

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The mission of the Skagit Council of Governments is to *Provide visionary leadership on regional plans, policies and issues*, which cannot be achieved without public interaction.

Through its Public Participation Plan (Plan), the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) intends to provide opportunity for appropriate broad-based, early, continuous, and meaningful public participation in all planning, programs, and projects. Further, SCOG intends to encourage an on-going forum for the discussion of regional issues, striving for an *Open Exchange of Information and Ideas*. The Plan calls for a broad range of public information and participation opportunities, supplying complete information, timely public notice and full access to key decisions.

The Plan provides a broad overview of basic public participation policy. As deemed necessary, SCOG will incorporate details of routine procedures into the *SCOG Policies and Procedures Manual*. Certain major planning efforts, programs, or projects may include Public Participation Plans specific to that effort. The term "major" is to be applied loosely. If a proposed action or decision is clearly a normal-course-of-business activity that does not significantly affect the public or alter public policy, it may not be necessary to apply these public procedures. If there is a question as to whether the Plan should be followed, SCOG shall follow it to ensure appropriate public notification and participation.

The Plan will be reassessed as necessary to determine if the public's needs for information and access are being met or to comply with changing regulatory requirements.

Failure to exactly comply with all Plan elements shall not constitute a failure of public process, nor render any actions or decisions invalid.

Public Access

SCOG will provide the public with timely notice and reasonable access to meetings and information.

- All regular meetings of SCOG and any subcommittees shall be open to the public, except as allowed under the State Open Public Meetings Act. Special meetings such as public hearings, forums, shall also be open to the public.
- SCOG shall hold all regular and special meetings at venues that are accessible to persons with disabilities where possible. Every effort will be made to select venues that are accessible to people who rely on public transportation.

- Public notification of all regular meetings of the SCOG's subcommittees shall be made at least 5 business days in advance of the meeting. Each agenda shall also include the date of the next scheduled meeting. In the case of special meetings, every attempt will be made to provide at least 5 business days advance notice.
- Notification of all regular and special meetings will be provided to SCOG membership, meeting participants, local news media, and anyone requesting notification. Notification will be made via mail and or/electronic means and shall include the time, date and location of the meeting. In certain circumstances, notice may also take the form of a press release, paid legal notice or advertisement, or may use non- traditional methods to reach certain segments of the community.
- All SCOG plans and documents shall be made available for public review at the SCOG office. In certain circumstances, copies of documents and plans may also be distributed to public libraries and other public venues for review.
- Most publications will be made available free of charge. When appropriate, a charge may be assessed to cover the cost of production and mailing.
- SCOG will provide reasonable access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and programs.

Public Outreach

SCOG shall create opportunities for all segments of the community to learn about and engage in issues under consideration by the Council, particularly those that may be directly impacted by the outcomes of specific recommendations and decisions.

- SCOG shall inform and educate the public about regional issues using a variety of means, including, but not limited to: regular and special meetings, printed materials, electronic communication.
- SCOG may work with civic, advocacy, service and other organizations and interested or potentially interested persons to disseminate information about regional activities.
- The Public Participation Plan shall be reviewed periodically to determine its effectiveness assuring full and open access to all.

- **Public Input**

SCOG values a two-way conversation with the public it serves. Explicit consideration of public input and response to public input shall be an integral element of SCOG's decision-making processes.

- A public comment period shall be provided during each regular meeting of the Skagit Council of Governments. The Chair may limit the duration of comments or provide alternative options for public comment in certain circumstances.
- As needed, SCOG will utilize surveys to assess either widespread or selected public opinion.
- SCOG shall offer different avenues for public comment - written, oral, formal, informal, electronic and other means suitable to the project and the community involved.
- Certain plans and programs require an extended review period, to allow for the submittal of written comment. For projects with such extended review, SCOG shall provide ample notice and opportunity for review and written comment.
- Written and oral comments will be maintained in SCOG's files. In certain circumstances, the comments may be incorporated into plans, programs or studies, either in total or in summary.

In addition to the procedures outlined in the Plan, SCOG will comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to:

- Open Public Meetings Act {RCW 42.30}
- State Environmental Policy Act {RCW 43.21C}
- State Growth Management Act {RCW 36.70A}
- Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 {P.L. 101 -336}
- Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA21) {P.L. 105-178}
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 {42 U. S.C 2000d}
- Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 {23 U.S.C. 324}
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 {29 U.S.C. 790}
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 {42 U.S.C. 6101}
- Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 {P.L. 100-209}
- Executive Order 12898 - 59 Fed. Reg. 7629 (1994) - (Environmental Justice)

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