permit to conduct mining is denied, then the operation must begin reclamation-only activities within one year of such determination.]*

The original purpose for our 2022 Docket Item was to prevent the typical practice of delaying reclamation by updating mine plans/expansions, and then delaying long enough either to go bankrupt or limit liability by selling site/business to “another” party. A good complement to the above proposed Code changes is to include a statement that major changes in the Reclamation Plan (or Schedule) will require a new application to conduct mining (with accompanying public comment, etc.). The presumption is that such a new application is an opportunity to fully review mining on a site like it was a new mine proposal. In fact, **KC Code 21A.22.050** Periodic review. should apply to reclamation, not just permitted extraction activities.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

To be clear, we need stronger protections around this area of mine reclamation/disposal. Currently, under existing Code and how it is interpreted in practice, we are living with the harmful practice of using mining sites, especially former or abandoned mining sites, effectively as waste-disposal facilities where, unfortunately, the standards that are supposed to provide a safeguard are routinely ignored by both the permitting agency and the site owner/operator. This appears to mainly be the case to maximize profits to the site owner/operator. Compounding all of this, is the lack of Periodic Review per Code (also a focus of our 2022 Docket Item), as KC DLS-Permitting simply doesn't have the person-power to do it, as related to us by Jim Chan on 10/26/21: *"We have had significant staff turnover tied to this body of work and are working on a plan to back into alignment with new staff."*

As a result, we see the need for more opportunities for Public Comment and Review, especially when there is a proposed change of activity and/or ownership. We have seen too many times when either has precipitated unanticipated problems and the Public is the last to know, but is the most affected. Although the existing KC Code 21A.22.060 Site design standards language could be regarded as already containing this requirement, as generally public comment is "required" as part of the permitting process, the requirement isn't explicit. We already know from the debacle around the Reserve Silica in Ravensdale (note: from the start of 2023 we have an ongoing dialogue with KC DLS-Permitting's Deputy Director, Mark Rowe, and Code Enforcement Manager, Thomas Campbell, on this particular site and operation) matter that such changes to permits for these types of properties and situations are done without any public notice, involvement or input. We believe such language is the minimum necessary to address such questionable activities by mine property owners and Permitting.

King County can never allow the environmental debacle and legal quagmire that occurred this in mid 2023 at the Reserve Silica site in Ravensdale to happen again! Forty acres were illegally clearcut, then 33 truckloads of contaminated fill from the Tacoma ASARCO Superfund site were illegally dumped on the clearcut land and illegally graded. We alerted King County DLS-Permitting about the clearcut and provided photographic evidence—we were ignored! The Federal EPA and the State DOE alerted King County of the dumping of the contaminated fill—extremely embarrassing! As King County does little inspection and little code enforcement, none of this should be a surprise.

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KC Code 21A.30.085

p. 72, Section 165

Current Code—Establishes requirements for home occupations in Agricultural (A), Forest (F), and RA zones.

Proposed Change—Removes allowance for nonresident employees who report to the site but primarily provide services off-site.

Intent/Rationale—Change to employee standards is proposed as the current provision is not enforceable.

Comments—If this means having such employees is *not* allowed, we support this; but if it allows home occupations to have such employees, we do not. A construction company and associated equipment should *not* be part of a valid home occupation activity.

We support this change, yet it is just one of several important changes we propose for the **21A.30.085 Home Occupation** and **21A.30.090 Home Industry** codes. These codes were significantly loosened circa 2008 and, combined with liberal interpretations of imprecise code language by the Department of Local Services—Permitting Division, have had predictable effects of increasing the scale and infringement of these activities on surrounding neighborhoods.

The following proposed changes (in tables on the next three pages) are intended to put the “*Home*” back in **Home Occupations**. The primary use for such properties should be residential in RA zones and residential/agricultural in the A zones. These changes will allow for residents to operate neighborhood-compatible businesses in their houses and on properties that are their actual places of residence. This is in response to the increasing trend of business owners buying or leasing residential properties in the Rural Areas in which they do *not* reside, but with the sole intent of running businesses there, subordinating residential use or abandoning it altogether. If these proposed changes are adopted, they will provide an enforceable limits on such businesses.

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Existing Code	Proposed Revised Code	Rationale
21A.30.085 Home occupations in the A, F and RA zones. In the A, F and RA zones, residents of a dwelling unit may conduct one or more home occupations as accessory activities, under the following provisions:	21A.30.085 Home occupations in the A, F and RA zones. In the A, F and RA zones, residents of a dwelling unit may conduct one or more home occupations as accessory activities, under the following provisions:	
	<u>A. The dwelling unit is the primary residence of the owner and operator of the home occupation business.</u>	NEW. This clause is designed to put the "Home" back in Home Occupation activities. There are numerous cases of an entity buying or leasing a residential property and using it to site a commercial business, at which the owner/operator does not live. Sometimes the house is rented to an employee to satisfy existing code. In some these cases, this appears to be an arrangement on paper only to satisfy the "residents" clause. Standards would need to be identified for what proof of residency is required to meet this condition.
A. The total floor area of the dwelling unit devoted to all home occupations shall not exceed twenty percent of the dwelling unit.	<u>AB.</u> The total floor area of the dwelling unit devoted to all home occupations shall not exceed twenty percent of the dwelling unit. <u>Attached garages are not considered part of the dwelling unit ground floor area for purposes of the provisions for home occupations.</u>	SOME NEW. This clarifies what portion of a house may be used for the calculation of total floor area.
	<u>C. In addition to the provisions in 21A.30.085 B., one garage or outbuilding can be used for activities associated with the home occupation(s). The floor area of the garage or outbuilding used for all home occupation activities shall not exceed fifty percent of the ground floor area of the dwelling unit.</u>	NEW. In addition to what is allowed inside the dwelling unit, this clause allows for "activities" to be conducted in a garage or detached structure. It ties the scale of activities to the size of the dwelling unit to keep activities in scale with the developed property.
B. Areas within garages and storage buildings shall not be considered part of the dwelling unit and may be used for activities associated with the home occupation;	<u>BD.</u> Additional areas within garages and storage buildings shall not be considered part of the dwelling unit and may be used for storage of goods associated with the home occupation. <u>Areas used for storage shall not exceed fifty percent of the ground floor area of the dwelling unit.</u>	SOME NEW. This clause allows for additional space to be used for storage of goods. It ties the scale of activities to the size of the dwelling unit to keep storage area in scale with the developed property.
	<u>E. Services to patrons shall be by appointment only or provided off-site.</u>	NEW. This was taken directly from pre-existing code. It was removed in the 2000's along with other changes which we warned would result in negative unintended consequences, as indeed they did. This provision should be added back in to avoid allowing drive-up retail sales businesses to pop up in residential neighborhoods.

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Existing Code	Proposed Revised Code	Rationale
<p>C. Total outdoor area of all home occupations shall be permitted as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For any lot less than one acre: Four hundred forty square feet; and 2. For lots one acre or greater: One percent of the area of the lot, up to a maximum of five thousand square feet. 	<p>C.F. Total outdoor area of all home occupations shall be permitted as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For any lot less than one acre: Four hundred forty square feet; and 2. For lots one acre to five acres, one percent of the area of the lot, up to a maximum of two thousand square feet; and 3. For lots five acres or greater: One percent of the area of the lot, up to a maximum of five thousand square feet. 	<p>SOME NEW. Lots under 5 acres tend to be located in neighborhoods which are more residential in character. This provision will reduce the visual intrusion on neighbors and works in harmony with subsection O.</p>
<p>E. A home occupation or occupations is not limited in the number of employees that remain off-site. Regardless of the number of home occupations, the number of nonresident employees is limited to no more than three who work on-site at the same time and no more than three who report to the site but primarily provide services off-site;</p>	<p>E.H. A home occupation or occupations is not limited in the number of employees that remain off-site. Regardless of the number of home occupations, the number of nonresident employees is limited to no more than three two who work on-site at the same time and no more than three who report to the site but primarily provide services off-site;</p>	<p>SOME NEW. The number of employees has a direct effect on the scale and intrusiveness of a business activity. It is very difficult to monitor the number of employees in any case, but even more so with such fuzzy distinctions as to who works primarily on-site, who's there on what day, etc. Reducing the number and simplifying the distinctions will improve accountability.</p>
<p>L. The home occupation or occupations may use or store vehicles, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The total number of vehicles for all home occupations shall be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. for any lot five acres or less: two; b. for lots greater than five acres: three; and c. for lots greater than ten acres: four; 2. The vehicles are not stored within any required setback areas of the lot or on adjacent streets; and 3. The parking area for the vehicles shall not be considered part of the outdoor storage area provided for in subsection C. of this section. (Ord. 19030 § 22, 2019: Ord. 17710 § 11, 2013: Ord. 17539 § 61, 2013: Ord. 17191 § 48, 2011: Ord. 16323 § 2, 2008: Ord. 15606 § 20, 2006). 	<p>L.O. The home occupation or occupations may use or store vehicles, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The total number of vehicles for all home occupations shall be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. for any lot five acres or less: two; b. for lots greater than five acres: three; and c. for lots greater than ten acres: four; 2. The vehicles are not stored within any required setback areas of the lot or on adjacent streets; and 3. The parking area for the storage of vehicles shall not be considered part of the outdoor storage area provided for in subsection C. of this section. (Ord. 19030 § 22, 2019: Ord. 17710 § 11, 2013: Ord. 17539 § 61, 2013: Ord. 17191 § 48, 2011: Ord. 16323 § 2, 2008: Ord. 15606 § 20, 2006). 	<p>SOME NEW. Storage of vehicles can be the most visually intrusive elements of a business. As the use of outdoor spaces is permitted for "activities and storage," vehicle storage is often the most impactful outdoor evidence of a business. This works in harmony with subsection F.</p>

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Existing Code	Proposed Revised Code	Rationale
21A.30.090 Home industry. A resident may establish a home industry as an accessory activity, as follows:	21A.30.090 Home industry. A resident may establish a home industry as an accessory activity, as follows:	
A. The site area is one acre or greater;	A. The site area is one acre or greater;	No change.
	<u>B. The dwelling unit is the primary residence of the owner and operator of the home occupation business.</u>	NEW. This clause is designed to put the "Home" back in Home Industry activities. There are numerous cases of an entity buying or leasing a residential property and using it to site a commercial business, at which the owner/operator does not live. Sometimes the house is rented to an employee to satisfy existing code. In some these cases, this appears to be an arrangement on paper only to satisfy the "residents" clause. Standards would need to be identified for what proof of residency is required to meet this condition.
B. thru K.	Simply re-letter to C. thru L.	

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KC Code 21A.32.100

p. 73, Section 167

Current Code—Establishes when a TUP is required, including for uses not otherwise permitted in the zone and that can be made compatible for a period of up to 60 days per year.

Proposed change—Replaces 60 days with 24 days.

Comments—Please see our Comments under KC Code 21A.32.129 immediately following this subsection. Also, we believe that wineries, breweries, distilleries should be *excluded* from TUPs.

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KC Code 21A.32.120 pp. 73 - 75, Section 169

Current Code—Establishes standards for temporary uses, including: Limiting events to no more than 60 days per 365-day period and Allowing for annual renewals of TUPs for 5 consecutive years.

Proposed Changes: Changes 60 days to 24 days. Limits uses to no more than 4 days per month and no more than 3 days per week; Limits uses to only occur six months out of the year; and Annual TUP renewals are reduced to up to 4 years, and requires the use to demonstrate compliance with current development regulations with each renewal.

Intent/Rationale: ... Changes for the number uses allowed per month and per week are intended to limit grouping of multiple events in short amount of time, such as having a use that occurs non-stop over the course of 24 consecutive days. This change would help limit intensity of events and associated impacts. Changes on number months per year that uses are allowed in is to limit, for example, an event that happens at the same time each month, every month of the year, for 5 years (as allowed for annual TUP renewals elsewhere in the chapter), which is more akin to a permanent use than a temporary one. Changes to renewal requirements are intended to increase oversight, to ensure impacts are appropriately accounted for, and ensure any applicable new regulatory requirements adopted after initial TUP approval are met.

Comments—Although these changes are welcome, please note, that in the Public Review Draft, we proposed changes that would place “*Events*” in a separate category such that places with a few events per year would be allowed and those essentially run “*Event Centers*” in the RA and A zones as a business under a Temporary-Use Permit (TUP) would be disallowed. Currently, TUPs allow “*up to sixty days a year*” (e.g., ~7 months of Saturdays and Sundays, which clearly is not “*temporary*.” The proposed changes above reduce that limit to no more than *twenty-four days a year* (6 mo x 4 da/mo). While this proposed change is a step, in the right direction, we still firmly believe that “*temporary*” should be no more than “*ten days a year*” (e.g., 5 Summer weekends).

“*Businesses*” that hold events, such as weddings and family or group reunions, should not be granted a TUP, but rather should fall under **Title 21A.06.958 Recreation, active, as large-scale gatherings or social events**. In addition, **Title 21A.08.040 Recreational/cultural land uses** already allows certain activities in the Rural Area either outright or with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). A CUP must be consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) rules for the Rural Area and **Title 21A.44.040** criteria. Should CUPs be sought, then there should be *real* conditions imposed and enforced.

To be frank, Event Centers do *not* belong in the Rural Area. Granting TUPs for Event Centers in the Rural Area allows *special-interest commercialization* of the Rural Area. State and County laws that protect rural and resource lands must be upheld. County actions should be consistent with its own Code, Policies, and practice and protect rural and resource lands from illegal, special-interest, and unnecessary *urban-use commercial development*. Allowing Event Centers in the Rural Area essentially grants special privileges to the few, at the expense of the many: farm businesses, rural

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residents, the environment, and taxpayers. Such urban-serving businesses belong in the UGA, not the Rural Area.

Once again, while the proposed changes are welcome, they do not go far enough and will prove useless unless they are vigorously enforced, which would require changes at the DLS-Permitting Division.

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KC Code 21A.32.XXX
p. 75, Section 170

Proposed Changes—Adds a new section to K.C.C. Chapter 21A.32 requiring temporary uses to: Be scaled based upon building occupancies, site area, access, and environmental considerations; Be limited to no more than 250 guests; Comply with building setback requirements; and Adequately provide for temporary sanitary facilities; potable water; vehicle parking, access, and traffic control; accessibility for persons with disabilities, and noise compliance.

Comments—In general, we support these changes, *but not the “limited to no more than 250 guests,”* which is far too high and translates to possibly 125 to 175 vehicles for an event, which would create big parking and traffic impacts. Also, for these changes to have any practical impact on the ground, they must be vigorously enforced, which would require changes at the DLS-Permitting Division.

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KC Code 16.82.150 thru 152, 154
pp. 102-103, SECTIONS 222.A thru E

Current Code—

- KC Code 16.82.150:** B—Establishes clearing standards for individual lots in the rural zone
KC Code 16.82.151: C—Addressing relocation of undeveloped area in adjacent lots
KC Code 16.82.152: D—Establishes clearing standards for subdivisions and short-subdivisions in the rural residential zone
KC Code 16.82.154: E—Addresses modification of clearing limits through farm management and rural stewardship plans

Proposed Changes—Repealed.

Intent/Rationale—Reflects court rulings and current case law, as directed by 2016 Comprehensive Plan Work Plan Action 5.

Comments—We have several concerns here:

1. What will replace the proposed *repealed* Code sections that deal with *clearing standards and limits*? We were told by the Executive's Office that these haven't been enforced since 2008 and that the guidance available in assorted Manuals suffice. We disagree, as guidance in Manuals is not considered code. Without specific Code, there is nothing to enforce. This simply will feed into the continuing problems King County has with enforcement, as identified by the recent KCAO Audit, which barely scratched the surface of the problem.

2. The lack of code enforcement in this regard is just one example of a larger problem we have observed in the culture of the DLS Permitting Division. The fact that it has not been doing its job to apply and enforce our zoning and development codes these past years is not an acceptable justification for continued negligence, nor for removing standards altogether. Applied across our zoning and development codes, we would be left with a free-for-all which would not bode well for protecting our resources, properties and communities from irresponsible development.

3. Code and accompanying regulations spell out what has to be done, and provide the basis for enforcement by the County. However, the County typically wouldn't take an enforcement action for someone not complying with a particular manual. Rather it would take an enforcement action against a violator for either taking an action without a required permit, or violating the permit, including by not carrying out actions or practices as specified in the relevant manual.

4. There still needs to be an underlying Code at the County level that authorizes County actions. So, for example, while the Stormwater Manual may be robust, it only lives through a related permit, where the permit must be written and enforced by an assigned agency—there has to be related authority in code that identifies the Stormwater Manual as the *governing authority* and spells out related procedures.

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Area Zoning and Land Use Studies

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Black Diamond Fire Station

[Black Diamond Fire Station](#)

We fully support the following **Conclusion** and **Recommendation**.

pp. 12-13:

III. Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Conclusion

The site does not meet the requirements to allow extension of sewer service to the rural area or for addition to the Urban Growth Area. The current septic system, and the ability to build a new system if needed, meets both current and future plans for operation of the fire station.

B. Recommendation

No changes are recommended.

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Carnation Urban Growth Area Exchange
[Carnation Urban Growth Area Exchange](#)

Although it is stated on p. 16 that “*No public comments were received on this item,*” we submitted substantial comments in July 2023 in response to the Public Review Draft. We include those comments below:

Specific Comments

We understand this is a difficult issue. On the one hand the City of Carnation apparently does not support removing the site from its UGA or preserving it from urban uses without having land added to its UGA as a replacement. Such a “*swap*” would constitute a *UGA Exchange*.

However, we see no reason to create a *UGA Exchange* here, as the County already has robust, time-tested programs in place to handle such issues: *Four-to-One* and *Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)*. For example, a TDR program could be explored within the City, where TDRs on the property in question could make something else within Carnation denser. This would appear to be a better solution than a *UGA Exchange*, where all proposed properties would have constraints. We support a solution that saves the agricultural use, but does not hurt the integrity of the adjacent Rural Area.

We would like to see this land protected and added to Tolt MacDonald Park that surrounds it on two sides and believe local citizens and the County want this as well, as it makes great sense. However, the idea of a *UGA Exchange* would need to be looked at carefully, as the devil would be in the details and it would need to be very limited as to where and how it might be used. In general, we do not support the concept of *UGA Exchanges* and are concerned about setting a precedent that could harm the integrity of the UGA elsewhere in the County.

Consequently, we support the following **Conclusion** and **Recommendation**:

p. 16:

III. Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Conclusion

The City has indicated that it does not support removing the site from the UGA or otherwise preserving it from urban development without replacement land being added to its UGA. Such a change would be dependent on whether the GMPC recommends creating a UGA exchange program as noted above. However, the proposal does not meet the criteria for an UGA exchange under the state law. Should the CPPs be changed to allow for use of such an exchange program in King County, the proposal would not be eligible.

B. Recommendation

No changes are recommended.

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Kent Pet Cemetery
[Kent Pet Cemetery](#)

No comments.

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Maple Valley Industrial
[Maple Valley Industrial](#)

We support the following **Conclusion** and **Recommendation**:

p. 17:

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

The development conditions restricting uses to those that do not require a Conditional Use Permit limit the types of uses that would likely conflict with the surrounding Rural Area. This condition is the same as the rural industry standards contained in the code. The condition concerning a "master drainage plan" is also redundant to current code provisions. The combination of these conditions treats this site as if it is in the Rural Area, which is appropriate given its location and surrounding environment.

The City of Maple Valley does not have plans to annex this site and it is not represented in their Comprehensive Plan for growth. Further, the site currently lacks urban services and infrastructure adequate for an urban industrial site, has environmental constraints, and is surrounded on three sides by rural residential properties. It also abuts an agricultural parcel, (use and zoning A-10) which may create further incompatibilities.

No progress has been made in over 20 years to urbanize it, improve infrastructure, or make it suitable for urban or industrial development.

This site's lack of infrastructure, critical areas designations, proximity to rural residential development, a regional recreation trail corridor and the Cedar River habitat, strongly suggest a Rural Area designation and zoning is appropriate.

Recommendation

This study recommends the following for parcels 1622069091, 1522069034, and 1522069036:

- *removal from the UGA;*
- *change the land use designation from "I" (Industrial) to "ra" (Rural Area);*
- *change the zoning classification from I (industrial) to RA-5 (Rural Area, one home per five acres); and*
- *removal of TR-P17 from the site and repeal from the zoning atlas.*

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Snoqualmie Interchange Area Zoning and Land Use Study [Snoqualmie Interchange](#)

We have followed this issue for many years including fully participating in the Growth Management Planning Council's recent "4:1 Program Review."

p. 1

We propose the following **addition**:

I. Overview

The Scope of Work [[Motion 16142](#)] for the 2024 update to the [[King County Comprehensive Plan](#)] (KCCP) (2024 Update) includes the following direction:

Conduct a land use and zoning study for the Snoqualmie Interchange, and area north of I-90 impacted by the new Interstate 90/Highway 18 Interchange. The study should include, at a minimum, review and recommendation of the appropriate zoning for properties abutting the urban growth area boundary. The study should include the properties west of Snoqualmie Way along SE 99th that could have access to urban services, including whether the area should be included inside the urban growth area, and should recognize and protect the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic byway on Interstate 90 as well as provide appropriate conservation mitigation via use of the 4:1 program and its requirements for any newly allowed development. The land use and zoning study and land use designations and zoning classifications should focus on solutions for the northwest corner while planning a vision for the properties on the northeast portions abutting the urban growth area. The study should include a review of whether affordable housing and/or behavioral health support services and/or facilities could locate in this area. The study should also ensure potential trail connections for regional trails and adhere to current King County policies. The Executive should collaborate with the City of Snoqualmie, Affected Tribes, Washington state DOT, DNR, property owners, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, regional partners and the community.

pp. 1-2:

Also, we have questions related to the following that immediately follows the Scope of Work above:

"Per Footnote 58 found in the Scope of Work: "This request is like a required study in Chapter 11 of the KCCP, to be done with the Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County Community Service Area Subarea Plan. The County intends to complete the work in Chapter 11 and this scope of work with the Subarea Plan. The entire text is included in the scope of work for context, but if the study requirement in this scope of work is completed with the Subarea Plan, it need not be included in

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the 2024 update." Given this, both requirements are addressed in the 2024 Update and not in the Subarea Plan."

This wording is very confusing, especially the last two sentences, and should be clarified. For example, is it stating that this study (34 pp and already complete) is *part* of the subarea plan?

pp. 33-34:

We strongly support the **Conclusion and Recommendation** below, as we did during the Growth Management Planning Council's (GMPC's) 4:1 *Program Review* in late 2022 and early 2023.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, the potential level of development in the study area should remain low intensity to be consistent with the surrounding rural area, to not create new impacts and growth pressure by conversion to urban areas or more intensive rural uses, and to not create new policy or precedent that would incentivize rural to urban conversions in other parts of the county. This furthers the goals of the GMA and Regional Growth Strategy to accommodate growth first and foremost in the urban areas, avoid the conversion of rural lands, protect natural resources, and preserve rural character.

The study area is located in the rural area, adjacent to the UGA and the incorporated limits of the City of Snoqualmie but ineligible to be added to the UGA by long-standing policy. It has been reviewed several times over two decades for inclusion in the UGA, redesignation, and reclassification. Each time, the recommendation has been to maintain the UGA boundary and current land use designation and zoning classification of the area. This has been the conclusion at both the local level through the Comprehensive Plan and, more recently, at the countywide level through GMPC action on the CPPs.

The study area is largely vacant, with the exception of the adaptive reuse of a former recreational vehicle campground as a base of operations for KCSARA. This use operates under current zoning and serves activities that occur largely in the rural and natural resource lands accessed to the east of the study area. This use fits the rural setting because it is low intensity and serves activities occurring in the rural and natural resource lands of the county.

The current RA-5 zoning allows for low-density residential uses that could be clustered as necessary to preserve and protect the numerous streams and wetlands that exist in the area and still remain consistent with rural area character. Additional land uses may be considered as permitted, conditional, and special uses in accordance with K.C.C. development regulations, as discussed above. Affordable housing is unlikely to be located in the study area. Regardless of the potential uses that may occur in the study area, special attention should be paid to the viewshed of the area, critical areas, as well as adequate spaces for potential use as a regional trail.

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The zoning, similar to elsewhere in the study area, supports low-density residential and rural dependent uses. Any intensification of uses in this area beyond what is contemplated by the Rural Area land use designation has the potential to negatively impact the planned function of the imminent improvements to the Snoqualmie Interchange, as well as impact the viewshed from the highway looking north.

Protection of the northwest portion of the study area is an important factor in protecting the forested visual character of the Mountains to Sound National Scenic Byway on I-90. The northeast corner of the study area, abutting the UGA, contains numerous critical areas, and provides a forested gateway into the City of Snoqualmie. This area still provides a significant visual and sound buffer for the residential neighborhoods inside the City.

B. Recommendation

This study recommends that the UGA be maintained in its current location (consistent with current countywide policy) and that the study area keep its Rural Area land use designation and RA-5 zoning classification.

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Sustainable Communities & Housing Projects Demonstration Project
[Sustainable Communities and Housing Projects Demonstration Project](#)

No comments.

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CSA Subarea Plans

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Vashon-Maury Island CSA Subarea Plan Amendments (Attachment H)

[Vashon-Maury Island CSA Subarea Plan Amendments \(Attachment H\)](#)

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment.

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Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County CSA Subarea Plan

[Attachment B – Snoqualmie Valley/Northeast King County Subarea Plan](#)

Some Joint Team member organizations and Rural Technical Consultants participated in aspects of the Subarea Plan. We consider it to have been well done with extensive efforts made to engage members of the Public. We believe findings of the Subarea Plan strongly support and echo our own Joint Team comments herein urging continued and greater protection of Rural Area, Agricultural lands, and Forestlands with no increase in urban lands, urban-serving businesses, and a priority on sustaining a healthy rural ecosystem and lifestyle.

However, we are disappointed in *Chapter 8 (Transportation)* for its lack of useful information, unlike other chapters of the SVNE Subarea Plan. Lamentably, this is unchanged from the draft Subarea Plan released in June 2023 as part of the Public Review Draft. Extensive recommendations for improvement of the draft plan were submitted last July by one of our affiliated members, Michael Birdsall, a retired transportation planner with extensive experience preparing such plans pursuant to the State Growth Management Act. He submitted his July comments independently, but we were in full agreement with them. We were dismayed to see that *Chapter 8 (Transportation)* made no changes from the June 2023 draft plan – not even to correct a map error he had pointed out that mis-identified a certain county road as a state highway. Also, by way of comparison, our review of the Vashon Subarea Plan shows it has a much more detailed Transportation Chapter. So we are mystified as to why transportation was given so little attention in the SVNE Subarea Plan. The comments Mr. Birdsall submitted earlier remain fully valid and point the way to making significant improvements to Chapter 8, so we now **re-submit** those same comments below. We look forward to seeing substantial expansion of this chapter before it is adopted later this year.

Chapter 8 – Transportation - contains six pages of description of existing conditions, but only one page of forward-looking material (Community Priorities and related Policies). This chapter is lamentably brief. A plan should give citizens and public officials much more information about what's ahead, whether general or specific.

The description of existing facilities and services is long on description of state highways and short on description of county roads. There is only one map in this section – depicting state highways and the outline of city/town boundaries, but not county roads. There should at least be an additional map of county roads depicting functional classifications, and recent traffic volumes on key roads. Additional maps could depict transit routes and services, and should also depict known information about the 20-year future from the traffic and transit forecasts by Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), which King County relies upon for countywide transportation planning. (By the way, the map of state highways shows Preston Fall City Road as part of SR 203, While the text description of that route excludes that portion.)

While community priorities identified a number of issues such as facility improvements for active transportation and transit, there is no discussion of how or when the county might deliver such improvements. I do understand the financial difficulties the county faces to maintain roads it now has,

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let alone upgrade anything. That being the “elephant in the living room”, why isn’t that information shared with the community in the subarea plan? It need not be extensive, as it could summarize the information in the countywide comprehensive plan on that subject. But citizens need to have full knowledge of the financial situation countywide and this opportunity should not be overlooked.

There is no discussion of the traffic growth issues on several heavily used rural arterials – notably Woodinville-Duvall Road, Novelty Hill Road / NE 124th Street, Avondale Road, Bear Creek Road / Mink Road, and West Snoqualmie Valley Road NE. This is remarkable, as these arterials are heavily used for commuting from outlying cities that are rapidly growing under the demands of the growth management policies of the region. Subarea residents are adversely affected by the huge volumes of intercity through traffic. In past decades Duvall and Carnation were the main drivers of traffic growth, but recently Monroe, Sultan, and Gold Bar have added greatly to the pressure on county roads to serve intercity travel. Ironically, congestion on SR 203 through Duvall is now so great that growing numbers of Snohomish County commuters are avoiding that highway and finding their way through bucolic farmland in the Tualco Valley to cross the Snoqualmie River at High Bridge, in order to take West Snoqualmie Valley Road NE down to Woodinville Duvall Road and/or Novelty Hill Road. In a perfect world these commuter flows would not be on county roads at all, but use state highways to reach their destinations. Alas, neither SR 203 to I-90, nor SR 522 to I-405, provides adequately for commuters out of Snohomish County. There should be some discussion of these problems in the subarea plan.

An over-arching concern is that the through commuter traffic that troubles area residents comes from cities, even another county, that do not contribute any tax revenue to the county road fund, yet the county puts high priority on maintaining those roads first because of the high volumes of traffic using them. So all taxpayers are not being treated equally. This is the crux of the county’s fiscal dilemma, and is well known to county officials and observant citizens. In the absence of fiscal relief from any regional or higher entities, after ten + years of pleading, I think it is time for the county to consider prioritizing its limited revenues in service of its own residents, rather than giving first priority to the freeloading commuters from other jurisdictions. That could mean applying traffic calming measures in some corridors to limit through traffic so as to shift some through traffic back to state routes, and maintaining the physical condition of local roads at least as well as the regional arterials.

One example could be to designate West Snoqualmie Valley Road NE for local service to adjacent properties only, and enforce this designation by closing the road somewhere south of the High Bridge. This would save the county considerable expense of maintaining a high volume thoroughfare on an unstable hillside, with (arguably) minimal inconvenience to the residents it serves and considerable benefit to said residents from the reduced traffic volumes. It could also mean reducing speeds on regional arterials and re-configuring intersections so that local residents enjoy better access to the arterials in peak commuter hours. This could be guided by the County’s rural level of service policy (B) which is not satisfied today at many intersections for the local access movements.

Some attention is given to transit service in the subarea, but more could be said about the potential for intercity transit to alleviate the congestion on regional arterials discussed above. In particular, what would be the benefit of a greater allocation of transit bus-hours to those corridors (beyond the status

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quo) – i.e., prioritizing transit service on the basis of reducing vehicle-miles-of-travel by cars in long-distance corridors, rather than on maximizing ridership in (more urban) short-distance corridors?

More service to active transportation is mentioned as a desire of the community, and shoulder-widening is mentioned as a suitable response. The draft plan says Road Design and Construction Standards call for roadways to have shoulders for multipurpose use (including walking and biking), and describes those standards as meeting the safety and mobility needs of the public. The fallacy here is that most county roads lack useable shoulders for active transportation, and thereby fail to meet the standard. Upgrading all 555 lane miles in the subarea to meet the standard is clearly not feasible in our lifetime, so when and where will improvements be made, and why? The table of county road assets lists road miles, lane-miles, sidewalks and bike lanes, but does not include an inventory of shoulders of suitable width for active transportation.

There is no discussion of any approach for upgrading shoulders to meet the design standard. For example a table of shoulder width needed for safety and mobility could be arrayed against traffic volumes, with the ultimate shoulder width per the design standard being associated with some high volume of traffic, and lesser width being tolerated at lower traffic volumes.

I hope that by sharing this potpourri of impressions and suggestions, a better and more useful subarea plan can be produced.

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Reports

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Middle Housing Code Study

[Middle Housing Code Study](#)

Theme

- Multi-family housing should NOT be outright allowed in Rural Towns

Specific Comments

3. Recommendations

[table of recommendations, pp. 19 thru 23 (note, there is no title on the table)]

p. 21:

Recommended Change 3. “Remove CUP requirement and outright allow duplex, triplex and fourplex throughout the R-1 to R-48 zones (including Rural Towns), with restrictions for the R-1 zone to match current regulations”

Rural Towns should not be viewed as part of the answer to affordable, middle housing. In general, Rural Towns lack transit, jobs, and do not historically include multi-family, middle housing in their character. Seeking to greatly increase population and housing in Rural Towns is not a viable solution to King County's housing needs, nor should any such proposal be entertained.

Further, this proposal to “Remove CUP requirement and outright allow duplex, triplex, and fourplex...in Rural Towns” is in conflict with the following four Policies documented in **Chapter 3, RURAL AREAS AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS:**

- R-301:** ***King County shall use all appropriate tools at its disposal to limit growth in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, such as land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives, to:***
- a. Retain ((A)) a low growth rate ((is desirable for the Rural Area, including Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers, to));***
 - b. ((e))Comply with the State Growth Management Act((;));***
 - c. ((continue preventing)) Prevent sprawl, the conversion of rural land, and the overburdening of rural services((;));***
 - d. ((f))Reduce the need for capital expenditures for rural roads((;));***
 - e. ((m))Maintain rural character((;));***

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- f. ~~((p))~~Protect the environment, and**
- g. ~~((r))~~Reduce ~~((transportation-related))~~ greenhouse gas emissions. ~~((All possible tools may be used to limit growth in the Rural Area. Appropriate tools include land use designations, development regulations, level of service standards and incentives.~~**

A low growth rate for Rural Towns does NOT include expanding multi-family housing. Further, such action would overburden rural services, NOT maintain rural character, and would only increase transportation-related greenhouse gases as new residents commute to far-away urban jobs.

- R-302 Residential development in the Rural Area should only occur ((as follows)):**
- a. In Rural Towns at a variety of densities and housing types as services an infrastructure allows, compatible with ~~((maintenance))~~ protection of historic resources and community character; and**
 - b. Outside Rural Towns at low densities compatible with traditional rural character and uses~~((,))~~; farming, forestry, and mining; and rural service levels.**

"Compatible with community character" of Rural Towns does NOT include duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes in Rural Towns, where very few, if any, such accommodations exist. Such housing is urban in nature and belongs almost exclusively inside the UGA.

- ~~((R-507))~~ R-503b Rural Towns serve as activity centers for the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands and may be served by a range of utilities and services, and may include several or all of the following land uses, if supported by necessary utilities and other services and if scaled and designed to protect rural character:**
- a. Retail, commercial, and industrial uses to serve the surrounding Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands population;**
 - b. Residential development, including single~~((-family))~~ detached on small lots as well as multifamily housing and mixed-use developments;**
 - c. Other retail, commercial, and industrial uses, such as resource industries, tourism, commercial recreation, and light industry; and**
 - d. Public facilities and services such as community services, parks, ~~((churches))~~ places of worship, schools, and fire stations.**

While **R-503b** does include multi-family housing in Rural Towns, this should only be on a very limited scale and only within the capacity of rural services, while maintaining the existing historic character of each Rural Town. The recommendation to "remove CUP requirement and outright allow" extensive multi-family housing in Rural Towns would completely change the character of these Towns and will be certain to create severe backlash from town residents (as has already occurred in Fall City with extensive single-family home development).

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R-506 *Rural Towns may contain higher-density housing than permitted in the surrounding Rural Area, and should provide affordable and resource-worker housing if ~~((utilities and other services permit))~~. Development density in Rural Towns may approach that achieved in Cities in the Rural Area, when appropriate infrastructure is available.*

We applaud the Executive's underlined proposed addition, as it is very well placed and needed, as "appropriate infrastructure" includes roads, bridges, etc. and existing and even planned infrastructure do not support such increased densities, etc.

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Vashon-Maury Island P-Suffix Conditions Report

[Vashon-Maury Island P-Suffix Conditions Report](#)

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment.

2024 KCCP Major Update Executive's Recommended Plan

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Update on Best Available Science & Critical Areas Ordinance Review

[Update on Best Available Science and Critical Areas Ordinance Review](#)

We await the King County Executive recommended version — **Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Amendment** and **Best Available Science (BAS) Report** — to be submitted to the King County Council on March 1, 2024.

The State requires updates to both BAS and the CAO. This will be the first significant review and update of CAO since 2004.

Critical areas regulations are intended to protect public health and safety and the environment. They apply to new development and land-use activities. They must be based on BAS and demonstrate “*special consideration*” for anadromous fisheries.

Critical areas include: Riparian Areas (i.e., aquatic area buffers); Wetlands; and Geologically Hazardous Areas. These constitute the areas for BAS Review.

The updated State framework calls for a requirement for no net loss (NNL) of ecological functions and values. Critical area impacts are allowed, but require compensatory mitigation. King County uses mix of regulations, programs, projects and partnerships to achieve no net loss. The new State requirements include planning for Climate Change.

County Code will be updated. There also will be non-regulatory actions including: mapping, policies, investments, design manuals, forest planning, fish passage planning, and floodplain reconnection projects.

On December 12, 2023, we received the following from Michael Murphy in the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) — Water and Land Resources Division:

- Summary of BAS in findings and policy considerations (9 pp)
- BAS-driven amendments to King County Code/CAO (185 pp) *
- BAS-driven amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (13 pp) *

**These amendments were drafted generally based on the June 2023 Public Review Draft for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and will be updated based on the Executive Recommended Plan for the final submittal to Council in March 2024.*

So far we are in general approval of all the materials we have received and consider this update well done.

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Vashon Rural Town Affordable Housing Special District Overlay Final Evaluation

[Vashon Rural Town Affordable Housing Special District Overlay Final Evaluation](#)

Please note that one of our Joint Team organizations, the *Vashon-Maury Island Community Council (V-MCC)*, due to limitations in its By-Laws, is unable to complete its review of the ERP at this early stage. We have encouraged the *V-MCC* to submit its comments separately when ready and fully approved and request the County Council strongly consider them. Consequently, we have *not* included any comments here on this part of the ERP that warrant specific *V-MCC* comment.

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Other Documents

JOINT RURAL AREA TEAM COMMENTS

Supplemental Changes to the 2024 KCCP (A-23)

No comments.

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Draft EIS

2024 KCCP Major Update Executive's Recommended Plan

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Draft EIS

[Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#)

PLEASE NOTE ALL JOINT TEAM'S DEIS COMMENTS BELOW PREVIOUSLY WERE SUBMITTED TO THE KING COUNTY SEPA OFFICIAL, IVAN MILLER, ON JANUARY 30, 2024, TO MEET THE JANUARY 31, 2024, DEADLINE FOR SAME.

We understand per **WAC 197-11-442(4)** an EIS for a comprehensive plan calls for a discussion of alternatives that:

"...shall be limited to a general discussion of the impacts of alternate proposals for policies contained in such plans, for land use or shoreline designations, and for implementation measures. The lead agency is not required under SEPA to examine all conceivable policies, designations, or implementation measures but should cover a range of such topics."

With the above in mind, while we support much of what is described in the **Extensive Change Alternative** considered, such as "Require cities to pay impact fees and implement traffic demand management strategies for large developments that impact unincorporated areas," we have **highlighted** several concerns, as detailed in the sections below.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

p. ES-4:

We have concern with the following statement in that "all unincorporated areas" includes, by definition, the Rural Area:

*"For example, the Extensive Change Alternative would seek to achieve the proposal objectives by **expanding mandatory inclusionary housing** to all unincorporated areas."*

p. ES-6:

We have concerns with the following as related to greater: (1) Land conversions in the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands and (2) Urban development in the Rural Area:

"Extensive Change Alternative

The Extensive Change Alternative includes mandatory programs and requirements to implement more substantial changes related to land use, zoning classifications, and development standards

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*compared to the Limited Change Alternative. The County would be expected to make progress in meeting its objectives to address equity, housing, and climate change and the environment under this alternative to a greater degree than under both the No Action Alternative and Limited Change Alternative. Following are **examples** of potential impacts from the Extensive Change Alternative, whether positive or negative.*

Natural Environment

*In comparison to the Limited Change Alternative, the Extensive Change Alternative would help the County to a greater degree in meeting its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and protecting water resources, farmland, critical areas, and natural habitat from development. However, the Extensive Change Alternative **could result in a greater conversion of Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands through policies that provide expanded allowances for the development of renewable energy, resorts, or industrial uses** than the other alternatives. The Extensive Change Alternative would require, rather than incentivize, active production of farmland in agricultural zones, which could result in greater localized water quality impacts within areas zoned for agriculture as compared to the Limited Change Alternative.*

Built Environment

The Extensive Change Alternative includes greater allowances for density and requirements for inclusionary housing than the Limited Change Alternative. It could increase the variety of housing options and lead to development patterns within and closer to existing urban areas and those served by public transit. This would support housing for a broader range of income levels and lead to a more efficient expansion of utility and public services than compared to the Limited Change Alternative. Substantial increases in allowances for temporary and emergency housing would support short-term housing needs, though could necessitate an increase in social service provider staff and resources.

*The Extensive Change Alternative would conserve more land as rural through the TDR Program and make more substantive updates to the Four-to-One Program requirements, including changes that are more likely to increase participation. As with the Limited Change Alternative however, the Extensive Change Alternative could alter the geographic pattern of land designated for conservation, including **greater urban development within unincorporated rural areas. Tourism, resort, and economic development-oriented buildings would be allowed to a greater degree in the Rural Area, on Natural Resource Lands, and within agricultural zones, which could result in development inconsistent with the existing character of those areas.***

2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Our comments on the **Table 2.3–1. Alternatives Examples Table** (pp. 2-5 thru 2-21) below only deal with the “Extensive Change Alternative” column.

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Equity (pp. 2-5 thru 2-8):

(p. 2-5):

“Reduce housing and business displacement and advance equity for those who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants, and/or refugees, especially those who also earn less than 80% of the AMI.”

(p. 2-5): ***“Expand inclusionary housing or require mandatory inclusionary housing in all unincorporated areas, including Rural Towns.”***

Climate Change and the Environment (pp. 2-11 thru 2-14):

(p. 2-11 to 2-12):

“Align with and advance the King County 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan to reduce GHG emissions, support sustainable and resilient communities, and prepare for climate change.”

(p. 2-12): ***“Allow additional clearing of trees and vegetation in unincorporated King County, without a permit, for habitable structures and utilities.”***

(p. 2-13 to 2-14):

“Increase the amount of land that is preserved for conservation.”

(p. 2-13): ***“Make substantive updates to the Four-to-One program requirements, such as:***

- Using joint planning area boundaries.***
- Allowing for reduced open space ratio.***
- Allowing for noncontiguous open space.***
- Allowing urban-serving facilities in the Rural Area.***
- Allowing nonresidential projects.***
- Allowing projects not likely to be timely annexed.”***

(p. 2-14): ***“Modify and expand the TDR program, such as providing bonus TDRs for sending sites that are in the Forest zone or are vacant marine shoreline without bulkheads, allowing TDR sending sites on Vashon–Maury Island, allowing urban open spaces that were previously acquired using conservation futures tax funding or urban separators to become TDR sending sites, removing specific goals for reduction of development potential outside the Urban Area, allowing TDRs to be used for duplex units in the Urban Area and Rural Towns, and allowing for payment into the TDR bank when TDRs are not available.”***

General (pp. 2-14 thru 2-21):

(p. 2-15 to 2-16):

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“Address the outcomes of the County Subarea Planning Program.”

(p. 2-16): *“Make substantive updates to the existing land use designations and zoning classifications in the Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County subarea, such as updating the allowed uses in the Fall City Business District Special District Overlay and removing some conditions to create parity with adjacent properties. For example:*

- Incentivize agritourism, including options for compatible uses (education, experiences, value-add, processing, sales).*

(p. 2-17 to 2-18):

“Update transportation policies.”

We suggest that all ten items listed under the ***“Extensive Change Alternative”*** column be moved to and replace the comparable ten items under the ***“Limited Change Alternative”*** column, as these all constitute activities we would like to see implemented.

(p. 2-18):

“Improve regulations governing rural and natural resources.”

(p. 2-18): *“Expand SEPA exemptions to the maximum allowed by WAC 197-11-800.”*

(p. 2-18 to 2-21):

“Implement land use designation and zoning classification changes.”

(p. 2-18): *“Allow resorts in additional areas with limited development conditions, beyond the existing permitted use.”*

(p. 2-18): *“Allow for additional material processing uses in additional zones, with limited development conditions.”*

(p. 2-19): *“Make more extensive changes to manufacturing and regional land uses allowed in the Industrial zone and remove the prohibition outside the UGA or revise the uses that require a conditional or special use permit.”*

(p. 2-19): *“Make more extensive changes to development standards in anticipation of new and innovative industrial uses.”*

- “Encourage rural economic development, rural economic strategies, and tourism in the rural area and on Natural Resource Lands.”*
- “Encourage agrotourism in the Rural Area, especially where there is the opportunity for compatible uses, such as educational experiences, value-added processing, and sales.”*
- “Modify the uses permitted in the Rural Area to implement rural economic development goals.”*

(p. 2-19): *“Allow mineral extraction operations with fewer development conditions.”*

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(p. 2-20): "...Consider how mixed-use developments, at an appropriate size and scale, could support rural economic and agritourism opportunities, the number of mixed use developments needed, and what uses would be allowed." **[This is in the "Limited Change Alternative" column.]**

(p. 2-20): "Allow food stores in the Rural Area zone with minimal development conditions."

(p. 2-20): "Make more extensive land use designations and zoning classification changes based on area- wide evaluation of the UGA and permitted densities, such as moving the UGA boundary and/or increasing the density and intensity of use."

(p. 2-21): "Allow for additional industrial zoning classification in the Rural Area and on Natural Resource Lands."

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Glossary

Our explanation and rationale for **recommended changes** herein are given as **[COMMENT:....]**.

p. G-6:

Community Service Area Subarea Plan

~~((With King County's initiation of the subarea planning program, the new plans will be called)) Community Service Area Subarea Plans((-These will)) apply the countywide goals of the Comprehensive Plan to smaller geographic areas consistent with the Community Service Area Program. ((Each one of King County's six rural CSAs and each of the five large Potential Annexation Areas has or is scheduled to have its own CSA Subarea Plan. CSA Subarea Plans focus on land use issues in the smaller geographies, ((as well as community identified implementation activities)) while recognizing the parameters of County funding and revenue sources.)) These plans help implement and are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policies ((and development regulations)) **and County Code.**~~

[COMMENT: Since the phrase “and development regulations” is proposed to be removed above, we recommend adding the phrase “and County Code,” as these plans must be consistent with King County Code.]

p. G-8:

Cumulative impacts

Cumulative impacts ~~for the purposes of Chapter 6, Shorelines,~~ are the sum total of the current, plus any reasonably foreseeable future disturbances to **ecological functions the environment and quality of life**, which can be impacted by both development subject to shoreline permits and by development that is not subject to permits.

[COMMENT: Why only for the shorelines?. “Cumulative impacts” are important in many other areas. For example, we have suggested that the cumulative impacts of adjacent or nearby mining sites on road infrastructure, pollution, noise, etc. be assessed and addressed. Consequently, we suggest “Cumulative impacts” pertain to anything and their impact on the environment and quality of life.]

p. G-12:

Feasible

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Feasible means ~~for the purpose of ((this)) the Shoreline Master ((p))Program~~, that an action, such as a development project, mitigation, or preservation requirement, meets all of the following conditions:

- (a) The action can be accomplished with technologies and methods that have been used in the past in similar circumstances, or studies or tests have demonstrated in similar circumstances that such approaches are currently available and likely to achieve the intended results;
- (b) The action provides a reasonable likelihood of achieving its intended purpose; and
- (c) The action does not physically preclude achieving the project's primary intended legal use.

In cases where these guidelines require certain actions unless they are infeasible, the burden of proving infeasibility is on the applicant. In determining an action's infeasibility, the reviewing agency may weigh the action's relative public costs and public benefits, considered in the short- and long-term time frames.

[COMMENT: Why only for the SMP?. “Feasible” could pertain to anything. It’s used throughout the Comprehensive Plan, e.g., at least a dozen times in Chapter 3 alone. Consequently, we suggest we we have highlighted above be removed from the first sentence.]

p. G-34:

Transportation Facilities and Services

Transportation facilities ~~and services~~ are ~~((the physical assets))~~ elements of the transportation system that are used to provide mobility. They include roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and other facilities supporting ~~((nonmotorized travel))~~ active transportation, transit, bridges, traffic signals, ramps, buses, bus garages, park and ride lots and passenger shelters. Transportation services are programs and activities to maintain the transportation system and provide information and assistance to citizens about use of the transportation system.

[COMMENT: “Transportation Services” are distinct from “Transportation Facilities” and, thus, need to be described separately.]

p. G-35:

Transportation Needs Report ~~((TNR))~~

The ~~((TNR))~~ Transportation Needs Report is a comprehensive list of ~~((recommended c))~~ County road system transportation needs ~~((through the year 2022 needed))~~ to implement serve the mobility needs of the land use element of the Comprehensive Plan. It includes transportation needs for the unincorporated King County road network ((, and some city, state, and adjacent county projects)). It does not include transit service, city and state needs, or capital needs for such related things as maintenance buildings. (See Chapter 8((:)), Transportation, and Appendix C1, Transportation Needs Report)

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[COMMENT: If our recommendations above are accepted, this definition would read as follows:

Transportation Needs Report

The Transportation Needs Report is a comprehensive list of County road system needs to serve the mobility needs of the land use element. It does not include transit service, city and state needs, or capital needs for such related things as maintenance buildings. (See Chapter 8: Transportation, and Appendix C1, Transportation Needs Report)]