

# Justice Project Discussion

April 14, 2026

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# Outline

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- 1 Project Values and Framework & 2026 Successes**
- 2 Validation Process Update (STV)**
- 3 Financial Framework & FFAB Recommendation**
- 4 Behavioral Health Analysis (Erin Persky & Associates)**
- 5 Jail Population Forecast (Patrick Jablonski, Ph.D.)**
- 6 Next Steps**



# Project Values & Framework 2026 Successes

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KAYLA SCHOTT-BRESLER, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE



# Values and Priorities – Justice Facilities Projects

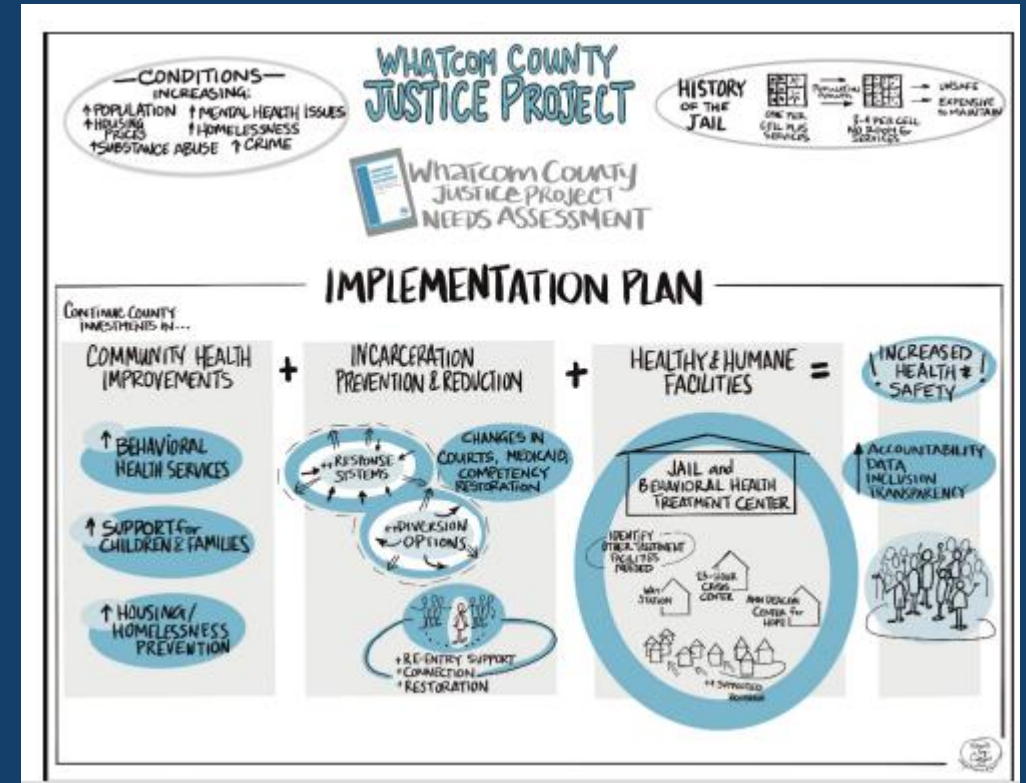
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- Build Behavioral Care Center at the same time as the new jail
  - Ensure adequate budget authority
  - Leverage state and federal funding where possible
  - Coordinated operational planning (diversion system, service provider, etc.)
  - Leaders continue to prioritize this locally-driven pilot project
- Ensure new jail provides improved access to an array of services (medical care and observation, behavioral health treatment, recreation, programming, modern design and more)
- Analyze and plan for operational costs



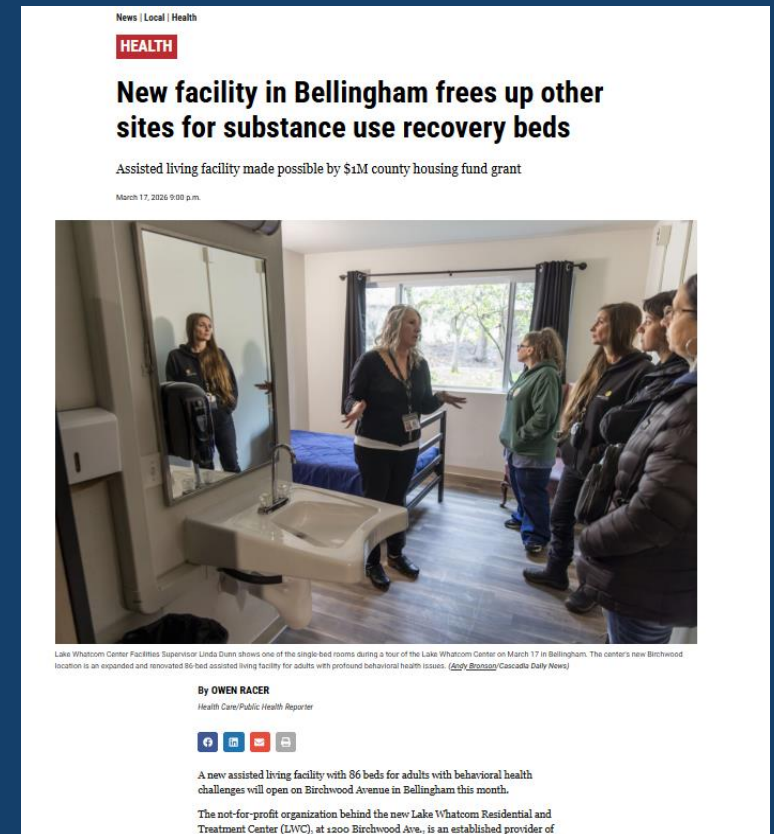
# Values and Priorities – Justice Facilities Projects

- Data should guide project decisions on facility capacity, housing configuration, and specialized housing priorities
- Honor feedback from law enforcement agencies and cities
- Build with the future in mind
- Analyze and plan for operational costs



# 2026 Wins & Grant Applications

- Medicaid Re-Entry project set to begin July 2026 (Sheriff's Office/Juvenile Detention)
- Addition of 24/7 Nursing in Whatcom County jail (Sheriff's Office/CHP)
- Award of \$3.6M in Trueblood Diversion funds to build a new supportive housing facility with 27 apartments, over a third for Trueblood Class Members (WCHCS/LWTC)
- Opening of the new Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center's 86-bed Birchwood assisted living facility for adults with profound behavioral health issues (WCHCS/LWTC)
- Development of new Justice Data Tracking Site to provide transparency on implementation plan progress (Council/JPOP)



# 2026 Wins & Grant Applications

- Applications to backfill state cuts to LEAD & ART (City of Bellingham/Sheriff's Office/WCHCS)
- Secured legislative flexibility to use \$11.2M in state funding for Behavioral Care Center (Exec/Council/COB)
- Application for Congressionally-directed spending request for Behavioral Care Center (Exec)



# Validation Process Update

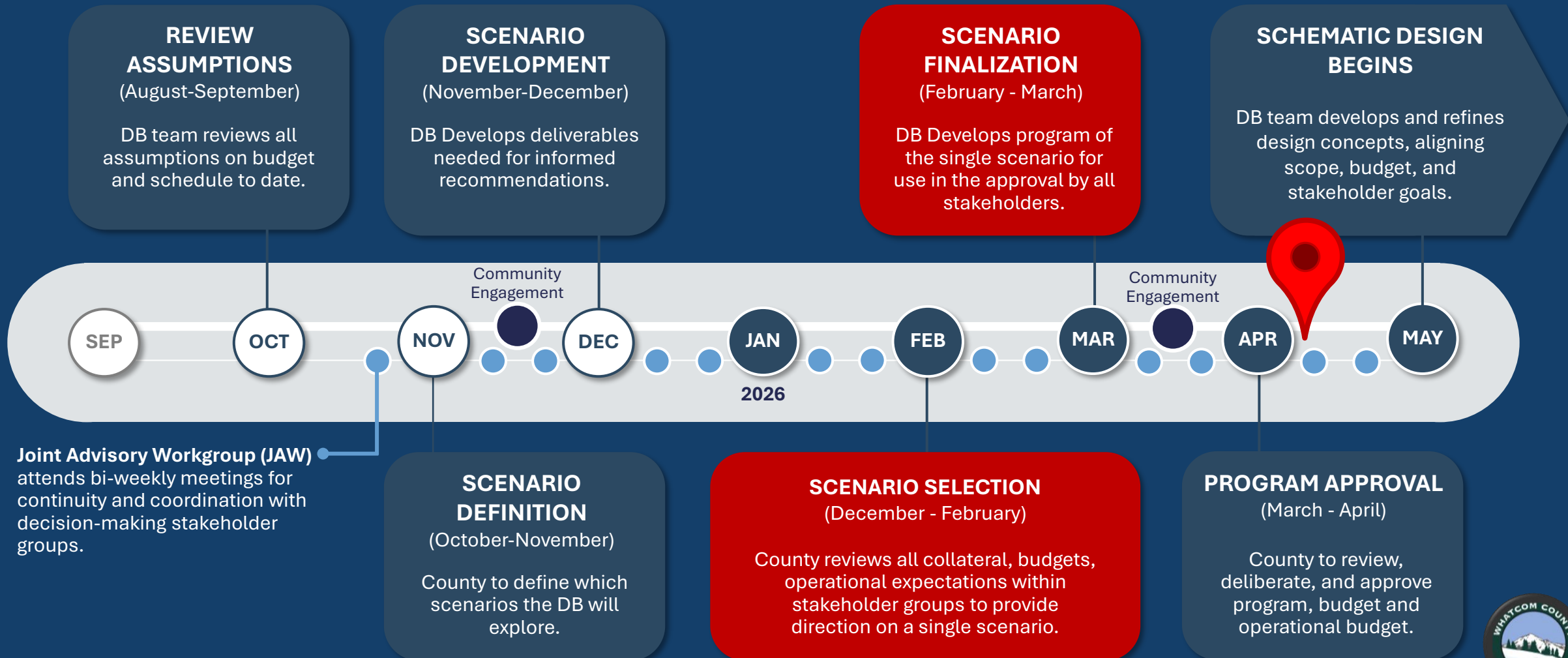
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ADAM JOHNSON, STV



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Scenario Development



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## MEMO: Current Trajectory of Justice Facility Scenario Development



### 1. Current State

- ▶ Early benchmarking showed the anticipated revenue stream does not support the full Implementation Plan scope
- ▶ Scenario testing has been useful in clarifying the relationship between scope, cost, and operations
- ▶ The County has requested additional scenarios and deeper operational cost analysis

### 2. Identified Risk

- ▶ Continued scenario development without a budget framework will draw work out and add costs
- ▶ Preconstruction effort, time, and cost are increasing
- ▶ The team risks losing momentum before foundational priorities are translated into programming

### 3. Path Forward

- ▶ *Establish a clear budget cap*
- ▶ Direct the team + partners to proceed with programming within that budget
- ▶ Use structured check-ins to allow input, adjustment, and course correction at defined points



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

A coordinated structure where each group contributes distinct value based on role, expertise, and authority



## 1. INPUT

What informs the work?  
*Stakeholder Groups*

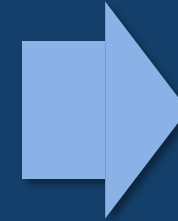
- ▶ Implementation Plan
- ▶ Needs Assessment
- ▶ Sheriff's Office
- ▶ WCHCS
- ▶ Facilities Team
- ▶ Expert guidance (Design + Const)
- ▶ Site Limitations
- ▶ Community Engagement
- ▶ Municipal Partners
- ▶ FFAB
- ▶ JAW
- ▶ IPRTF
- ▶ Programming Efforts
- ▶ Expert data (JCA, BHA)
- ▶ Budget



## 2. DIRECTION

How is the work shaped?  
*Project Team*

- ▶ Sheriff's Office
- ▶ WCHCS
- ▶ Facilities Team
- ▶ Expert advising (Design, Construction, JCA, BHA)



## 3. DECISIONS

How the work moves forward?  
*Executive + Council*

- ▶ Final authority on capital project development
- ▶ Final authority on total budget and funding approvals



## 4. OUTCOMES

- ▶ A clear path forward shaped by coordinated input, documented trade-offs, and transparent decisions



## 5. COMMUNICATIONS

- ▶ Support transparency, public understanding, and a feedback loop that supports refined direction



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Input informs the work



## TECHNICAL STUDIES

*Analytical input that helps define needs, constraints, and project implications.*

- ▶ Jail Capacity Analysis (JCA)
- ▶ Behavioral Health Analysis (BHA)
- ▶ Ongoing input as both studies are developed

## PROJECT PARAMETERS

*Budget, timing, and delivery realities.*

- ▶ Site limitations
- ▶ Benchmarking exercise
- ▶ Scenario determination
- ▶ Program and budget integration

## EXPERT GUIDANCE + WORKSHOPS

*Specialized insight that tests ideas against operational and real-world conditions.*

- ▶ Design, programming, and construction workshops
- ▶ Operations expertise
- ▶ Lessons learned from toured facilities

## PUBLIC + STAKEHOLDER

*Community and partner perspectives that help align the project with values, priorities, and expectations.*

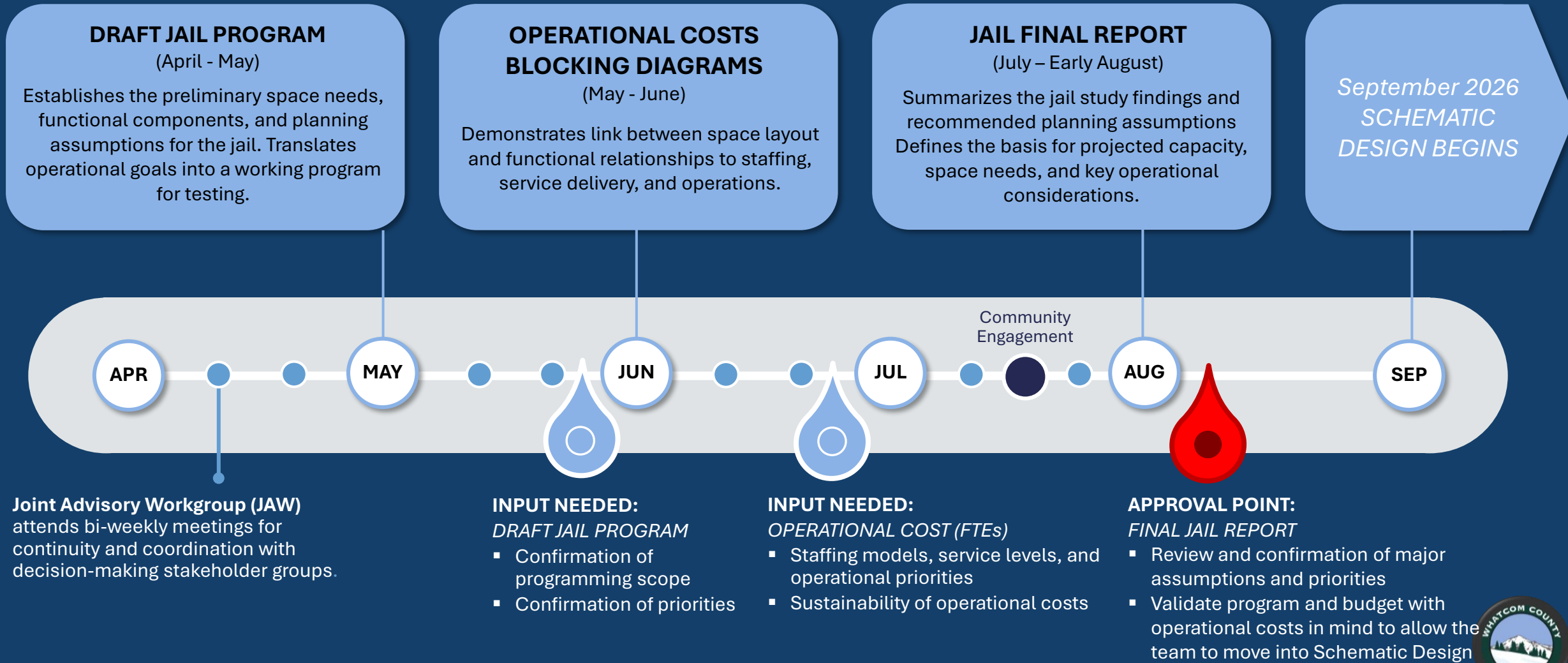
- ▶ County Council Meetings
- ▶ FFAB
- ▶ IPRTF
- ▶ Community Engagement
- ▶ Communication Plan
- ▶ Project dashboard

## FOUNDATION | Needs Assessment + Implementation Plan

*Established values, needs, priorities, and initial direction on the project.*

# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Opportunities to check-in, give input, offer adjustment, and course correction at defined points



# Financial Framework & FFAB Recommendation

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JED HOLMES

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & STRATEGY MANAGER



# Project Budget Context

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- Scenario discussions with Design-Build team illustrated impacts of cost escalation
- Initial scenarios showed that original jail programming concepts as envisioned in Implementation Plan would significantly exceed budget contemplated in interlocal
- The administration was asked to analyze potential budget cap – maximum available for construction of Behavioral Care Center and jail
- Calculations in February 2026 pointed to budget ceiling of \$225 million
- Two separate questions: 1) what can we afford? and 2) policy choice about how much to spend



# FFAB Financial Discussion & Budget Cap

- The Finance and Facility Advisory Board received a presentation of PFM's updated financing scenario at its April 9 FFAB meeting.
- Three financial risks were described and discussed:
  - Short-term revenue risks
  - Long-term revenue risks
  - Interest rate volatility risks



# FFAB Financial Discussion & Budget Cap

- Seven mitigation strategies were considered:

1. Revenue Stabilization Account
2. Fixed City Contributions
3. Conservative Growth Assumptions
4. 2035 Cushion
5. Contingency in Interest Assumptions
6. Two Bond Placements
7. Maintain Project Flexibility



# FFAB Financial Discussion & Budget Cap

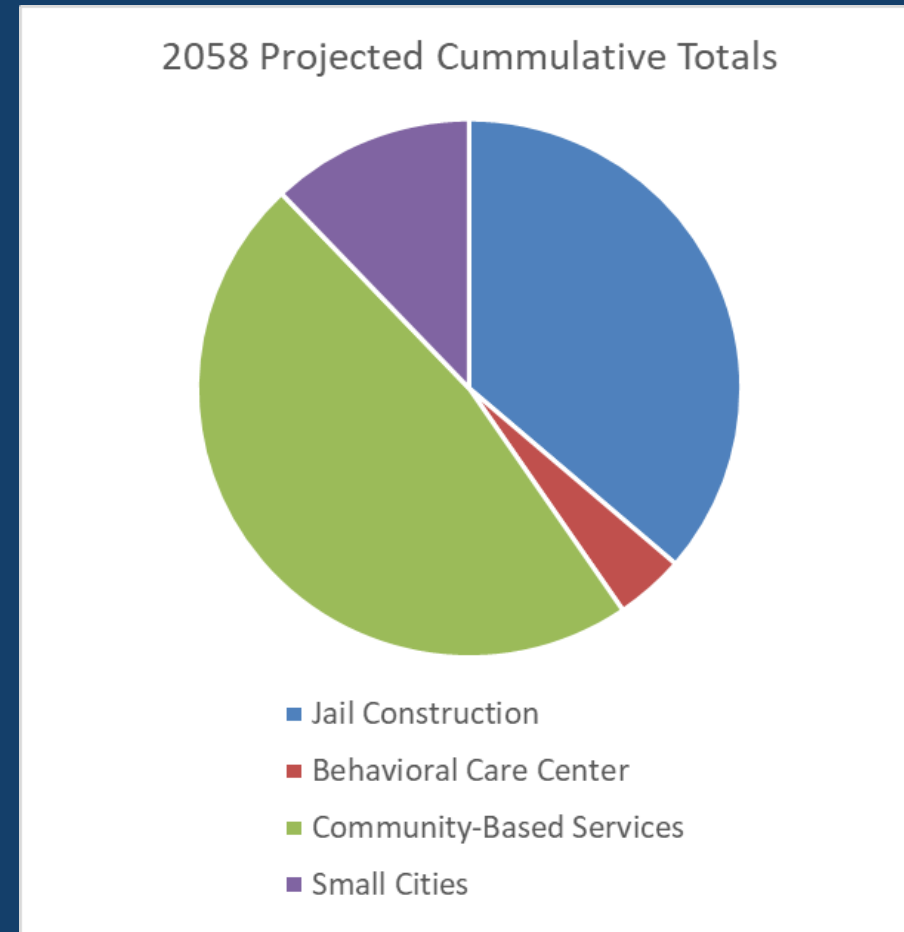
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- The FFAB discussion was robust and lengthy, covering a number of issues:
  - Underlying assumptions
  - Risk tolerance
  - Policy tradeoffs with setting a capital budget
  - Communication of County priorities to STV and the design-build team
- After public comment, **the board unanimously approved** the following motion:
  - *“FFAB recommends that the County Council provide a budget cap of \$225 million, with \$205 million for the jail and \$20 million for the behavioral care center for STV to show the County and its partners what can be done.”*
- The County Executive’s Office is awaiting Council’s direction on budget cap to enter next phase of negotiations with the cities



# Community-Based Services Commitment

- Whatcom County has continued to pursue all avenues to fund behavioral health commitments in the Implementation Plan (Trueblood, state allocations, federal grants, etc.)
- Decoupling growth projections from risk mitigation measures shows much more potentially available for services
- Using a 4% growth model for the next 30 years, which is 80% of the historical growth numbers for the past 30 years, results in over 50% of collected revenues available for services over the life of the bond.



# Whatcom County Behavioral Health Analysis

## *Service Model Recommendations for a Proposed Behavioral Care Center*



Erin Persky & Associates

April 14, 2026

# Our Team



**Erin Persky**  
Principal-in-Charge



**Greg Barker**  
Senior Data Expert



**Brenda Epperly**  
Senior Health Care Expert



**Jay Farbstein**  
Senior Advisory Expert

# Process

**Schedule:** 12 weeks (December 2025 – March 2026)

## **Major Tasks:**

- Studied background materials and previous studies
- Visited Whatcom County
  - Site Visit
  - Tours
  - Listening Session
- Virtual meetings
- Data Analysis
- Recommendations
  - Number of “beds”
  - Licensure
  - Staffing
  - Costs

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# Process

## Listening Session and Follow-Up Meetings with:

- Whatcom County Health & Community Services (WCHCS)
- North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (NS-BHASO)
- Lake Whatcom Center (LWC)
- Alternative Response Team (ART)
- Ground-Level Response and Coordination Engagement (GRACE) program
- Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (or Let Everyone Advance with Dignity – LEAD)
- Lummi Nation – Behavioral Health
- Pioneer Human Services – Substance Use Disorder Services
- Compass Health
  - Crisis Triage
  - Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOTs)
  - Designated Crisis Responders (DCRs)
- Peace Health, providing inpatient mental health services at St. Joseph's Hospital
- Emergency Medical Services/Community Paramedics
  - Whatcom County Fire Department
  - Bellingham Fire Department

# Foundation

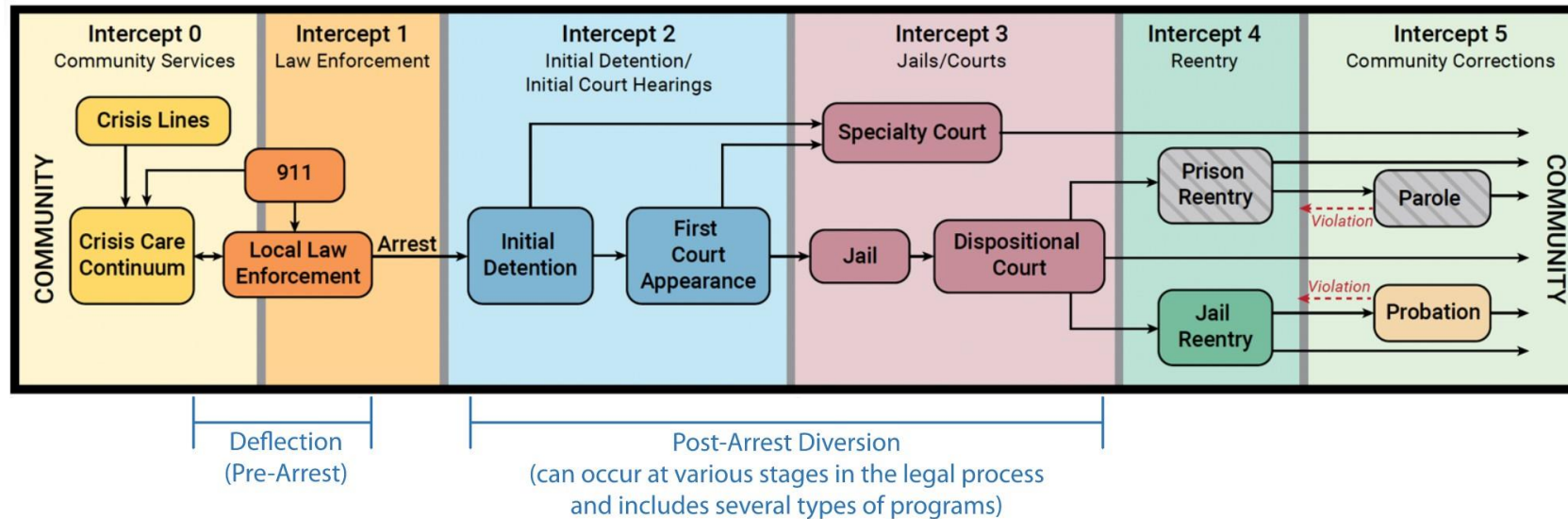
## *Deflection and Diversion*

### Deflection

- Pre-arrest
- Avoidance of criminal legal system involvement
- Often brought to locations for treatment instead of jail
- Focus on those with mental health or substance use challenges

### Diversion

- Post-arrest
- Pre-charge, post-charge/first-appearance, or pre-adjudication.
- Incarceration alternatives



# Recommendations

## Analyzed the need for:

Crisis Relief Center (CRC)	Co-Occurring Disorders (COD) Facility	Psychiatric Urgent Care (PUC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “First door” for the behavioral health care system (mental health and substance use).</li><li>• First responders and outreach workers can drop off.</li><li>• Walk-ins allowed.</li><li>• Initial assessment and intervention.</li><li>• All services voluntarily .</li><li>• LOS &lt;24 hours.</li><li>• Referred out to treatment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Substance use, mental health, and comorbid disorders.</li><li>• Longer-term inpatient treatment (a few weeks to a couple of months).</li><li>• Referred from other services and/or prosecutorial diversion program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very short-term outpatient evaluation and treatment.</li><li>• Voluntary walk-ins by members of the public.</li><li>• Clinic setting, operates 8-12 hours/day.</li><li>• LOS approx. four hours or less.</li></ul>

# Recommendations

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*Incorporated into CRC operations.*

# Recommendations

## CRC

- Data Analysis:
  - Estimate: ~35 clients per day
  - Peak of 22 clients at one time.
- Programming Recommendations:
  - 22 spaces (recliners, cots, quiet rooms)
  - Mental health, sobering (not medical detox)
- Licensed as a Behavioral Health Agency with a certification as a CRC.
- Estimated Staffing Requirements: 39.5 FTEs
- Estimated Operating Costs: \$7.3 million annually.
- Cost Reimbursements:
  - Revenue gap that Whatcom County must account for:
    - Currently stands between \$880,000 to \$4.5 million (both facilities).
    - CRC low end of range: ~\$500,000.

# Recommendations

## COD Facility

- Data Analysis:
  - Estimate: Average demand of 36 clients now and increasing ~50 in 2045.
- Programming Recommendations:
  - 32-bed facility in two units of 16.
  - Potential to add a third unit if demand is adequate before 2045.
- Licensed as a Residential Treatment Facility meeting DOH requirements for a Behavioral Health Agency.
- Estimated Staffing Requirements: 32 FTEs
- Estimated Operating Costs: \$5.2 million annually.
- Cost Reimbursement:
  - Revenue gap that Whatcom County must account for:
    - Currently between ~\$880,600 to \$4.5 million (both facilities).
    - COD Facility low end of range: ~\$365,000.

## Prosecutorial Diversion

### \*Analysis in progress\*

- Current estimate of reduction of jail ADP: 20 beds.
  - ***This does not translate to 20 fewer beds to be built at the jail.***
- These numbers will be validated, updated as appropriate, and included in the *Whatcom County Behavioral Health Analysis: Service Model Recommendations for a Proposed Behavioral Care Facility, March 20, 2026* report.

# Recommendations

## PUC

- Data Analysis:
  - Significant overlap in service demand between CRC and PUC.
  - Insufficient demand for the next 18-20 years for a standalone PUC.
  - Potentially adequate demand near 2045 but could also be managed within CRC.
- Programming Recommendations:
  - PUC functions should be entirely integrated into the CRC.

### **Major benefit of this arrangement: keeps the CRC as the “first door.”**

- Simplifies decision-making about where to go when help is needed.
- Eliminates confusion.
- Eliminates the need to move people between functions.

# Additional Notes on Funding and Cost Reimbursements

## Summary

- Revenue gap that Whatcom County must account for:
  - Current estimate between ~\$880,600 to \$4.5 million (both facilities).
  - CRC low end of range: ~\$500,000.
  - COD Facility low end of range: ~\$365,000.
- Many uncertainties around reimbursement mechanisms, requiring ongoing study.

## Whatcom County needs the BCC, but you can't do it alone!

- ✓ Consider the potential of licensing the COD Facility first, then licensing the CRC when funding and anticipated revenue sources are more firmly established. (Bringing on one or the other first may require slight adjustment to staffing costs presented in the report.)
- ✓ State contribution of funds is critical.
- ✓ Insurance reimbursements are critical.
- ✓ Establish your financial goals for BCC services and communicate these are part of operator pre-solicitation processes.

**Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to  
serve your county!**



# Whatcom County Jail Population & Forecast Analysis

April 14, 2026





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Introduction

### **PURPOSE:**

- Provide a more-detailed analysis of the jail's population
- Enhance understanding of the jail's population dynamics
- Develop a sophisticated statistical forecast of the future population

### **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH:**

- Acquired raw line-by-line custody data along with criminal court case processing data
- Reconstructed the jail's population for each day between 2014 and October 2025
- Built time series statistical models of the jail population, resulting in a jail population forecast

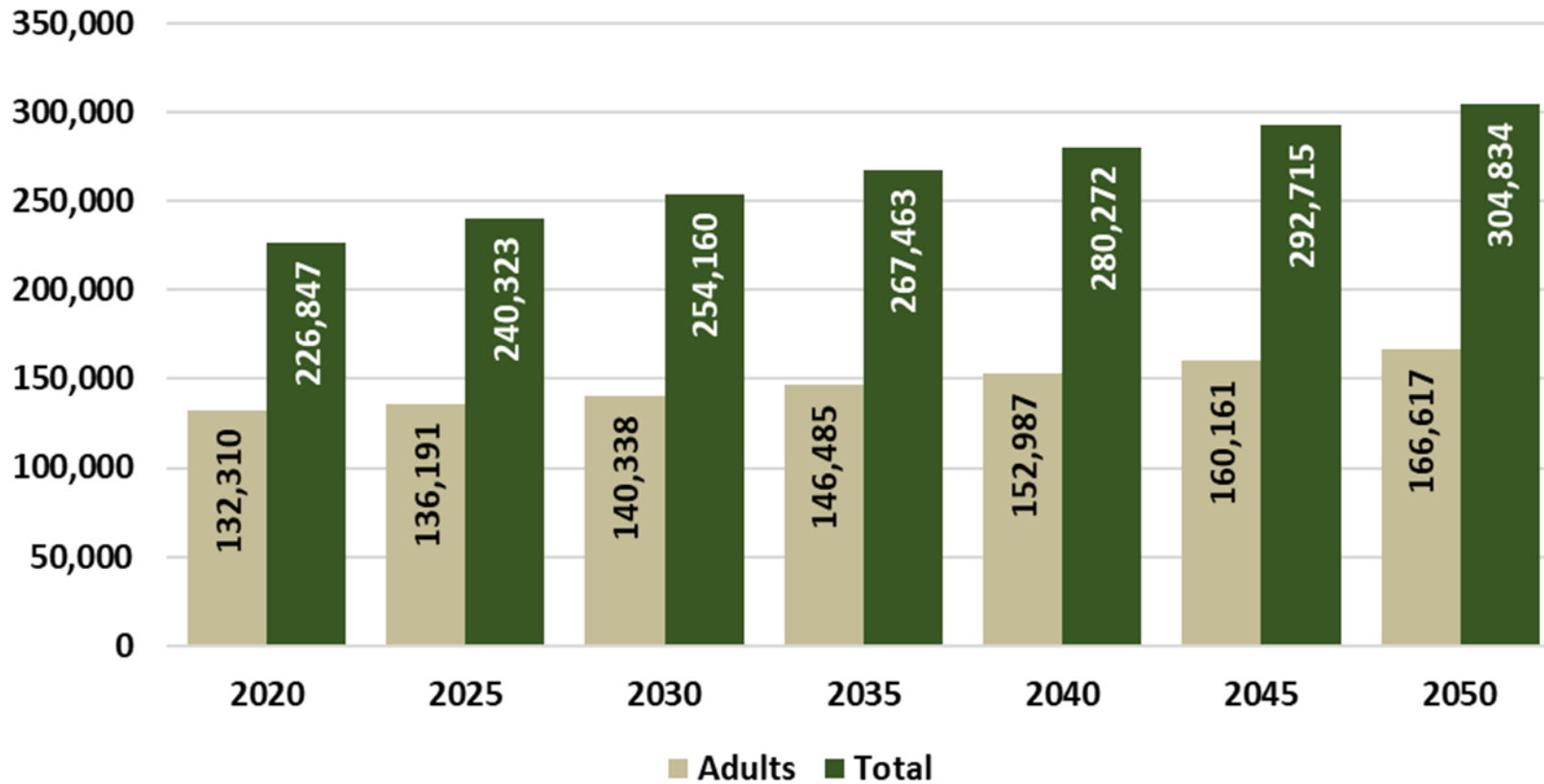




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Future Whatcom County Population

Projected Whatcom County Population to 2050



- Used data from the Washington State Office of Financial Management
- Adult population excludes children & senior citizens; growth rate = 22%
- Projected overall population growth by 2050 is 27%



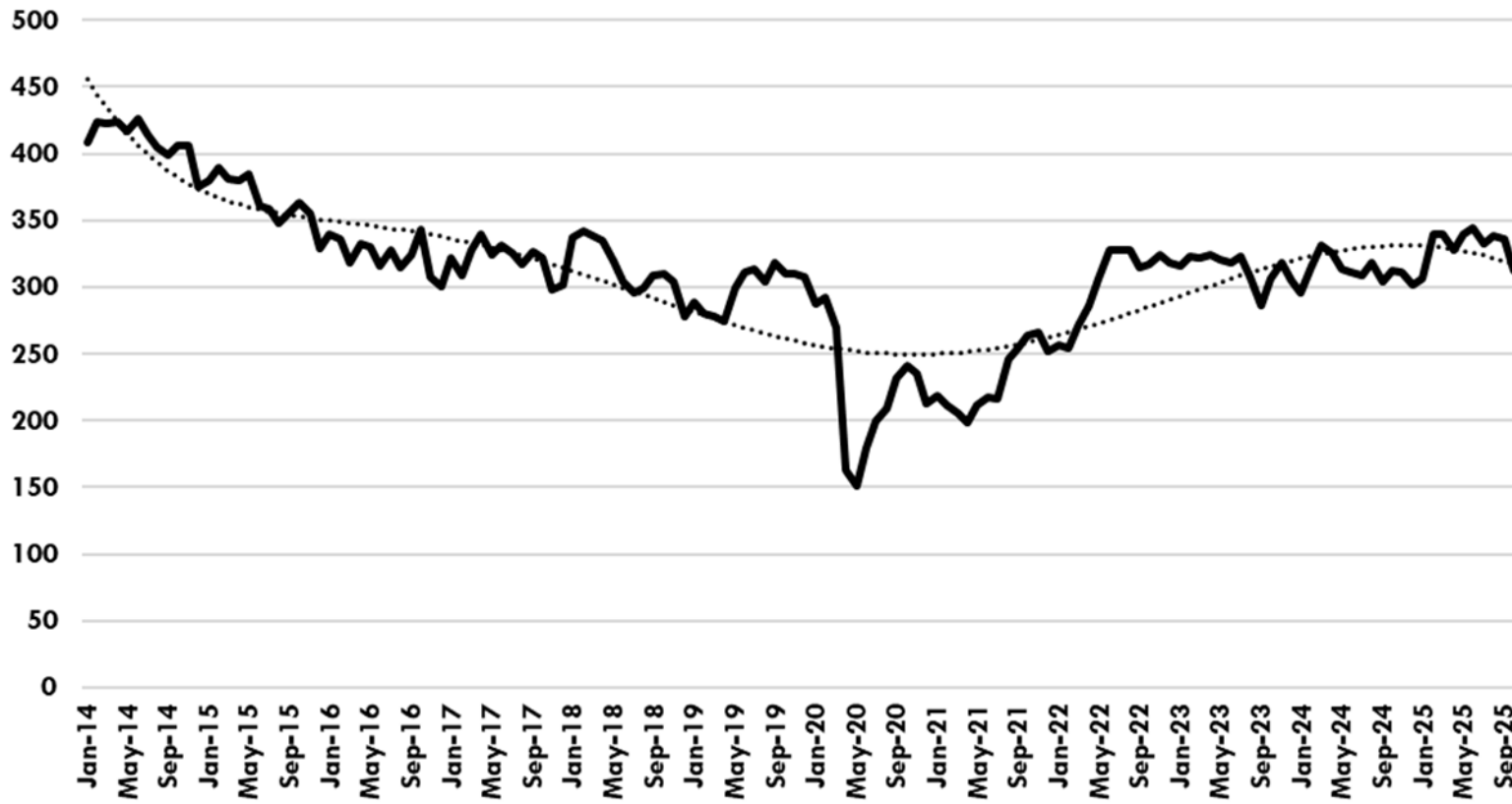
<https://ofm.wa.gov/data-research/population-demographics/forecasts-projections/growth-managment-act/2022-projections/>



# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Population

Whatcom County Jail Monthly ADP



- ADP = 'Average Daily Population'
- We acquired multiple raw data extracts from the jail's information management system
- The information in the extracts allowed us to forensically reconstruct the population for each day between January 2014 and October 8, 2025
- 2025 ADP was 7% above 2024





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Correctional Population Dynamics

At a basic level, 2 factors determine all correctional facility populations:

- Admissions/Bookings
- Average Length of Stay (ALOS)

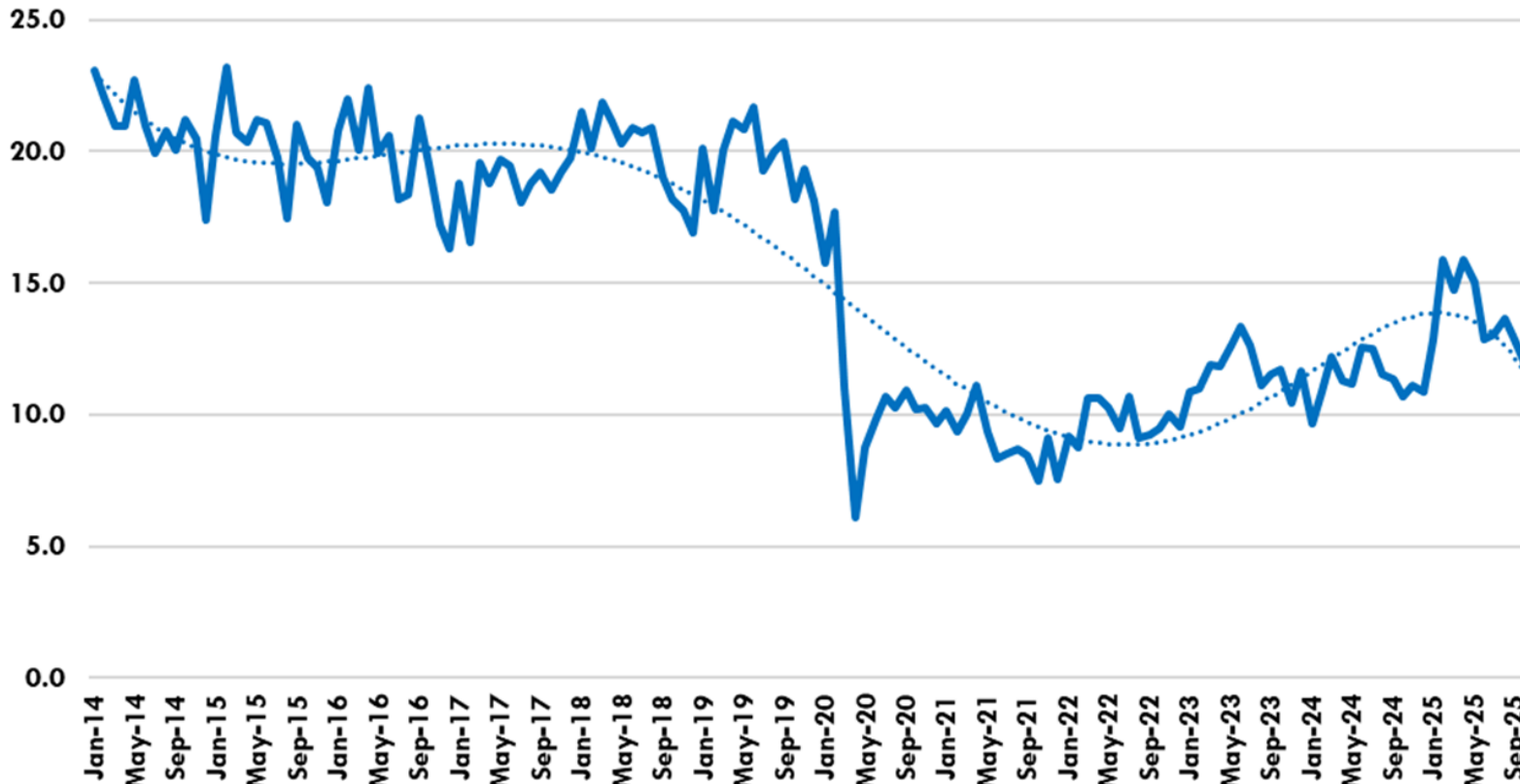




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Bookings

Whatcom County Jail Average Daily Bookings



- ADP = ‘Average Daily Bookings’
- Bookings have never returned to pre-pandemic levels
- 2025 bookings were 24% higher than in 2024

Year	ADB	2025 YTD ADB is...
2020	10.9	28% Larger
2021	9.0	56% Larger
2022	9.8	43% Larger
2023	11.7	19% Larger
2024	11.3	24% Larger
2025	14.0	---

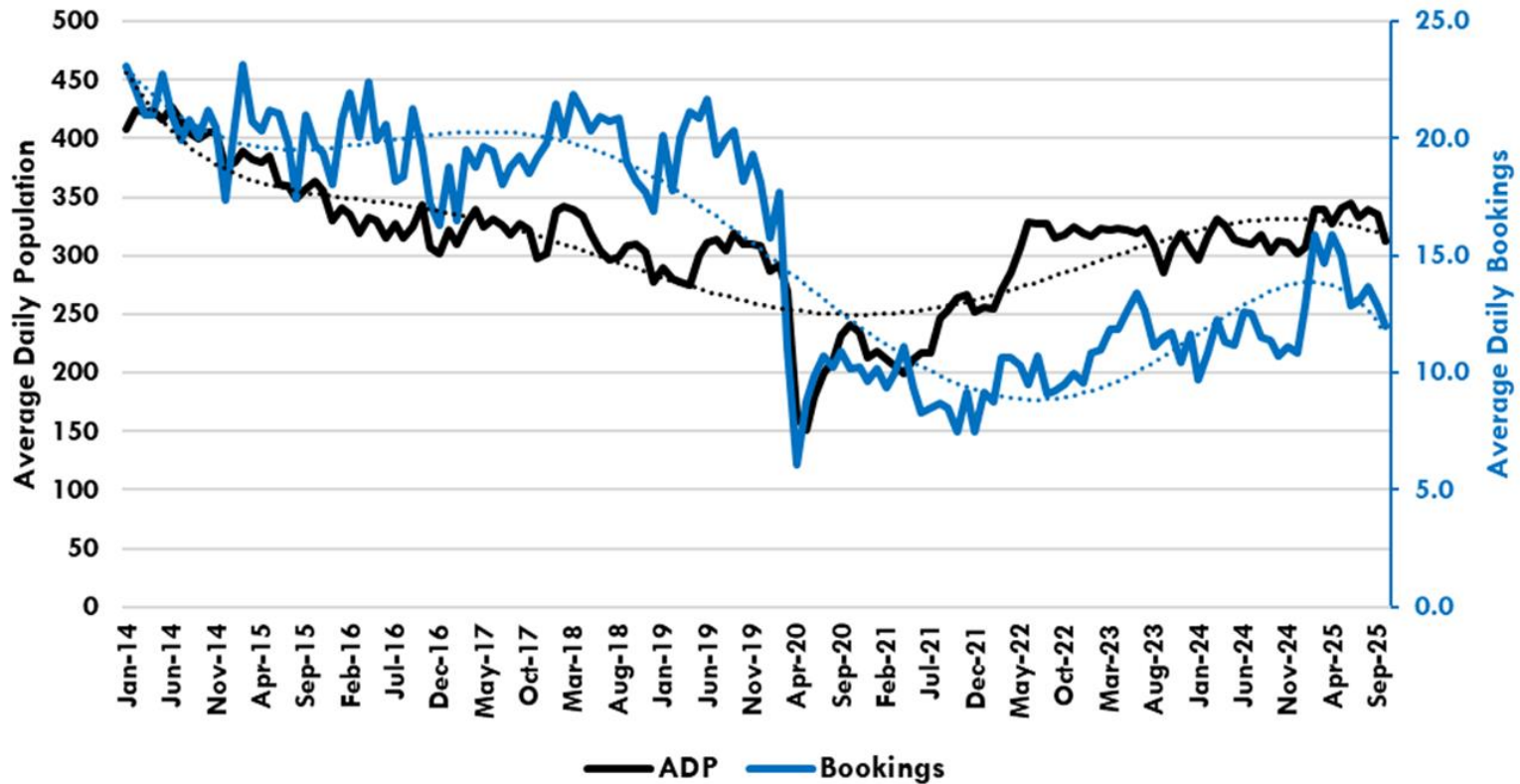




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Bookings vs. ADP

Whatcom County Jail ADP vs. Average Daily Bookings



- Moderately strong relationship between bookings and ADP throughout time

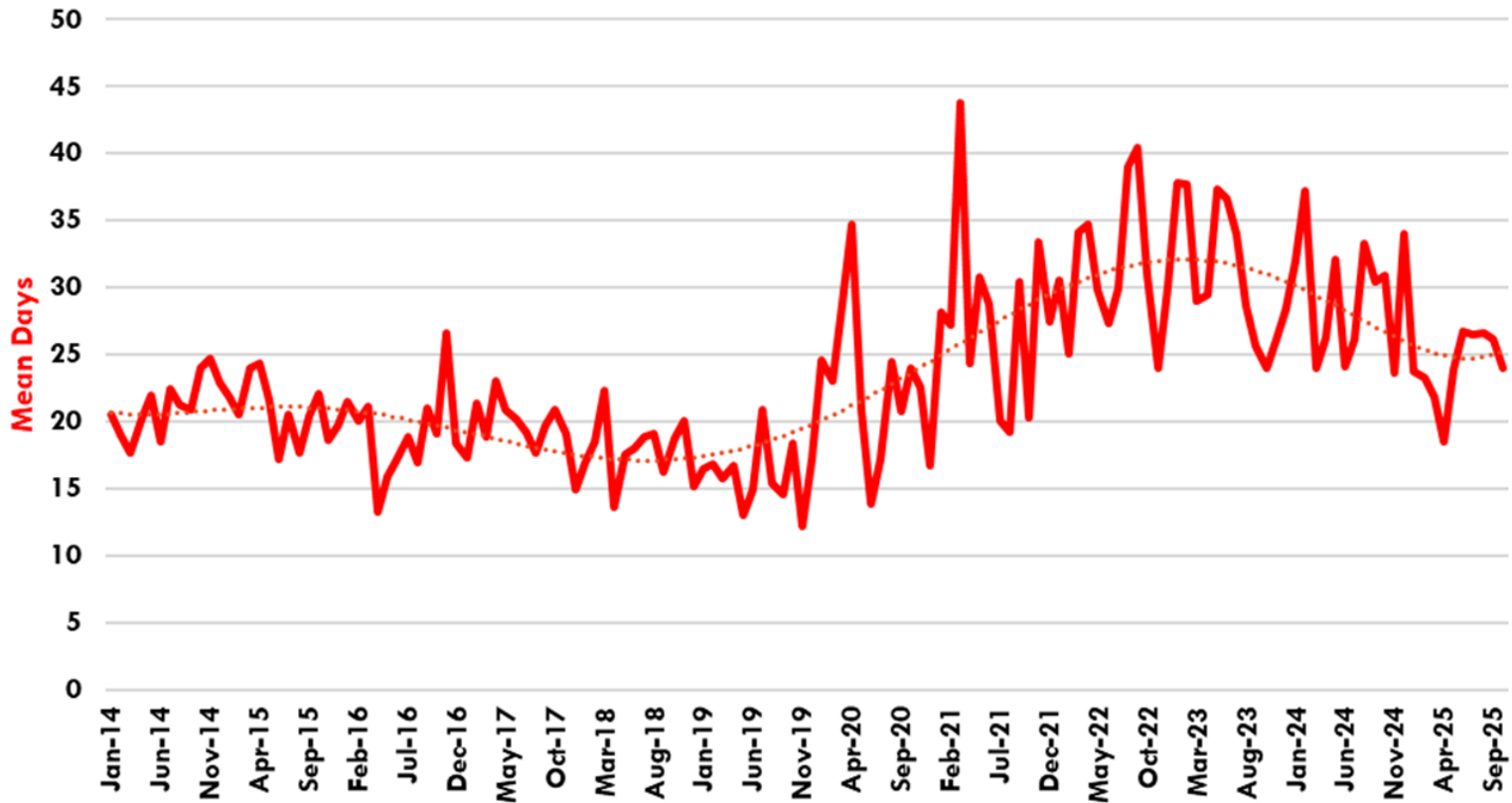




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Average Length of Stay

Whatcom County Jail Monthly ALOS



- ALOS = ‘Average Length of Stay’
- Nationally, ALOS numbers have increased since the pandemic
  - More serious charges
  - Increases in court case processing
- 2025 ALOS was 18% lower than in 2024

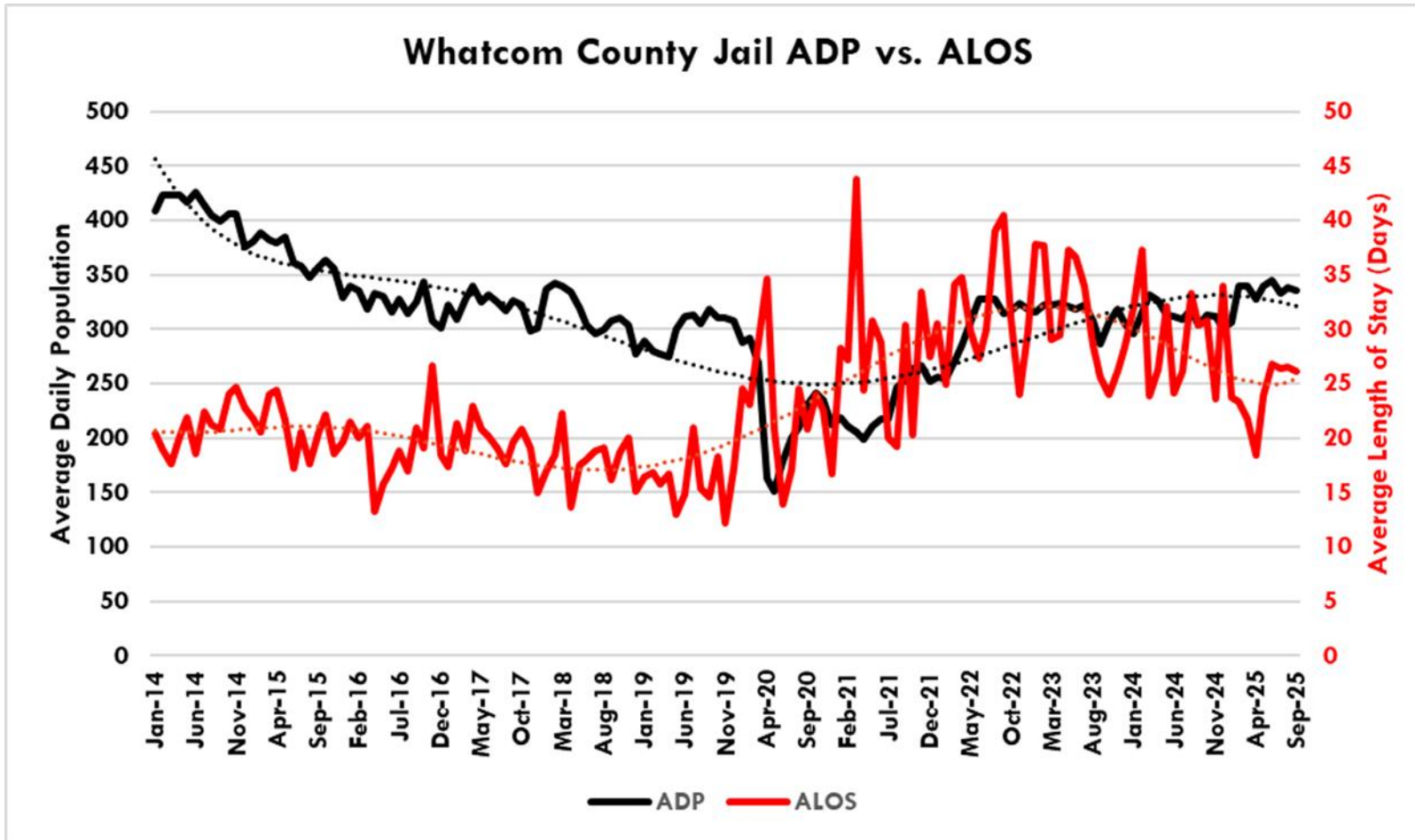
Year	ALOS	2025 YTD ALOS is...
2020	22.9	4% Larger
2021	28.2	15% Smaller
2022	31.5	24% Smaller
2023	31.1	23% Smaller
2024	29.3	18% Smaller
2025	23.9	---





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Average Length of Stay vs. ADP



- Relationship between ADP and ALOS has not been as strong as what we saw for bookings
- However, if the front-end processing was not so efficient, the population would be larger
- ALOS is very important and is very much working in combination with bookings to drive the population





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Population By Most Serious Offense

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Delta From 2019
<b>Violent Felony</b>	75.2	70.8	80.0	119.3	122.2	104.4	84.6	12.5%
<b>Theft/Fraud Felony</b>	24.9	16.3	16.9	26.2	27.7	22.2	36.1	45.2%
<b>Offenses vs People Felony</b>	12.4	15.7	15.9	21.6	15.4	20.7	28.9	134.1%
<b>Offenses vs Government Felony</b>	22.3	8.7	12.7	20.8	22.3	24.6	23.4	5.2%
<b>Burglary Felony</b>	18.0	16.9	19.9	30.1	30.5	24.2	21.2	17.7%
<b>Drugs Felony</b>	32.6	15.7	7.4	4.5	6.5	13.5	19.5	-40.3%
<b>DUI Misd</b>	24.2	15.7	16.3	15.0	15.5	16.8	19.0	-21.3%
<b>Offenses vs Government GMD</b>	15.9	4.8	5.2	4.3	5.3	7.6	12.8	-19.0%
<b>Sex Offense Felony</b>	9.4	7.1	9.7	10.7	8.9	12.0	12.3	30.6%
<b>Offenses vs People GMD</b>	7.7	8.8	9.2	12.0	10.4	12.9	12.3	60.3%
<b>Violent GMD</b>	10.5	9.7	9.5	11.8	11.0	12.9	10.9	3.9%
<b>Weapons Felony</b>	6.7	8.5	5.6	7.1	11.0	13.3	9.1	35.7%
<b>Violation of Probation Misd</b>	7.7	6.4	4.8	4.2	5.7	6.9	5.7	-25.9%
<b>Traffic Felony</b>	3.8	1.8	2.5	3.8	3.8	4.0	5.7	48.7%
<b>Theft/Fraud GMD</b>	3.4	0.9	0.7	1.2	1.7	2.3	4.4	30.6%
<b>Everything Else</b>	25.4	14.7	13.8	11.0	16.7	14.2	21.4	-15.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>299.9</b>	<b>222.5</b>	<b>230.2</b>	<b>303.5</b>	<b>314.6</b>	<b>312.5</b>	<b>327.4</b>	<b>9.2%</b>

- Table sorted by 2025 values
- Facility is holding people with serious offenses
- Note the population decrease for those charged with a violent felony





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

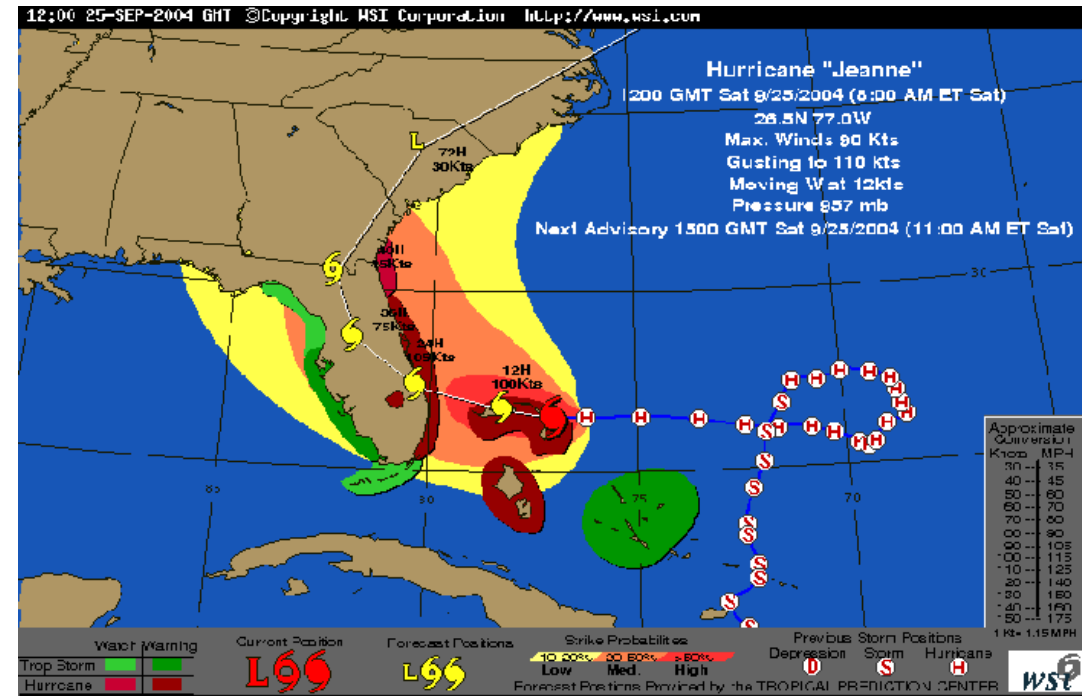
## Population Forecasting



Our time series mathematical models are built with the assumption that there are no unforeseen changes or alterations to laws, societal conditions, public policy, etc. when the forecast was produced



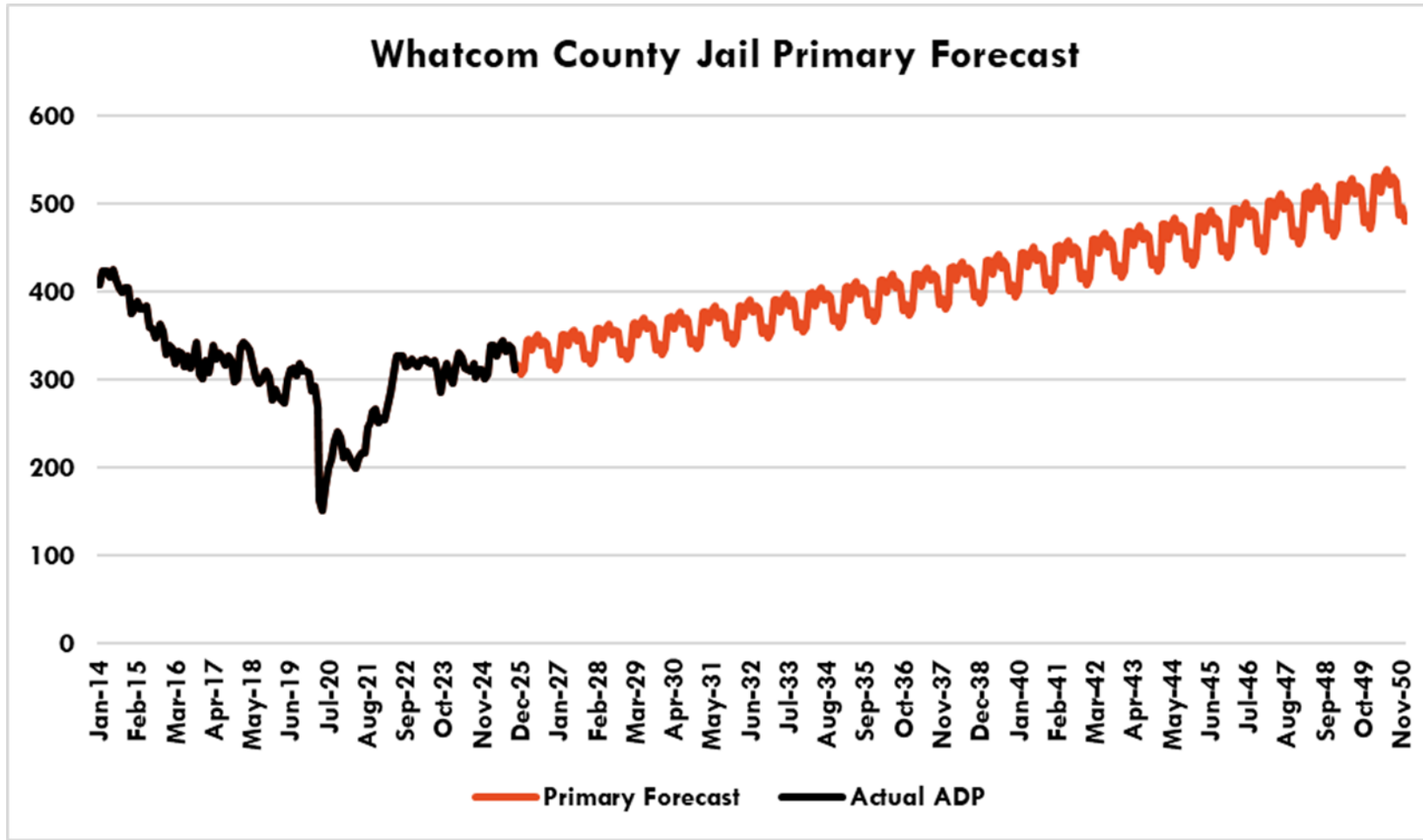
As with weather forecasting, unforeseen events may impact accuracy





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Whatcom County Jail Primary Population Forecast



- Forecast approach assumes that there is ample capacity for bookings
- As such, this forecast should not be checked against the current jail's population in the months/years ahead
- Bookings will increase from 14 per day to 20.5 per day
- ALOS needs to be 25 days
- 2050 ADP = 514





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

Average Daily Population vs. Actual Beds Needed

- This forecast does not reflect the required size of a hypothetical facility for 2 key reasons:
  1. It is important to remember that these forecasts are an average daily population. Actual populations will fluctuate above and below that average number. Our calculation indicates a peaking factor of 14.7% for females and 6.1% for males is required.
  2. To operate a facility safely and securely, extra capacity must be available to keep populations separated from each other, such as co-defendants, known enemies, people of different classifications, etc. We applied a standard norm of 10%.





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Primary Forecast – Bed Need Table

	Females				Males				Total ADP	Total Bed Need
	ADP	Peaking (14.7%)	Classification (10%)	Bed Need	ADP	Peaking (6.1%)	Classification (10%)	Bed Need		
<b>2030</b>	59	9	6	73	300	18	30	349	359	422
<b>2035</b>	64	9	6	80	329	20	33	381	393	462
<b>2040</b>	70	10	7	88	359	22	36	417	430	505
<b>2045</b>	77	11	8	96	393	24	39	456	470	552
<b>2050</b>	84	12	8	105	430	26	43	499	514	604

The forecast indicates that by 2050, 604 beds are necessary to safely house 514 people.

Remember, this assumes that the system can maintain a 25-day ALOS.

Note also that the statistical number of beds needed on this table will not match the architectural plan due to programming/design realities

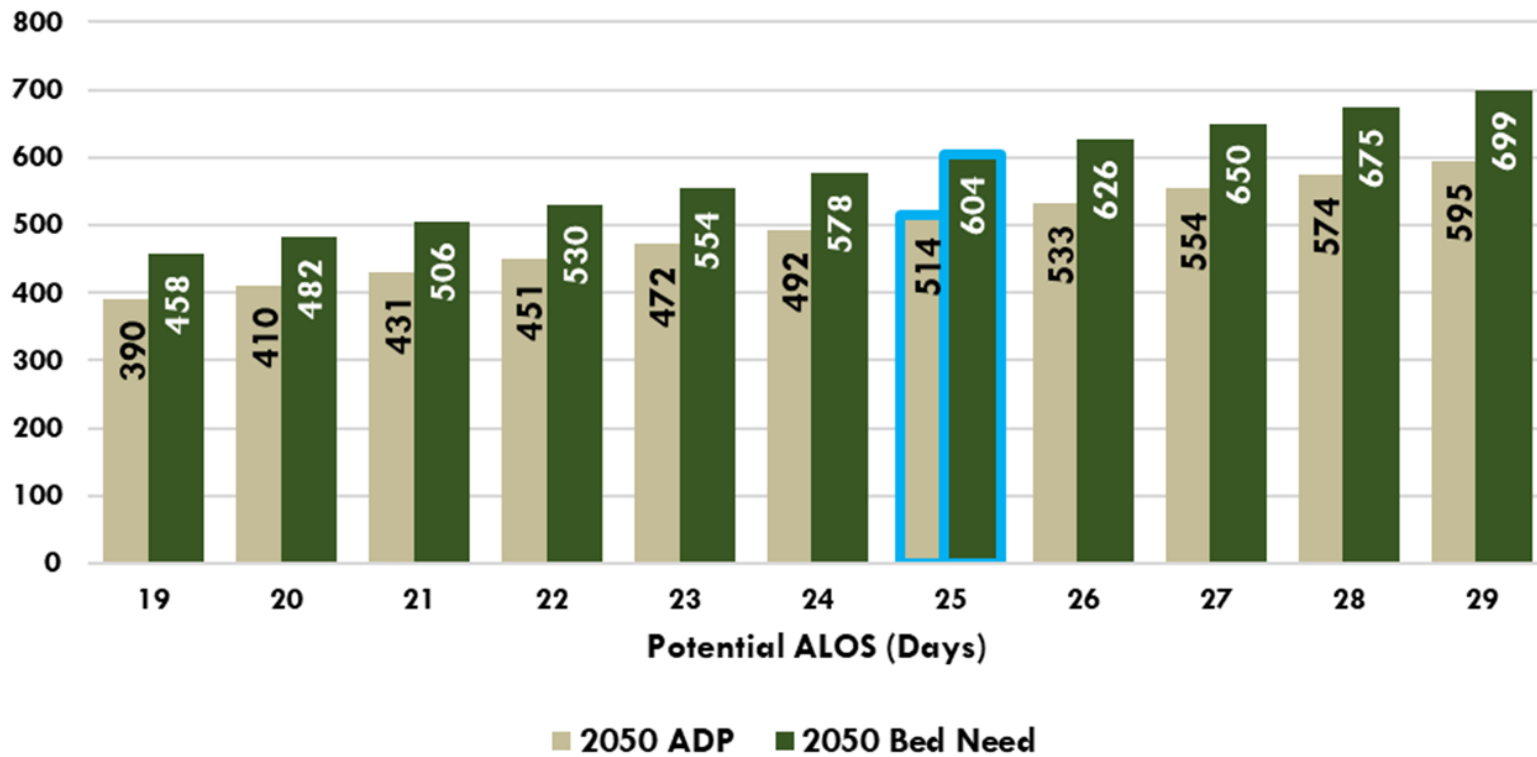




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Primary Population Forecast Alternate Outcomes

Whatcom Alternate Forecast Outcomes By Future ALOS At Projected 20.5 Bookings Per Day



- This chart examines ADP and bed need with various ALOS outcomes at 20.5 bookings per day
- Primary forecast projects ALOS to be 25 days in 2050
- ALOS currently 24 days

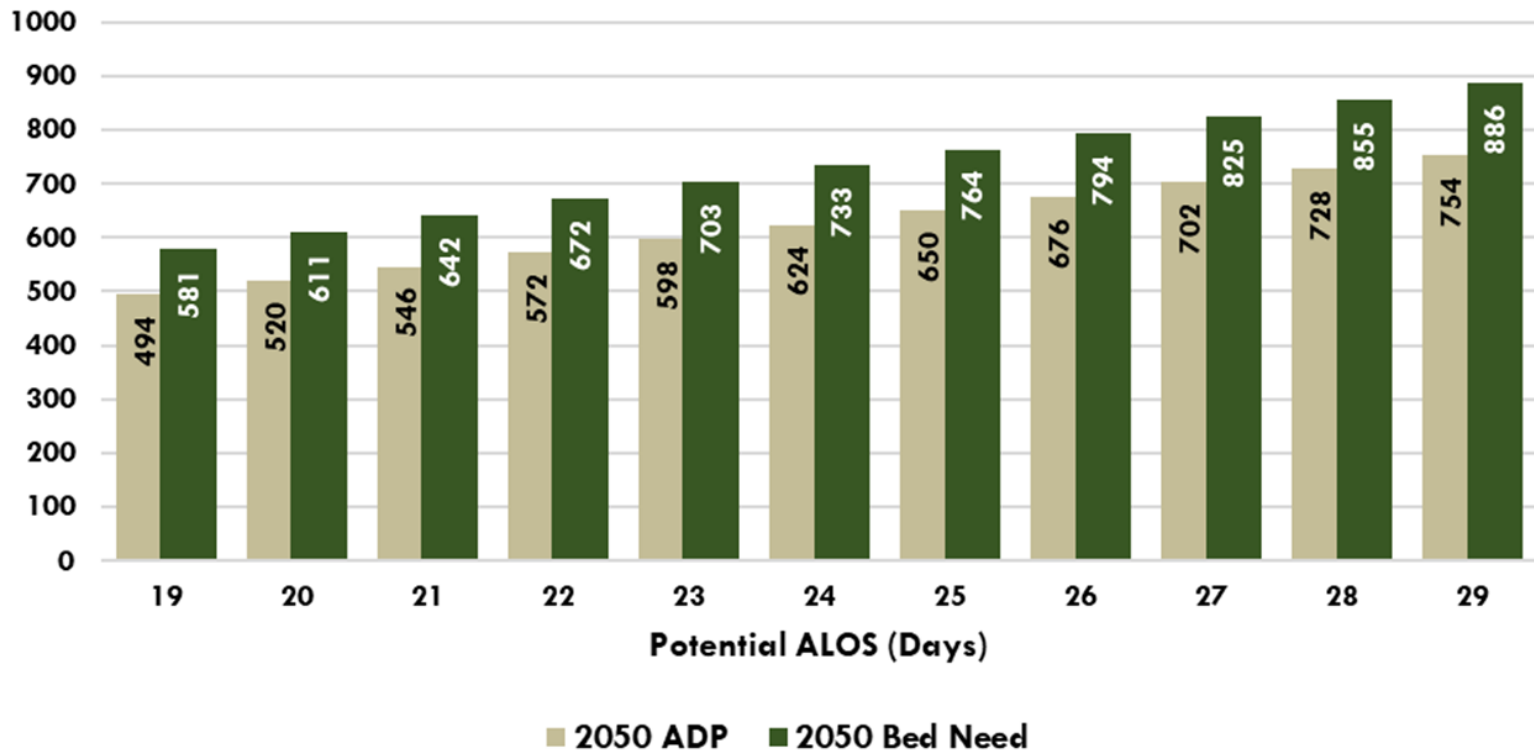




# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Primary Population Forecast Alternate Outcomes

**Whatcom Alternate Forecast Outcomes By Future ALOS At Upper Limit 26 Bookings Per Day**



- This chart examines ADP and bed need with various ALOS outcomes if there are 26 bookings per day in 2050
- A portion of our models projected bookings to exceed even this level





# Whatcom County Jail Forecast Analysis

## Conclusions

- Our forecast calls for 604 beds to house 514 people by 2050
- Whatcom County's criminal justice system needs to monitor and manage length of stay into the future
- The key uncertainty is the number of bookings into the jail once capacity becomes available
- There are some opportunities in the population to manage population size through diversion and deflection; the misdemeanor proportion of the population is higher than what we are seeing across the country



# Next Steps

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# Next Steps

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- Council resolution setting budget cap and values.
- STV set to move forward with programming efforts and alignment of scope and budget.
- Council will review proposed programming plan and alignment with budget in summer 2026.

