



# The Justice Project

Shared Funding Commitments to Support  
Public Safety & Incarceration Reduction



# Overview

- First Year Updates
- Policy Framework
- Financial Framework
- Community and Partner Participation in Advisory Bodies
- 23 Hour Crisis Relief Center Timeline
- Jail and Behavioral Care Center Timeline



# Status of First Year Strategies (18)

Project	Resources/Response
Put sales tax on the ballot	Complete, passed with 63% of Whatcom County vote
Establish JPOP Committee	County Council currently seating JPOP Committee
Establish Justice Project Finance Advisory Board	Will be established through County/City interlocal agreement
Hire Construction Manager for 23 Hour Crisis Relief Center	Hired



# Status of First Year Strategies

Project	Resources/Response
Collect data and develop data dashboard	Secured \$245,000 grant to build out county data efforts, through JPOP
Address Workforce Shortages	Ongoing efforts in partnership with NS-BHASO; considering incentives through County BH fund
Improve coordination	County established Multiagency Coordination Opioid Response group
Provide support for MHSA and Mental Health Court	County added 1 FTE



# Status of First Year Strategies

Project	Resources/Response
Increase capacity of existing diversion programs	Considering post-overdose response model as next phase of diversion work; actively exploring housing partnerships for prosecutorial diversion program
Crisis Relief Center	Secured \$11.3M from legislature and \$4M from Whatcom County, \$1M gap remaining; expect to release service provider RFP this summer
Identify additional treatment facilities	Lummi Nation working on secure withdrawal management facility; County scoping temporary crisis relief center / re-entry center utilizing BH fund and opioid settlement funds
Increase transportation services	County added 1 FTE; will propose 1 more FTE this year



# Status of First Year Strategies

Project	Resources/Response
Supportive Housing Needs Assessment	Bid for consultant contract drafted; releasing to MRSC roster in March
Release Housing RFP	County issued \$2.7M RFP early 2024, no projects proposed focused on this population; will re-issue RFP in 2024
Make changes in court systems	Focus of IPRTF and subcommittees
State advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional \$2.3M for Crisis Relief Center</li><li>• \$12.8M for Lummi Nation Secure Withdrawal Management Facility</li></ul>



# Policy Framework



# Big Picture Commitments

1. Invest significantly in incarceration prevention programs starting now, using local, state and federal funds
2. For next 4-6 years, dedicate revenues from new sales tax to build a jail that is adequately sized
3. After 4-6 years, dedicate 50%+ of sale tax revenues to expanding incarceration prevention programs and services

Commitments are spelled out in County ordinance ([ORD 2023-039](#)) and associated Justice Project Implementation Plan.





# Adequately Sized Jail

- Size of facility: “based on a fair analysis of jail use, bookings, and population growth, taking into consideration strategic investments to avoid unnecessary incarceration”
- Future expansion: develop “mechanism for additional bed capacity if the facility reaches 85% of operational capacity;” ensure a public process for any capacity expansion
- Capacity alternatives: establish “protocols to utilize other county or regional jails to accommodate the bed needs”



# Long-Term Investment in Incarceration Prevention

After 4-6 years, a minimum of 50% of the proceeds of the **county-wide** sales use tax revenue will be used for projects prioritized in the Justice Project Implementation Plan, such as:

- expansion of incarceration reduction programs
- community-based behavioral health and SUD treatment facilities and services
- re-entry programs
- supportive housing
- diversion programs



# Funding Partnership

- Sales tax proceeds are split 60/40 between County and cities
- Bellingham receives 27%; all other cities combined – 13%
- Jail and behavioral health facility estimated to cost \$150 million
- Target debt service cost in 4-6 years: \$6.3 million (leaves 50%+ for incarceration prevention)

Meeting these commitments requires city financial participation in jail construction costs.



# Funding Partnership (cont'd)

All cities of Whatcom County indicated a willingness to participate in funding of adequately sized jail:

- “We are willing to fund virtually any new correction facility, but one thing we need as cities is capacity.”
- “We, as cities, will commit a portion or nearly all of our sales tax proceeds for 4-6 years to drive the bond amount to something under \$100 million. For this contribution, the cities expect no booking restrictions and no capital fee associated with the per diem.”

June 6, 2023, letter signed by all seven mayors



# Funding Partnership (cont'd)

- Authorizing ordinance commits all County and City of Bellingham tax proceeds to Implementation Plan projects (87%).
- Small cities can use proceeds on any eligible expense (13%).
- Future Implementation Plans will be developed with COB input through IPRTF and Finance Advisory Board.
- Draft interlocal agreement stipulates consultation with and approval from City of Bellingham for future Implementation Plans.



# Funding Partnership (cont'd)

The City of Bellingham signaled agreement with framework in authorizing ordinance.

- “We also applaud the County for committing a minimum of 50% of the ongoing County-wide sales tax to incarceration prevention and reduction services...”
- “The City of Bellingham is committed to working with the County to come to an agreement that commits to use City revenue from the proposed tax to accomplish the projects outlined in the Implementation Plan.”
- “The City looks forward to our continued coordination and shared investments as outlined in the Implementation Plan.”

June 26, 2023, letter from City of Bellingham Council and Mayor

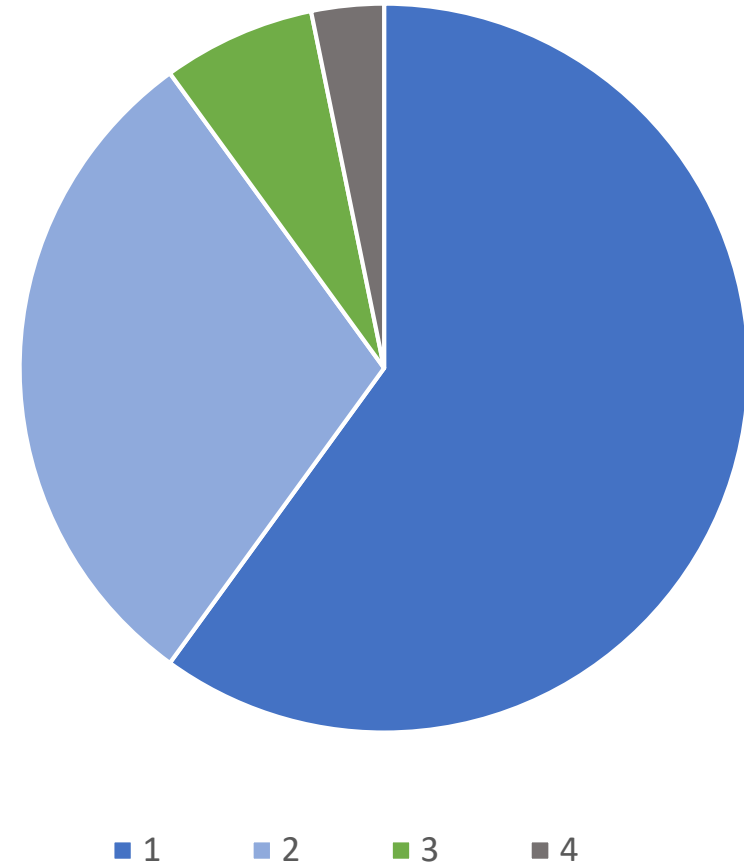


# Financial Framework



# Funding Partnership Snapshot: Year 1

- 2025 – approx. \$14M
  1. County contributes 100% to jail capital: \$8.4M
  2. Cities contribute 75% to jail capital / debt service: \$4.2M
  3. COB contributes 25% of its share to Implementation Plan projects: \$950K
  4. Small Cities remaining 25%: 450K

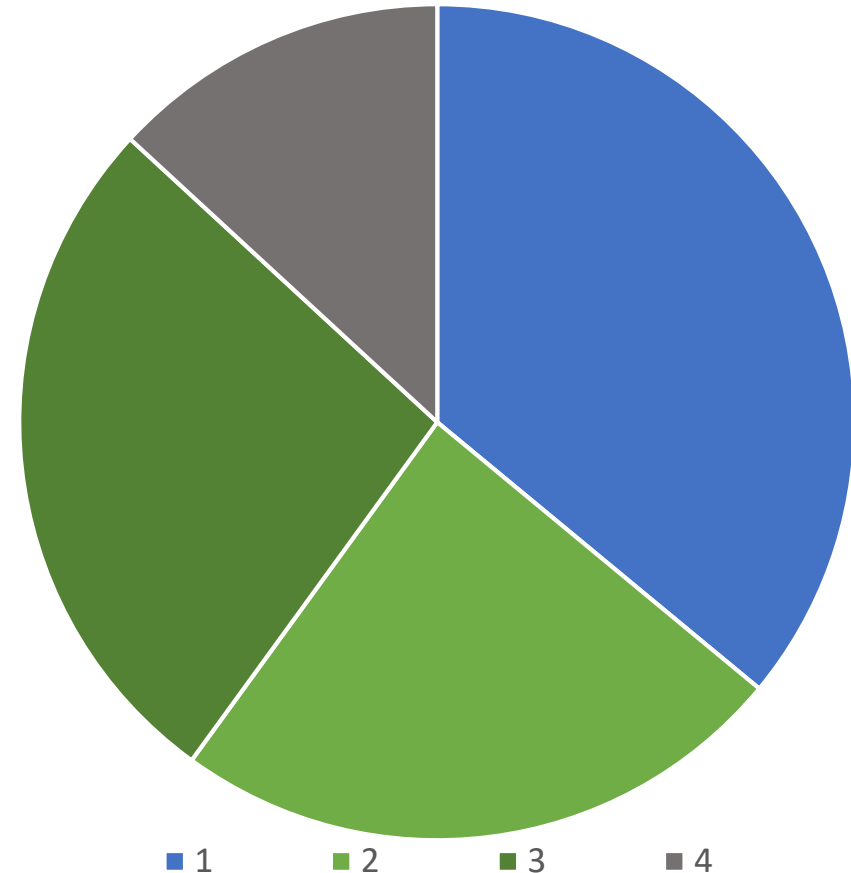






# Funding Partnership Snapshot: Year 7

- 2031 total revenue approx. \$17.5M
  - County contributes 60% of its revenue to debt service: \$6.3M
  - County contributes 40% to implementation plan projects: \$4.2M
  - COB contributes 100% to implementation plan projects: \$4.7M
  - Small cities' share: \$2.3M
  - Cities contribute 0% to jail capital / debt service
- Total of \$8.9M (more than 50%) going to incarceration prevention





# Financial Assumptions

- Cost of Jail and Behavioral Facility – \$150 million
- Interest rate – 4.4%
- Sales tax revenue growth – 4%

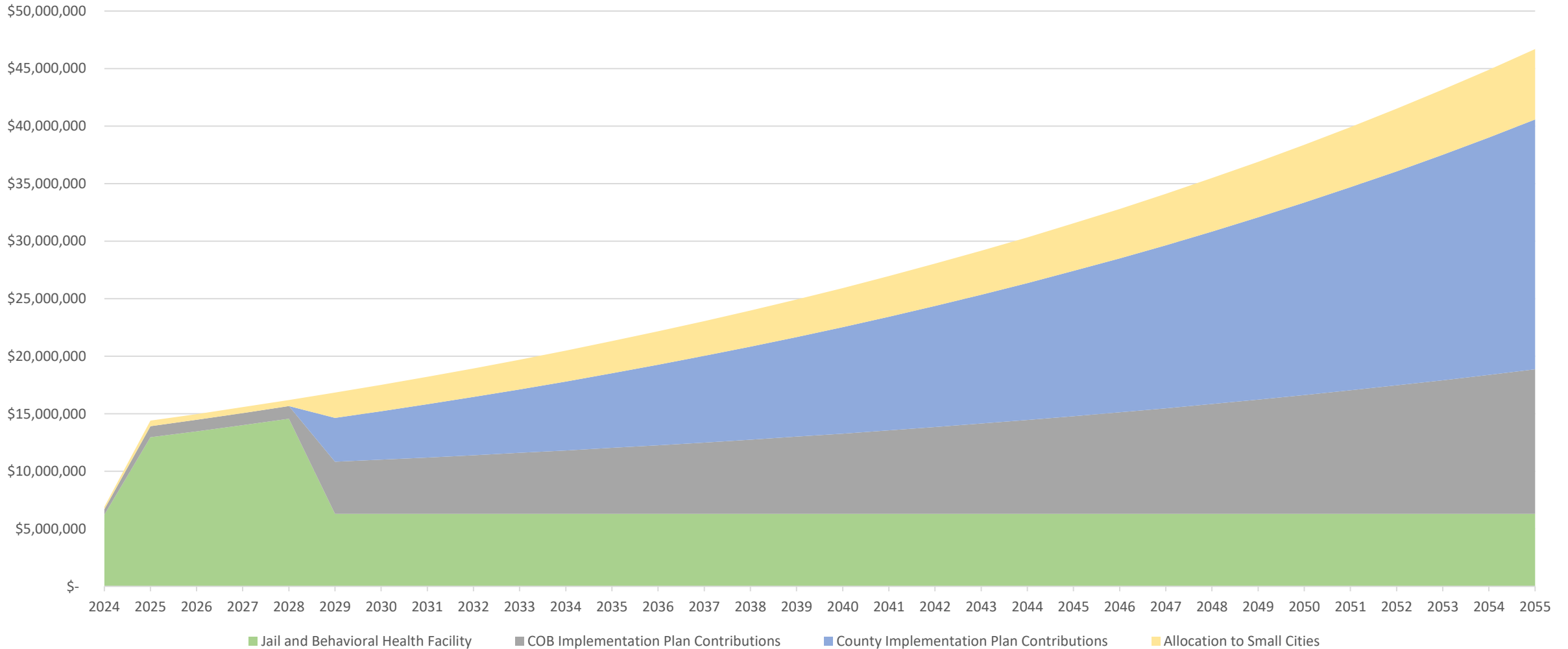
True capital costs to become known in 2026.

Interlocal will be flexible to respond to actuals and spread impacts equitably among County and city partners.



# Funding Partnership Visualization

Anticipated Expenditure Allocations for 0.2% Sales and Use Tax





# Status of Interlocal

March – Review by legal and administrations

April – Discussions and Q&A with Councils

May – On Council agendas for consideration

June – Interlocal takes effect, first revenues distributed by DOR



# Community and Partner Participation in Advisory Bodies



# Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF)

- Monitors progress of the Justice Project Implementation Plan through annual reports to County Council.
- Provides policy recommendations to County Executive and County Council on updates to Implementation Plan and Spending Plan.

Membership: County councilmember; County Executive; Sheriff; prosecuting attorney; public defender; Juvenile court representative; Superior court rep; district court rep; Tribal representation; WCHCS rep; EMS rep; PeaceHealth rep; DOC rep; Bellingham mayor; small city mayor; Bellingham councilmember; Small city councilmember; Bellingham police chief; Small city police chief; Bellingham court administrator; Small city municipal court, health and social service providers (four); consumer of services or family members; concerned citizens (two).



# Justice Project Operations and Planning Committee (JPOP)

- As a subcommittee of the IPRTF, JPOP provides an important community and subject-matter-expert perspective on Implementation Plan priorities and Spending Plans, advising the IPRTF on its recommendations to the County Executive and County Council.

Membership: behavioral health provider; substance use disorder (SUD) treatment provider; criminal legal system users (2 positions); supportive housing subject matter expert; re-entry specialist; Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Paramedic; Whatcom County Councilmember; Whatcom County Executive; Whatcom County Sheriff; Public Defender; Bellingham Mayor; Bellingham City Councilmember; representative of the small cities in Whatcom County; IPRTF Chair(s).



# Oversight: Finance Advisory Board

- Provides financial oversight of the funds collected from sales tax and makes recommendations on the finance and operations of the jail, behavioral health, and supportive housing facilities and services.
- Reports to the IPRTF and County Council and Bellingham City Council on the financial performance of the fund and associated programs.
- Works closely with County Executive and Bellingham Mayor in development of Spending Plan.

Membership: County Councilmember; County Executive; Sheriff; Bellingham Mayor; Bellingham City Councilmember; small cities elected representative; Bellingham Police Chief; IPRTF Chair(s); one representative of the behavioral health system; one individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system





# COB Consultation and Approval

- The draft interlocal has language requiring COB consultation and approval of future Implementation Plans.
- The County Executive's Office will coordinate with the Mayor of Bellingham to incorporate COB priorities in updates to and future iterations of the Implementation Plan and Spending Plan.



# 23 Hour Crisis Relief Center Timeline

Q1 2024	Hired service modeling consultant & modeling operational costs
Q2 2024	RFP for service provider
Q3 2024	RFP for architect
Q4 2024- Q1 2025	Design
Q2 2025	Permitting
Q2 2025	RFP for general contractor
Q2 2025- Q2 2026	Build
Mid 2026	Construction concludes, ready for occupancy
Ongoing	Stakeholder outreach and service design

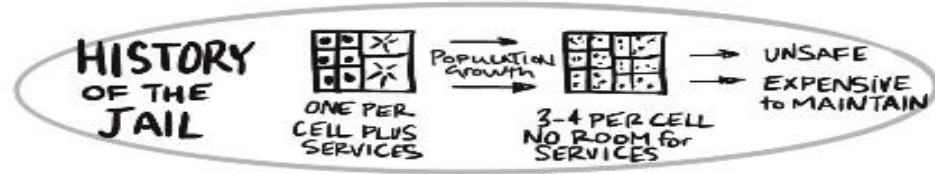


# Jail Construction Timeline

H1 2024	Design committee convened, preparing for consultant RFP, pre-permitting consultation
H2 2024	Consultant selected, design contract developed, project parameters defined
H1 2025	Design development
H2 2025	Construction plans defined
H1 2026	Plans go out for bid, permitting, preliminary site work, preparation for construction bonds
H2 2026	Total cost established, construction begins, bonding in place
2027	Continued construction
H1 2028	Construction concludes, jail and behavioral care center ready for occupancy

# WHATCOM COUNTY JUSTICE PROJECT

**CONDITIONS INCREASING:**  
 ↑ POPULATION ↑ MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES  
 ↑ HOUSING PRICES ↑ HOMELESSNESS  
 ↑ SUBSTANCE ABUSE ↑ CRIME



## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

CONTINUE COUNTY INVESTMENTS IN...

**COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS**

- ↑ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
- ↑ SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
- ↑ HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

**INCARCERATION PREVENTION & REDUCTION**

CHANGES IN COURTS, MEDICAID, COMPETENCY RESTORATION

++ RESPONSE SYSTEMS

++ DIVERSION OPTIONS

+ RE-ENTRY SUPPORT  
 + CONNECTION  
 + RESTORATION

**HEALTHY & HUMANE FACILITIES**

**JAIL and BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER**

IDENTIFY OTHER TREATMENT FACILITIES NEEDED

WAY STATION

23-HOUR CRISIS CENTER

ANN DEACON CENTER FOR HOPE

++ SUPPORTED HOUSING

**INCREASED HEALTH & SAFETY**

↑ ACCOUNTABILITY  
 DATA INCLUSION  
 TRANSPARENCY

