

Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan- Draft Climate Element- Item #5—Proposed Council Changes Chart for Council Committee of the Whole- 4/14

Requested Action: Discussion of revisions to item #5 on Council chart of proposed changes for 4/14 at Whatcom County Council of the Whole, as jointly proposed by Planning and Development Services and Public Works for Council’s consideration

New Section- Add as 2nd Paragraph in Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Sub-Element Background Summary:

Per [WAC 365-196-443](#) (2026) Whatcom County is required to provide WA Department of Commerce an implementation progress report detailing the progress Whatcom County has achieved in implementing the comprehensive plan five years after the latest required periodic review and revision of the comprehensive plan has been completed. The WA Department of Commerce is also required to adopt guidelines for indicators, measures, milestones, and criteria for counties to utilize in their five-year implementation progress reports that must cover, in part, “[p]rogress toward implementing any actions required to achieve reductions to meet greenhouse gas and vehicle miles traveled requirements provided for in any element of the comprehensive plan under [RCW 36.70A.070](#).”

Until such time as Commerce adopts such guidelines for periodic reporting and Climate Element Implementation Progress Reports, Whatcom County will quantify countywide progress on greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled reductions per capita for the Five-Year Climate Element implementation progress report required in RCW 36.70A.130(9) based on the following interim performance indicators:

Amended Section (Changes in Strikeout and Yellow Underline):

Consistent with the 2050 statewide net zero greenhouse gas emissions target set by the Washington State Legislature in RCW 70A.45.020 and adopted in Whatcom County Countywide Planning Policy T3: ~~Whatcom County sets the following interim performance indicators to monitor our progress towards the 2030 Climate Element implementation progress report):~~

- ~~By 2030,~~ All electric utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet interim targets for greenhouse gas neutrality under WAC 194-40-040.
- ~~By 2030,~~ Natural gas utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet each two-year therm conservation target, consistent with RCW 80.28.380.
- ~~By 2030, target 45,174 registered~~ Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric passenger vehicles (PHEVs) registered in Whatcom County increase by at least 20%, ~~consistent with~~ towards the goal of 13,810 electric vehicles, in partnership with the private sector and developers, and subject to consumer demand and economic conditions. ~~set by the Washington State Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council forecast.~~
- ~~By 2030,~~ Reduce annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita across incorporated and unincorporated Whatcom County by at least 3%, as measured by annual certified mileage reporting by the Washington Department of Transportation. ~~to 5,731 VMT per capita.~~

Rationale for Changes to 4/7 Council preliminary motion to Background Summary:

Proposed changes clarify criteria for annual amendment and periodic reporting requirements for the Climate Element Progress Report. Washington State Department of Commerce has not issued guidance specific to developing incremental emission reduction targets, standardized emissions quantification estimates, or periodic reporting for the implementation progress report. Subject to changes in state guidance, amendments to interim performance indicators will be proposed as part of the Climate Element annual review schedule.

Rationale for Changes to 4/7 Council preliminary motion regarding EV forecasting:

The Washington State Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council’s methodology utilized a different forecasting approach compared to Whatcom County's 2025 Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation Roadmap. Based on 2025 countywide registrations, on a countywide basis, adoption is tracking with the "medium growth scenario" as shown below in Table B-3.

The Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council [assumed that](#) if a county was following a low adoption scenario in the 2025-2027 period (as defined by the state’s [Transportation Electrification Strategy](#)), that County was assigned to a more aggressive adoption scenario in the 2028-2029 period. Utilizing the County’s medium EV adoption forecast for 2030, rather than the state’s estimate for Whatcom County, may address some of the concerns discussed on 4/7 regarding the assumptions associated with the statewide forecast.

Table B-3: Fast, Medium, and Slow EV Adoption Forecasts

EV Forecast	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2035
Fast Growth		153	493	579	668	757	933	1,162	6,892
All new LD sales in Whatcom County		4,086	4,168	3,188	4,746	4,410	4,273	4,125	11,664
EV Population in Whatcom County	4,331	4,944	6,194	7,310	9,208	11,193	13,543	16,348	28,012
EV% New Car Sales	12.0%	15.0%	30.0%	35.0%	40.0%	45.0%	55.0%	68.0%	100%
Medium Growth		123	411	447	417	589	763	1,008	6,203
All new LD sales in Whatcom County		4,086	4,168	3,188	4,746	4,410	4,273	4,125	11,664
EV Population in Whatcom County	4,331	4,821	5,863	6,724	7,910	9,454	11,377	13,810	25,475
EV% New Car Sales	12.0%	12.0%	25.0%	27.0%	25.0%	35.0%	45.0%	59.0%	90%
Slow Growth		82	197	248	417	589	763	940	4,135
All new LD sales in Whatcom County		4,086	4,168	3,188	4,746	4,410	4,273	4,125	11,664
EV Population in Whatcom County	4,331	4,658	5,158	5,636	6,823	8,366	10,289	12,558	24,222
EV% New Car Sales	12.0%	8.0%	12.0%	15.0%	25.0%	35.0%	45.0%	55.0%	60%

(Whatcom County Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation Roadmap, 2025 page 53)

Note: See: [April 7th Whatcom County Council of the Whole staff memo](#) for additional discussion