



2016
ANNUAL
REPORT

EXECUTIVE’S MESSAGE

TRANSPORTATION

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As we end 2016 and move into 2017 the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) has been doing regional planning in Skagit County for 50 years. As you will see in later in this report, that planning has been over a number of issues that affected multiple agencies in the county from housing to transportation. Jurisdictions and leaders in the County have a long history of working together to solve regional issues and I am proud to say that SCOG has assisted in many of those efforts over 50 years.

SCOG as a voluntary organization of local governments and members tries to foster a cooperative effort in resolving problems. We prepare policies, and plans that are common to the membership and regional. SCOG focuses primarily on two important areas that affect the membership of the Council and the citizens of Skagit County.

The first focus is on transportation. SCOG prepares regional transportation plans consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans, manages and awards federal grant funds to construct projects, and provides a forum for discussing and coordinating regional transportation issues.

The second focus is on economic development. SCOG manages four revolving loan fund programs and prepares the region’s comprehensive economic development strategy.

A major new program was started in 2016 centered on housing issues in the county. This work has been focused on providing data and analysis of the interrelationships between land use, growth, transportation and economics to assist members in planning for adequate housing now and into the future. This work will result in a set of recommend actions over the next few years to improve the housing situation in the County.

To be successful, we depend on the many talented and committed elected officials, staff and people of the region to engage in our work at the regional level. There is a lot more to come in 2017 and we look forward to working with you on creating a prosperous future for Skagit County.

Kevin Murphy
Executive Director

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The history of SCOG spans 50 years. The following provides an overview of significant activities related to the formation and continuation of SCOG going back to the 1950s.

1950s

Two pieces of federal legislation in the 1950s helped establish the foundation for regional planning in Skagit County:

- (1) The Housing Act of 1954 established federal aid for comprehensive planning through the introduction of Section 701 grants; and
- (2) The Federal-aid Highway Act of 1956 authorized the construction of the Interstate Highway System, including what later became known as Interstate 5, with the federal government covering 90% of highway construction costs.

The construction of this transportation system was a significant contributor to suburbanization around the U.S. following World War II. The next two decades would see a substantial growth in regional planning in Skagit County and around the U.S.

1960s

In 1965, the State of Washington enabled the establishment of “regional agencies” or “conferences”, for the purpose of studying regional and governmental problems of mutual interest and concern. The Skagit Regional Planning Council (Council) was formed shortly thereafter, in 1967, through an agreement of local governments. The agreement allowed the Council to receive grants, which were primarily provided by the federal government and funneled through the state government at the time, to conduct regional planning in a variety of subject areas. The Council joined the hundreds of other regional agencies/councils of governments (COGs) that were created across the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s. Several key pieces of federal legislation impacted COGs’ activities including:

- (a) The Federal-aid Highway Act of 1962, which introduced the “3-C Process”, the comprehensive, cooperative and continuing transportation planning process, and led to the creation of Metropolitan Planning Orga-

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nizations to carry out the process;

(b) The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which included Title VI preventing discrimination by government agencies using federal funds;

(c) The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, which encouraged the formation of COGs controlled by elected officials and addressing of local problems using a regional approach; and

(d) The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, which authorized federal financial assistance to regions with substantial and persistent unemployment and underemployment, consistent with long-range economic planning.

Much of this legislation was part of President Johnson’s Great Society program focused on the elimination of poverty and racial injustice. Many other federal programs were created, primarily in the mid-1960s, that provided federal aid to local governments for acquiring park land, developing public transit systems, urban renewal, building public facilities

and acquiring land for these facilities, beautifying public areas, and many others. A typical condition of federal aid through many of these programs was consistency with various plans and programs, many of which were developed by the Council. Federal legislation in the 1960s provided much of the bases for transportation planning, economic development planning and lending, and nondiscrimination that SCOG follows today.

Interstate 5 was completed in Skagit County in 1965 and completed as a freeway from the Canadian border to the Oregon state line in 1969.

1970s

The Council undertook many countywide plans, programs and studies during the 1970s. These included:

- (a) A sewer, water and drainage plan (1970);
- (b) A solid waste disposal plan (1971);
- (c) Land-use, economic development, and housing plans and programs (1976-1977);

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(d) The comprehensive economic development strategy (1978);

(e) A social services plan (1978);

(f) A regional transportation plan (1978); and many others.

Planning and coordination activities at the Council led to two significant accomplishments in the late 1970s:

(1) Reopening of the Northern State Hospital facility in 1978, which had closed in 1973, to house a federal Young Adult Conservation Corps and state programs for residential alcohol treatment and mental health; and

(2) Saving the Anacortes to Vancouver Island state ferry service which had been slated for discontinuation.

In addition to the federal funds flowing to the Council, through the state, for regional planning, the Council also acted as an “areawide clearinghouse” in the 1970s whereby applications for federal aid were reviewed and commented on by the Council. This “A-95” process

was established nationwide to implement the 1968 Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, ensuring that federal funds were consistent with locally determined plans, were cost effective and not overlapping/duplicative.

1980s

During the 1980s, regional planning was substantially curtailed across the U.S. Federal funds to regional planning were substantially reduced or eliminated, with the exception of transportation planning funds, and the A-95 process was eliminated in favor of state-driven processes. This time marked a devolution of power from the federal government to the state governments, a transition to block grants with fewer federal requirements for states and a move away from the federal involvement and funding for regional comprehensive planning that had occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. The Skagit Regional Planning Council underwent a name change to the Skagit Council of Governments in 1980. Regional planning continued at SCOG, but was reduced from what occurred in the 1970s. Countywide plans and studies included:

(a) A solid waste management plan (1980);

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(b) An industrial lands survey (1982); (1) Have a population of 100,000 or more; or

(c) The comprehensive economic development strategy (throughout the 1980s); and (2) Contain at least three counties.

(d) A hazardous waste plan (1989).

While the duties of RTPO have expanded since 1990, their primary duties were originally to:

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Following a substantial loss of manufacturing jobs in the early 1980s, SCOG applied for federal assistance through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). SCOG began the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) in 1985 with a federal EDA grant for \$700,000. Several loans were made in the mid- to late-1980s directly to local companies to create or retain jobs. These companies were in the forest products, seafood products and boat construction industries.

(1) Certify that local GMA comprehensive plans' transportation elements are consistent with GMA and regional transportation plans; and

(2) Develop and adopt a regional transportation plan that is consistent with local GMA comprehensive plans and state transportation plans.

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Under GMA, RTPOs were to be the same organization as federal Metropolitan Planning Organizations where these existed, which did not apply to Skagit County until 2003. Skagit County had less than 100,000 population when GMA passed, and so the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization was formed in 1991 for Skagit and Island counties. Together, the two counties met the RTPO formation requirement. SCOG was the original lead agency for the SIRTPO.

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1990s
A watershed event in coordinated and comprehensive planning occurred in 1990 with passage of the state Growth Management Act (GMA). GMA enabled the establishment of Regional Transportation Plan Organizations (RTPOs) in counties across the state. RTPOs were to encompass at least one county and:

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After the SIRTPO was formed, the transportation planning and programming function expanded at SCOG. Beginning in 1994, transportation funding flowed through SCOG to local governments from the federal Surface Transportation Program. The first GMA-compliant regional transportation plan was completed in 1996 for Skagit and Island counties. SCOG also assisted with distribution of state GMA planning funds to local governments in the early 1990s, participated in water resource inventory area planning and flood hazard mitigation planning.

The North Sound Connecting Communities Project (aka The Farmhouse Gang) began in 1996 and has been working on regional issues in Skagit, Whatcom, Island, San Juan and north Snohomish counties ever since. Much of the focus of The Farmhouse Gang has been on enhancing regional transportation connections across county boundaries for the movement of people and goods. Specific projects of The Farmhouse Gang include plans and studies such as:

- (a) A regional governance study;
- (b) A feasibility study for adding passenger-only ferry service;

(c) Intercounty express transit services (currently in operation); and

(d) A commuter rail feasibility study.

The Farmhouse Gang continues to operate as a regional transportation forum with administrative funding coming from a federal grant administered by SCOG.

From 1996 - 2000, Skagit County received several federal Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, through agreement with the State of Washington, that are administered by SCOG. These grants expanded SCOG's Revolving Loan Fund into additional areas of lending from when the RLF was first established in 1985.

2000s

The 2000 decennial Census identified, for the first time, an Urbanized Area in Skagit County with a population of 50,000 or more. The implications of this designation were significant for SCOG, because it allowed a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to be created in Skagit County for the first time.

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An MPO was formed for the first time in Skagit County in 2003. It was named the Skagit Metropolitan Planning Organization, and covered the Urbanized Area in Skagit County surrounding the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington and Sedro-Woolley, and those areas expected to become urbanized over 20 years. Establishment of the MPO greatly expanded the transportation planning and programming capacity in Skagit County, and brought new revenue streams from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration into the area. SCOG was identified to staff the MPO.

In 2005, SCOG updated the state GMA-compliant regional transportation plan and integrated it with the federal Metropolitan Transportation Plan, a plan that is central to the 3-C Process.

2010s (so far)

Once the MPO was created in 2003, there were three overlapping regional governance structures in Skagit County directly related to SCOG:

- (2) The Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (Skagit and Island counties); and
- (3) The Skagit Metropolitan Planning Organization (Mount Vernon Urbanized Area including the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley as well as some surrounding areas).

From 2011 - 2015, multiple efforts were undertaken to clarify and simplify these governance structures. In 2014, a governance agreement was executed by Skagit County jurisdictions consolidating SCOG, the MPO and the Skagit portion of the SIRTPO into SCOG. The agreement also included a provision that SCOG would become a single-county RTPO if the SIRTPO were to dissolve, as Skagit County now exceeded the 100,000 population requirement for a single-county RTPO in state law, which it did not when GMA passed in 1990 . The SIRTPO was dissolved in 2015 following member withdrawals from the regional organization. SCOG is now the federal MPO, state RTPO and state regional agency/conference for Skagit County.

- (1) The Skagit Council of Governments (Skagit County);

MEMBER AGENCIES

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The following are the member agencies of SCOG:

County

Skagit County

Cities

City of Anacortes

City of Burlington

City of Mount Vernon

City of Sedro-Woolley

Transit

Skagit Transit

Tribes

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

Samish Indian Nation

Special Districts

Skagit PUD #1

Towns

Town of Concrete

Town of Hamilton

Town of La Conner

Town of Lyman

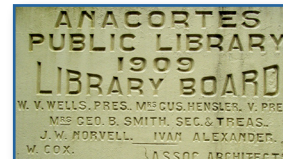
State

Washington State Department of Transportation

Ports

Port of Anacortes

Port of Skagit



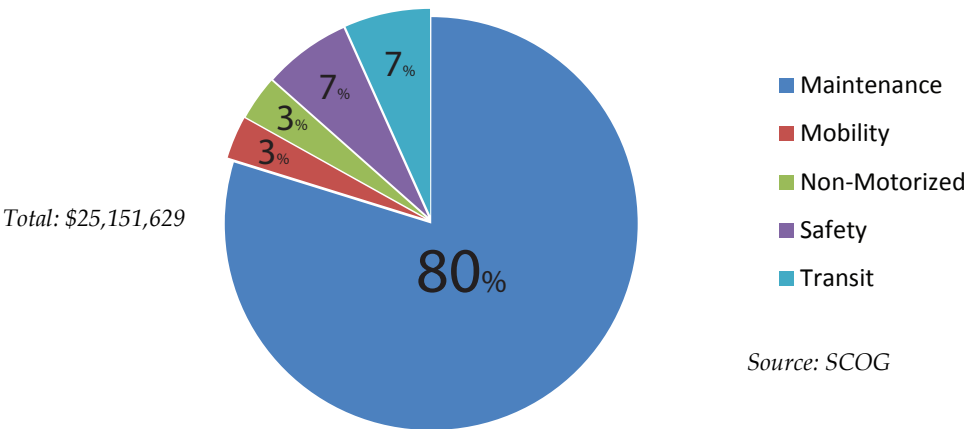
TRANSPORTATION

2016 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SCOG
Adopted Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan
Certified Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements

Transportation is a primary regional function of the Skagit Council of Governments. SCOG’s role in transportation extends from the state, to the region, to the local level. Through its metropolitan planning organization responsibilities, SCOG conducts a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive

multimodal transportation planning process. This process is ongoing and every year SCOG updates its work program, which lists all the transportation-related activities being conducted by the organization, to implement the regional transportation planning process.

2016 Federal Fund Obligations by Project Type



Source: SCOG

TRANSPORTATION INDICATORS

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Transportation indicators in Skagit County that SCOG tracks include the following:

\$1,710,927 Funds for Regional
Projects Obligated in 2016

\$25,151,629 Federal Obligations for
Transportation Projects in 2016

\$0 Grant Funding Returned
to State/Feds in 2016

3 Regionally Funded Projects
Completed

Sedro-Woolley's Jameson Arterial Extension to SR 9
Skagit Transit's Bus Stop Seating
Skagit Transit's March's Point P & R Bike Shelter

-12.6% Skagit Transit Ridership
Decrease 2015 to 2016 - WSDOT 2015 Summary of
Public Transportation & Skagit Transit

THE MEANING OF OBLIGATION

"Obligation" refers to funding being designated for a project. It does not mean that funds have been spent, only that they have been set aside for future spending.

9 Projects Obligated Regional Funds
in 2016

Anacortes:

32nd Street and D Avenue Intersection
Improvements
March's Point Shoulder Widening
Ship Harbor Boul. and SR 20 Spur Intersect. Impr.

Mount Vernon:

Hoag Road Sidewalk and Bike Lane Gap Project

Sedro-Woolley:

Jameson Arterial Extension to SR 9
SR 20/Cascade Trail West Extension - Phase 1A
SR 20/Cascade Trail West Extension - Phase 1B

Skagit Transit:

Bus Stop Seating
March's Point Park and Ride Bike Shelter

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

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SCOG maintains the transportation plan for the region. This plan, which was updated in 2016, serves to coordinate transportation planning across jurisdictions across Skagit County and meets the transportation plan requirements in federal and state laws. The plan is developed through a variety of stakeholder groups, technical advisory committees, member organizations and public participation.

To implement the regional transportation plan, SCOG maintains a regional transportation improvement program (RTIP) of regional transportation projects. The RTIP reflects the investment priorities of the regional transportation plan and the projects on the RTIP must be consistent with the plan.

Funds from the federal government, state government and other sources are used by local agencies to undertake transportation projects around Skagit County. The transportation planning process goes from the long-range vision of the plan, to the programming of projects, and finally to improve the transportation infrastructure around the county through completing transportation projects. In 2016, SCOG led a process to prioritize human

services transportation projects in Skagit County, which will culminate in the adoption of a prioritized list of projects. After the regional prioritization of projects, they are then considered for funding through a statewide grant program that utilizes funds from the Federal Transit Administration and Washington state to fund transportation projects.

In addition to developing transportation plans, programs and project selection/prioritization processes, SCOG conducts traffic counts on a regular basis to be utilized by jurisdictions around Skagit County and partners in transportation studies. One study, now underway, is focusing on the Cook Road/Interstate 5 intersection and examining needs in the area and different transportation options to meet those needs.



TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

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While SCOG does not actually construct any transportation projects, it leads the process by which funding decisions are made at a regional level. The following are the regionally funded transportation projects completed in 2016 by members of SCOG:

Sedro-Woolley *(photo of project on cover)*

Completed a project that added a roundabout on State Route 9 and added new roadway connections to the roundabout at Jameson Street

FUNDING PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING

Over the past few years, a greater share of regional funds for transportation has gone to preliminary engineering (PE) for projects. Using regional funds for PE has proven effective in getting projects started prior to getting other funds for acquiring right of way or constructing projects. Since a relatively minor amount of funding is available through regional processes, many jurisdictions have decided to pursue funds to begin/finish the design of a project, and to complete project funding at a later date using other funding sources that have higher levels of funding available. Kick-starting a project using regional funds often allows jurisdictions to leverage funds from other sources to successfully complete projects.

and Rhodes Road. This project slows traffic and reduces turning conflicts, making the intersection much safer.

Skagit Transit

Added bus stop seats at locations that did not have seating and constructed a covered bicycle shelter at March's Point Park and Ride near Anacortes. Together, these projects added amenities for pedestrian and cyclists, which enhanced multimodal connections to transit.

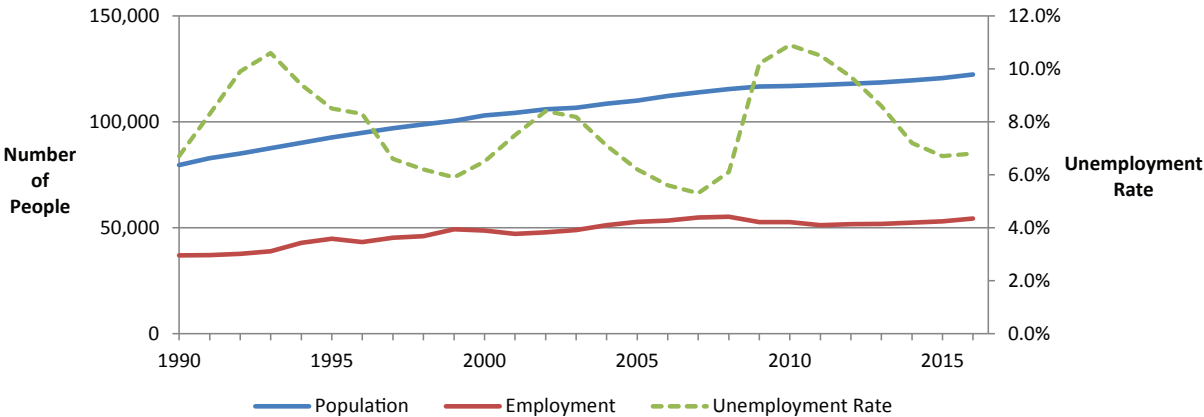


Bicycle Shelter at March's Point Park and Ride

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SCOG has prepared the Overall Economic Development Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the county going back to 1976. The most recent CEDS was completed in 2003 with a supplement in 2013 updating economic data and economic development projects planned around the county. The 2013 CEDS data supplement and implementation plan included over 200 projects with which SCOG members are planning to implement the CEDS.

Population Growth Steady while Employment Fluctuates



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington State Employment Security Department & Office of Financial Management

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

SCOG tracks several measures* to get a sense of how the regional economy is doing. These are fairly common measures and movement in a positive or negative direction does not necessarily reflect any decisions made by SCOG. They do, however, provide a gauge to regularly ascertain where present and future economic development efforts may be directed. These Skagit County indicators are as follows:

2016 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SCOG

4 Revolving Loan Fund Loans Paid Off
Skagit County Economic Profile Completed

6.8% Average Unemployment Rate
in 2016 - WA ESD, Seas. Adj.

+1,477 Civilian Labor Force Average Annual Change - WA ESD, Seas. Adj., 2014 - 2015

+0.1% Change in Average Unemployment Rate - WA ESD, Seas. Adj., 2015 - 2016

+6.5% Change in Taxable Retail Sales - WA DOR (3rd Q. 2014 - 3rd Q. 2015)

54,369 Total Employment in 2016 - WA ESD, Seas. Adj.

2.6% Inflation Rate - US BLS, Seattle Area, Consumer Price Index, Dec. 2015 - 2016

**Note: there are several other measures of economic development that may be appropriate to measure the Skagit County economy including, but not limited to: business starts and failures; number of higher than average wage jobs; change in average annual wage; educational attainment; worker productivity; patents; and exports.*

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REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program was originally funded in response to the loss of over 1,500 industrial jobs between 1982 and 1984. The Business Development RLF was established in 1985 with a \$700,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and \$234,000 of local funding. The primary objective of the EDA program is job retention and/or creation. It is also designed to leverage private sector investment in local business expansion projects. Since 1985, 65 loans totaling approximately \$3.7 million dollars have been made and 1,837 jobs are estimated to have been saved or created.

The success of the EDA Business Development RLF Program led to additional funding for two new programs. The Micro Enterprise RLF and the Business Lending RLF were both funded by Community Development Block

Grants in 1996 and 2000. The overall goal is to benefit low-to-moderate income persons. The Micro Enterprise RLF received a total of \$220,000 of grant funding. The purpose of this RLF is to provide financing for small businesses with up to 5 employees. The type of business funded typically has a low cost of entry and/or expansion. Examples of these types of businesses include: landscape and specialty contractor; shoe repair shop; massage therapy; and dog groomer. There have been 34 loans totaling approximately \$362,000 made since 1996.

The Business Lending RLF was funded with a \$500,000 grant. The goal of the program is to finance business expansion and/or retention of business and industry in Skagit County. All for-profit business types are eligible. There have been 55 loans totaling approximately \$1.4 million dollars made since 1996.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND INDICATORS

SCOG uses several indicators to measure the success of the RLF Program. These indicators are as follows:

8 Active Loans in 2016

1 New Loan Disbursed in 2016

16 New Loan Inquiries in 2016

4 Loans Paid Off in 2016

\$333,248 Total Value of Loans
(2016 year-end)

\$869,748 Total Monies Available
to Lend (2016 year-end)



\$0 Total Value of Loans and Interest
Written Off in 2016

1,837 Total Estimated Jobs Created/Retained from RLF, 1985 - 2016

\$6.5 million Value of RLF Loans
Made from 1985 - 2016

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Under the Washington state Growth Management Act (GMA), Skagit County, and the cities and towns within the county, have established a collaborative process for adoption of countywide planning policies (CPPs), modifications to urban growth areas, and allocating growth in population and employment across the county. CPPs provide a countywide framework by which county, city, and town comprehensive plans are developed and adopted.

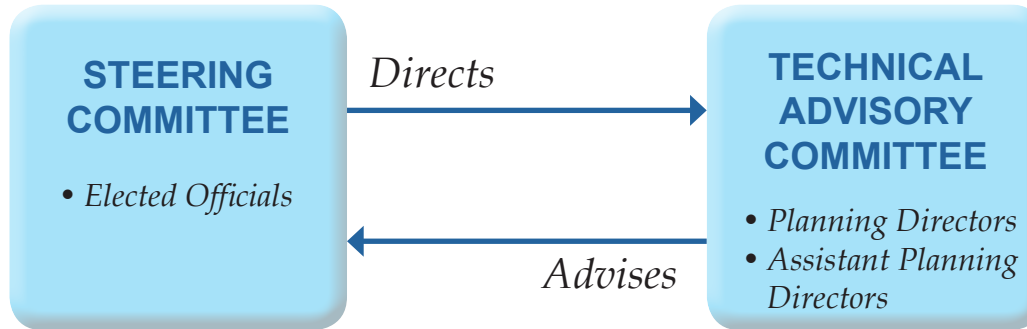
The 2002 Framework Agreement (Framework Agreement) was executed in 2002 by Skagit County, the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley, and the Town of La Conner. The Town of Hamilton signed on to the agreement in 2014. The towns of Concrete and Lyman could also sign on to the agreement in the future. The Framework Agreement includes provisions and procedures to address the collaborative requirement for planning at the regional level through GMA.

The Framework Agreement replaces an earlier agreement, from 1992, that had been used to originally establish countywide planning policies in Skagit County after GMA was signed into law. The 1992 agreement led to the first set of CPPs that year, with a subsequent amendment in 1996.

SCOG is not a party to the Framework Agreement. SCOG does, however, provide administrative support to the planning organization identified as the “GMA Committee” in the Framework Agreement, which includes a Steering Committee composed of elected officials, with support from a Technical Advisory Committee composed of planning directors and assistant planning directors. The Steering Committee develops recommendations for CPPs, urban growth areas, and allocations of population and employment to be used in comprehensive planning processes by jurisdictions planning under GMA.

The relationships between the committees are illustrated by the graphic on the following page.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT



Responsibilities over:

1. Countywide Planning Policies;
2. Urban Growth Areas; and
3. Population and Employment Allocations.

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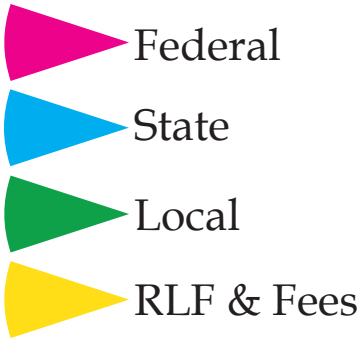
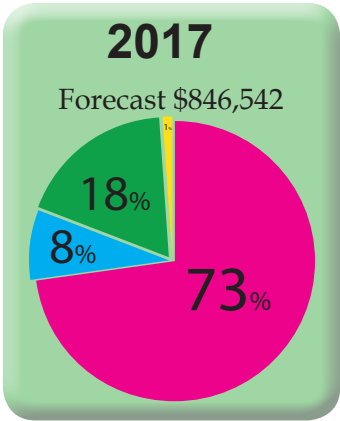
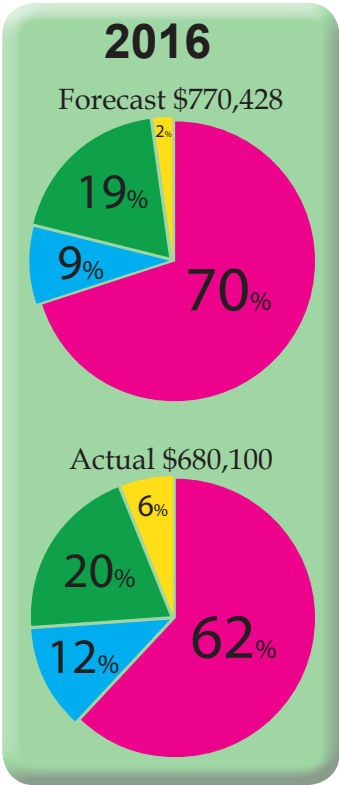
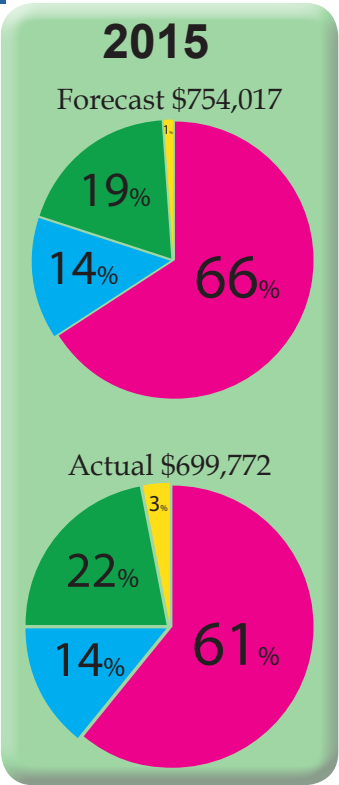
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REVENUES

2016 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SCOG
Audit Free of Findings for 6th Straight Year



Notes: 2016 ending net cash and investments were \$219,910; "Local" revenues include contributions, donations, investment interest and misc. revenues; and percentages are rounded and therefore may not equal 100% when combined.

EXPENSES

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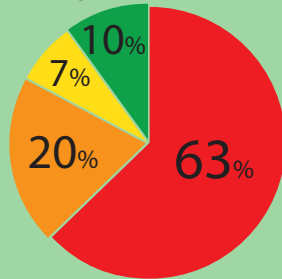
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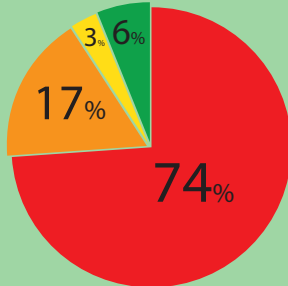
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2015

Budgeted \$739,951

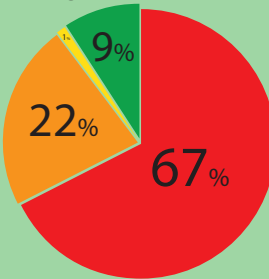


Actual \$644,466

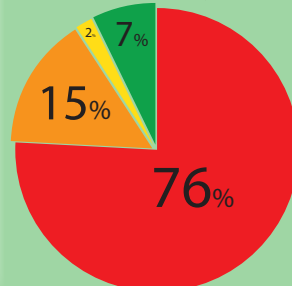


2016

Budgeted \$748,609



Actual \$653,546



Notes: 2016 ending net cash and investments were \$219,910; "Other" expenses include supplies, printing, insurance, training, software, rent and misc. expenses; and percentages are rounded and therefore may not equal 100% when combined.

WHAT'S COMING IN 2017?

TRANSPORTATION

Certify Transportation Elements

SCOG will work with local jurisdictions to review and certify transportation elements of comprehensive plans, ensuring consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan and state's Growth Management Act.

Demographic Profile

SCOG will update the demographic profile including protected Environmental Justice populations (low income and minority) and other demographic characteristics. The demographic profile is primarily used for SCOG's transportation activities.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

SCOG will update the "architecture" of technologies used to monitor and improve the operations of the transportation system.

Traffic Counts

SCOG will continue to coordinate traffic counts for member jurisdictions.

Select Transportation Projects

SCOG will work with local jurisdictions to evaluate transportation projects and select projects for funding through the federal Surface Transportation Program.

Cook Road Corridor Study

SCOG will partner with local and state agencies, the public and a consultant to identify needs at the Cook Road and Interstate 5 intersection.

Level of Service Methodologies

SCOG will review the different methods that jurisdictions use to evaluate the performance of the transportation system.

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HOUSING

Housing Program

SCOG will complete a comprehensive housing inventory to support regional transportation plans, growth management plans and housing strategy. The housing work will be linked to local comprehensive plans, regional transportation planning, growth monitoring process identified in the County-Wide Planning Policies and economic development planning.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RLF Evaluation

SCOG will evaluate its options for all RLF programs. Options range from continuing RLF programs to developing and implementing a transition plan for dissolution of these loan programs.

ADMINISTRATION

Planning Agreement

SCOG will complete work with Skagit Transit and WSDOT to cooperatively determine mutual responsibilities in regional transportation planning.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Growth Monitoring

SCOG will coordinate with local agencies to develop a growth monitoring process and baseline 2016 report to track estimated population and employment growth in Skagit County. After the process and baseline report are created, monitoring reports will be developed every year.

SCOG



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Skagit Council of Governments

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