



Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)

Public Participation Plan Update

November 19, 2014

What's in the existing Public Participation Plan?

- The existing Plan was adopted in 2003
- Includes goals and objectives for engaging the public in SCOG planning, programs and projects
 - Public access: Provide timely notice and reasonable access to meetings and information
 - Public outreach: Provide opportunities for the public to engage in issues under consideration by SCOG
 - Public input: Provide opportunities for public input, and consider and respond to public input as part of decision-making processes
- The Plan will be re-assessed to determine its effectiveness, and updated as necessary

The process to update the Plan



Current work: Assessment and Stakeholder interviews

- Purpose of stakeholder interviews:
 - Learn about how members of the community engage with SCOG currently
 - Gauge awareness and understanding of SCOG, how it operates, and the issues and topics it deals with
 - Receive feedback on how people prefer to engage on the issues that matter to them, and how they prefer to receive information
 - Hear more about what works well and opportunities for improvement
- Held in late-October, early-November 2014
- Seven (7) interviews have been held to date, including two (2) large group interviews

Who did we talk to?

Stakeholder interviews were held with representatives from the following groups and organizations:

- Center for Independence North Sound
- Citizens Alliance for Property Rights
- Citizens Alliance for Rural Preservation
- City of Anacortes
- Community Action of Skagit County
- Economic Development Association of Skagit County
- Friends of Skagit County
- Island Transit
- Port of Skagit
- SCOG staff
- Skagit Transit
- WSDOT

What questions did we ask?

Background on SCOG

- Are you familiar with SCOG and its work?
- Do you typically engage with SCOG, and if so, how?
- Do you have any thoughts or feedback on how SCOG engages with the public?
- What issues do you think people in your organizations/community care most about?

What questions did we ask?

Getting information

- How do you typically hear about news or events in your community?
- Are there any groups or organizations that are hard to reach?
- How could SCOG make information more accessible to your community?
- Does your organization use social media?

Getting involved

- For what topics are you most likely to get involved?
- How do you like to provide feedback on an issue or topic?

What did we hear?

Background on SCOG

- Stakeholders engage with SCOG to varying degrees
 - Attending SCOG Board meetings
 - Participating on various sub-committees
 - Hearing from SCOG staff through presentations to local community organizations
- There is appreciation for the work that SCOG staff already does to engage the public, and recognition that resources are limited
- Limited public awareness of SCOG
- Consensus among stakeholders that general public is not familiar with SCOG, or how to engage with SCOG

What did we hear?

Background on SCOG

- Interest in additional opportunities to hear from or engage with SCOG
 - More regular interaction with local community organizations
 - Providing more opportunities for dialogue as part of decision making processes
- People are interested in a lot of different issues, and this can drive who will engage in any given process
 - Economic development/jobs
 - Land use/property rights
 - Transportation
 - Water rights

What did we hear?

Getting information

- There's no single tool that people use to receive or share information. People get information in a variety of methods, such as:
 - Local publications
 - Email
 - Posting information on the web
 - Outreach activities (e.g. briefings, events, etc.)
 - Social media

What did we hear?

Getting involved

- People like to engage in different ways, and so a multi-faceted approach is needed
 - Ideas mentioned included: online/social media, reaching out to local community organizations and groups, providing opportunities for conversation and dialogue, having a presence at local community events, etc.
- People want to get involved on the issues they care about, but there is a lack of public understanding on how to engage with SCOG – more education is needed

Some ideas to consider

- Explore opportunities to “share SCOG’s story”
- Further develop relationships with local community organizations
- Make it easy to engage with SCOG by providing multiple ways to engage and considering how/when public proceedings occur
- Make it clear to the public when and how they can engage in decision-making processes

What will the updated Public Participation Plan include?

- The updated Plan will be developed based on the feedback received to date, and will be developed as a core plan, with tactical appendices
- Goals and objectives for public participation
- Pithy, clear messages on what SCOG is/does
- Strategies and tools for:
 - Planning effective public participation
 - Ongoing proceedings of the Board
 - Larger, programmatic initiatives/projects
 - Getting public feedback
 - Engaging traditionally under-represented populations
- A list of various community organizations and groups, including contact info, to reach out to when engaging the public



Thank you