6. Multicounty Planning Policies

This chapter discusses the existing multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 and policy updates for VISION 2050.

6.1 How Multicounty Planning Policies are Used

VISION 2040 includes the multicounty planning policies for the four-county region adopted under the authority of GMA (RCW 36.70A.210 (7)). Multicounty planning policies have both a practical and a substantive effect on the comprehensive plans of cities and counties.

The policies provide a common, coordinated policy framework for local plans and other large-scale planning efforts in the region, including countywide planning policies, functional plans developed by PSRC, and plans developed by other groups and agencies, such as Sound Transit and others.

The multicounty planning policies are designed to support implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy, including concentrating growth within the region’s designated urban growth area and limiting development in resource and rural areas. The policies provide an integrated framework for addressing planning for the environment, land use, housing, the economy, transportation, and public services.

Multicounty planning policies provide an opportunity for local elected officials in the region to collectively craft solutions that may not be appropriate in other parts of the state. Such policies are developed around issues that the central Puget Sound region holds in common. The
policies serve as statements of shared values and are designed to address what is to be accomplished and why.

Finally, multicounty planning policies provide assurance to local jurisdictions that those issues with broad benefit that would be difficult for individual localities to address alone will be addressed regionwide, within a collaborative framework—rather than 86 fragmented and unilateral ones. More information on the background of VISION’s multicounty planning policies is in Chapter 7 of the VISION 2040 FEIS.

This Draft SEIS identifies potential impacts of the Regional Growth Strategy alternatives, along with measures to mitigate those impacts. The multicounty planning policies describe how to address these impacts and implement mitigation measures.

### 6.2 Multicounty Planning Policies and Potential Updates

The multicounty planning policies are structured in the seven topic areas: Environment, Development Patterns, Housing, Economy, Transportation, Public Services, and General. The policies address issues of a regional nature in a way that provides guidance for implementation, often through local actions. When multicounty planning policies are less detailed, countywide policies and local comprehensive plans are the appropriate mechanisms for providing more detail.

For each topic area, Chapter 7 of the VISION 2040 FEIS summarizes the multicounty planning policies and describes their purpose and environmental effects. Input to date indicates that VISION 2040’s policies provide a strong foundation and should be largely retained, with select updates for emerging policy areas and changing conditions. Some changes are also proposed to strengthen or clarify policies. The multicounty planning policies will be revised to be consistent with the preferred Regional Growth Strategy alternative selected by the Growth Management Policy Board and will be included with the draft plan when it is released in summer 2019.

### 6.3 Environmental Effects

Chapter 7 of the VISION 2040 FEIS describes the likely environmental effects and benefits of the policies in VISION 2040, including the creation of mechanisms to preserve and conserve the natural environment, and to improve conditions related to human health (such as environmental health, noise, parks and recreation, and air pollution). It also states that the policies would not specifically regulate or restrict existing project-level approvals or planning processes. The updates to the policies would continue to maintain the environment by protecting important environmental features, reducing pollutants, and using state-of-the-art planning methods. VISION 2050 would reinforce VISION 2040’s environmental goals and
policies and would encourage the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in Chapters 4 and 5 of this Draft SEIS. The updates would continue to result in actions that minimize impacts from any of the growth alternatives.

6.4 Next Steps

All comments received on the Draft SEIS during the public comment period will be reviewed and considered in the development of the preferred Regional Growth Strategy alternative and draft policies. The preferred alternative and draft policies will then be released in a draft VISION 2050 plan for review and comment. The release of the draft VISION 2050 plan will be followed by a public comment period.

Input and feedback received during the draft VISION 2050 comment period will be reviewed and considered by the Growth Management Policy Board and the draft multicounty planning policies will be revised accordingly. Revised draft policies, along with revisions to the preferred Regional Growth Strategy alternative, will then be finalized for review and action by the region’s elected officials. For the adoption of the revised multicounty planning policies, Regional Growth Strategy, and VISION 2050, PSRC will provide a notice of availability and public hearing. Prior to adoption of VISION 2050, a Final SEIS will be issued. Final action on the updated VISION and the updated policies will take place in spring 2020.