Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2025-413

File ID:	AB2025-413	**Version:**	1	**Status:**	Substitute Approved
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Assigned to:	Council Committee of the Whole	**Final Action:** 06/10/2025
Agenda Date:	06/10/2025	**Enactment #:** RES 2025-022
Related Files:		

Primary Contact Email: koos@co.whatcom.wa.us

TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Resolution requesting information from the Executive and Planning and Development Services regarding the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

None

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
06/10/2025	Council Committee of the Whole	SUBSTITUTE RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL	
		Aye: 7 Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremler	
		Nay: 0	
06/10/2025	Council	SUBSTITUTE APPROVED	
		Aye: 7 Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremler	
		Nay: 0	

Attachments: Proposed Resolution, Substitute Resolution, Proposed Resolution - tracked changes, City Feedback on Draft Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. <u>2025-022</u>

REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REGARDING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County and the cities to review and, if needed, update their respective comprehensive plans <u>by December 31, 2025</u>; and

WHEREAS, the GMA requires county and city comprehensive plans to be coordinated and consistent; and

WHEREAS, the GMA states that urban growth areas (UGAs) must be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the succeeding 20-year planning period that extends through 2045 (RCW 36.70A.130); and

WHEREAS, population, housing, and employment allocations are a critical component in the comprehensive plan update and UGA review processes; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County's policies encourage placing a larger share of population growth and housing allocations in Bellingham and urban areas, and less in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the GMA encourages placing a larger share of population growth and housing allocations in urban areas, and less in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the County and cities' climate action and sustainability goals include minimizing vehicle trips from rural areas to urban areas; and

WHEREAS, Transit Oriented Development is key to these climate action and sustainability goals including minimizing vehicle trips from rural areas to urban areas; and

WHEREAS, Transit Oriented Development is more practical when housing and employment growth is concentrated in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, On March 11, 2025, the County Council approved Resolution 2025-011, "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution Regarding Population, Housing and Employment Allocations," agreeing to preliminary allocations for initial review of urban growth areas by the County and cities; and

WHEREAS, while final decisions on population, housing, and employment allocations will not be made until the 2025 Comprehensive Plan is adopted, it is important for the County and cities to agree upon preliminary allocations in order to coordinate transportation modeling, capital facility planning, environmental review, and UGA recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the final population and employment allocations may affect how accurately the cities and County plan for investing substantial amounts of capital into infrastructure needed for achieving housing and employment growth; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary population, housing, and employment growth allocations shown in Exhibit A of <u>Resolution 2025-011,</u> the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution," plan for population growth 19% greater than the State Office of Financial Management's (OFM's) most likely projection for growth through 2045; and

WHEREAS, higher city and UGA population projections will allow for increased housing supply and densities to help address the County's affordable housing needs, and increase capacity and feasibility for Transit Oriented Development, and compel responsible and capital facility planning and capital facilities investments to areas projecting longer term development windows; and

WHEREAS, providing additional employment capacity in such UGAs as Columbia Valley may reduce vehicle trips from such areas to other major employment centers; and

WHEREAS, the County's current land use policies may be re-evaluated to limit piecemeal development in unincorporated areas that cities may seek to annex in the future, to guard against making future annexations difficult and provide protections against rural sprawl into non-urban growth areas and reserves.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Whatcom County Council acknowledges that a range of population, housing, and employment allocations are being studied in the environmental impact statement and UGA review process and the final UGA growth allocations may be different than what is set forth in Exhibit A to the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution;" and
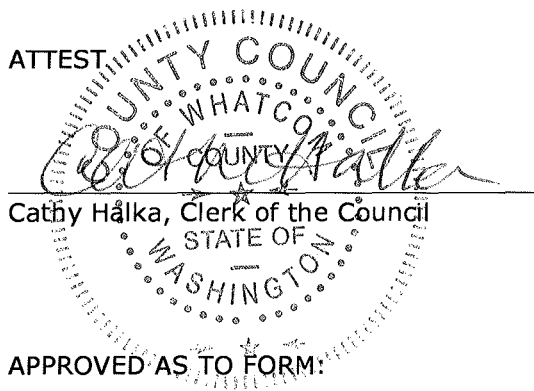
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the Whatcom County Council requests that prior to adoption of the Final Environmental Impact Statement associated with the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Executive and Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) provide Council with information about:

1) Avenues for coordination between the cities and County Council to develop tools for improving development potential upon annexation in municipal unincorporated UGAs (e.g., annexation incentives) where cities do not extend public sewer and water prior to annexation. Policies associated with this could include:

    a. Modifying County zoning in existing and city-proposed urban growth areas and reserves.

    b. Encouraging cities to develop or review future land use designations that would take effect in the UGAs upon annexation.

    c. Encouraging alternative funding mechanisms such as impact fees and other mechanisms to pay for infrastructure needs in the UGAs to enable cities and other urban service providers more feasible means to extend these services into municipal unincorporated UGAs.

2) Options for an analysis of the pros and cons of reducing or mitigating potential population growth impacts to the County's rural and resource lands.

3) Options for increasing transit from outlying small cities and rural areas into major employment areas to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

4) Opportunities to study street standards in municipal UGA and UGA reserves to align bicycle, pedestrian, and mobility infrastructure to connect with similar adjacent municipal infrastructure.

5) Information on how employment projections in Exhibit A to Resolution 2025-011, the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution," for rural and rural resource areas, and for UGAs not associated with incorporated cities, align with planned commercial and industrial land capacity and zoning in those areas.

6) Information about options to County Council to discourage and/or mitigate potential risks from growth in vulnerable floodplains and coastal areas projected to experience sea level rise and to encourage growth in low flood or no flood zones.

7) Information in the form of maps that show what future UGAs would look like under each alternative scoped in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including maps that detail where UGAs will be added and / or deleted, and detail how UGA changes may extend into critical areas, resource lands, and flood prone areas.

APPROVED this __10th__ day of _____June_____ 2025.

ATTEST:

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Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin (by email 06.06.2025/koos)

_____
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair