



# **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**