



# Public Policy Perspectives

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Memo: June 22, 2009

To:

David Stalheim, Director  
Whatcom County SEPA Official  
Planning and Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226

Mr. Stalheim,

Following is our comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, *Whatcom County 10-Year Urban Growth Area (UGA) Review Draft Environmental Impact Statement* referred to in your letter of May 8, 2009.

Please consider our comments as you develop the final EIS for the ten-year review.

Regards,

Jack and Clayton Petree

Questions And Comments For Whatcom County Regarding the *Whatcom County 10-Year Urban Growth Area (UGA) Review Draft Environmental Impact Statement.*

Testimony

- **The “No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative is neither based on the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan nor is it a “No Action” alternative. Those flaws are fatal to the viability of the EIS.**

PAGE FS – 1 and many others

The “current” Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (Comp. Plan) is very specific to a planning period of 2002 – 2022.

Only two “No Action” options exist in examining the “current” Comp. Plan alternative.

First, it can be assumed the populations proposed in “No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative” will be reached in 2022 and no population at all will come to Whatcom County 2022 – 2029.

That would represent a true “No Action” alternative but the illogic of the alternative would violate SEPA for a plan examining growth 2009 – 2029.

Second, it could be assumed population growth would continue at projected levels through 2022 and, with no action taken, would continue to grow at Comp. Plan projected levels through 2029.

That would also represent a true “No Action” alternative compliant with SEPA **but only if a 2029 population of 261,928 persons (the number of persons expected at currently projected levels) is examined.**

**The alternative examined in the EIS is *not* a No Action Alternative.**

The growth rate assumed, **and adopted by the County Council**, in the current Comp. Plan is about **1.568%**.

On EIS page 1-20 the growth rate assumed for the “No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative” is **0.9%**.

**Assuming growth will drop to a level 60% of that adopted into and assumed in the Current Comp. Plan would require an action if the Alternative were to be chosen. This is a fatal flaw** making the EIS “No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative” meaningless in the context of Whatcom County’s ten-year review of the 1997 Comp. Plan.

- **It is very disturbing, in terms of the believability of the data and analysis contained in this EIS that the populations reported for the “No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative” projections in the EIS do not match the projected populations contained in the actual Comprehensive Plan (2008 version).**

PAGE FS – 1 AND OTHERS

The “No Action Current Comp. Plan Alternative” is supposedly based on the existing Comp. Plan and “...assumes growth similar to...” the existing Comp. Plan projections.

In actuality, **there are significant, even double digit, differences between the growth projected for nearly all of Whatcom County's UGAs (with the exception of Columbia Valley and Sumas) and the "No Action Current Comp. Plan Alternative" projections reported in the EIS.**

**Shouldn't an Alternative supposedly based on the "Current Comp. Plan" projections, however flawed that Alternative might be in other respects, at least contain the same projections for a starting point as those contained in the actual, and current, Comprehensive Plan? If it does not, how can it be a "No Action Current Comp. Plan Alternative?"**

- **The No Action Trends Alternative is neither a "No Action" alternative nor a "Trends" alternative. The fact that it does not utilize actual population trends seen in Whatcom County during the time frames examined is a fatal flaw for the viability of this EIS.**

PAGE FS – 1 and many others

The actual population of Whatcom County in 2008 is reported on page 2-14 of the EIS as being 191,000 persons. This comports with OFM.

The No Action Trends Alternative is reported as assuming "...future growth that matches the historic pattern of urban and rural growth."

The idea that population growth, land supply to accommodate that growth and the patterns of urban and rural growth are inextricably linked is fundamental to the Growth Management Act (GMA).

Assuming the term, "No Action" links this alternative to the existing Comp. Plan it can be seen that growth in Whatcom County 2000 – 2008 was about 1.71% per year. That would be the trend this alternative should examine or, alternatively, actual growth "The trend" in Whatcom County 1997 – 2008 has been 1.77% annually.

At 1.71% per year, Whatcom County's 2029 population would be 272,690 persons.

The purported "No Action Trends Alternative" assumes a growth rate of 1.45% to arrive at a "trended" population of 258,448. It has been nearly 4 decades since that rate, as a trend, would have been appropriate.

The difference between the "trended" and the actual trend exceeds 14,000 people, more if the trend during the timeframe we are supposed to be reviewing (1997 – 2008) is considered. That amount exceeds substantially the entire 2008 populations of either the Ferndale or the Lynden UGAs, Whatcom County's second and third largest cities!

It is axiomatic to planning and fundamental to the concept of the GMA that a 14,000 population difference in two scenarios in a County like Whatcom would likely result in two different patterns of growth throughout the County, and thus, different land demands through a 20 year planning period.

**As presented, the "No Action Trends" alternative examined in this EIS is fatally flawed.** This EIS must either examine existing population distribution trends in the context of a 2029 population of 272,690 or, support

examination of the population the EIS purports to examine (258,448 persons) with analysis regarding the impact on population distribution a significant reduction in growth might have.

If the latter is chosen, the alternative could no longer be presented as a trends alternative because it does not examine actual trends.

#### **A SUMMARY OF THE “NO ACTION ALTERNATIVES”**

**The two “No Action Alternatives,” as presented in this EIS are fatally flawed. As presented, the two alternatives would have to examine growth at a 2029 population of about 261,928 persons for the “Current Comp. Plan” alternative and 272,690 for the “Trended” alternative.**

**The alternatives could have been examined at the populations assigned them in the EIS (234,917 and 258,448). However, that examination could only take place in the context of accompanying analysis of how the two artificially low population growth projections (in the context of the existing Comp. Plan analysis and the actual population trends seen in Whatcom County) would, in turn, impact the distribution of population growth throughout Whatcom County.**

- **Alternatives X and Y do not provide much ability to compare alternatives in any meaningful way. Because of that the EIS is fatally flawed as a SEPA document.**

PAGE FS – 1 and numerous others

The science associated with making comparisons like these readers are asked to make between Alternatives X and Y would seem to suggest that a legitimate comparison between the two Alternatives is only possible if a difference between the two is examined in the light of similar base assumptions.

The two alternatives purport to examine what happens when various shifts in the location of future populations and the jobs to support them are made.

However, each alternative is examined in the light of a second fundamental shift making comparison between the two almost impossible. Alternative X assumes planned densities will occur while Alternative Y assumes achieved densities will continue to occur.

**The two alternatives, as stated, can only produce Alice in Wonderland results if used as comparison tools. A supportable analysis would have looked at each alternative in terms of the locational shifts in population proposed for each and then applied the second shift in approach, (achieved vs planned densities) to each alternative, examining each alternative in the light of both adjustments.**

- **The public has never been provided with the achieved density analysis utilized in this EIS. Has a meaningful achieved density analysis been performed?**

PAGE FS – 1 and numerous others

**Just one year ago testimony provided the Growth Management Hearings Board for legal argument reported that Bellingham had achieved a net density of 5.1 in the unincorporated UGA and 5.4 in the incorporated City Limits. In this EIS Whatcom County appears to be using it also reported to the GMCC claiming that the Bellingham UGA has an achieved net density of 9.4 units per acre.**

Those are extraordinary remarkable differences in terms of a study like this.

To study achieved densities at the level required in an EIS using achieved densities as a base line for one of its alternatives, an accurate picture of actual achieved densities must be provided.

To allow for informed public comment, that accurate picture must also be provided.

What accounts for the differences in numbers provided in a legal context last year and in the context of an EIS this year and what is the impact on the findings of the EIS?

- **It is troubling the assumed net densities in the Land Capacity Analysis appear to be based on little or no data yet the unfinished LCA drives many of the conclusions arrived at in this EIS.**

PAGE FS – 1 and many others

The Land Capacity Analysis forming the base of this analysis recounts that assumed densities in the Bellingham Unincorporated UGA are 9.0 units per acre.

Restrictions on density in the bulk of the UGA (the URMX zones) preclude achieving an average of 9.0 units per acre.

In addition, as shown by table 4.7-8 on page 4.7-11 of the EIS, only 13 multi family housing units were built in the UGA over a period of 8 years.

How can a build rate of 1.6 units per year possibly inform a density discussion arriving at an average density that cannot be achieved in the bulk of the UGA under the best of conditions?

If these kinds of densities are claimed, the data used to arrive at the calculations in all of the UGAs, as well as the assumptions utilized to form the conclusions, should be made public.

PAGE 1 – 1 and others

For purposes of this EIS, how does the County define the term “accommodate projected urban growth” in terms of housing, employment and other required demand elements put forward in the Growth Management Act (GMA)?

For example, in each UGA, for a population of 1,000 persons, how many housing units of each type, jobs in each major category, and other facilities will be required 2008 – 2029?

- **This EIS does not examine a range of population alternatives, a range required to be established before anything else can be accurately analyzed. That is a fatal flaw requiring repair before an EIS can adequately inform the public.**

PAGE 1 – 1 and others

The Scoping explanation contained in the slide show attached to the Determination of Significance and Scoping Notice in the Appendix to the EIS says the Current Comp. Plan Alternative “Assumes Current Growth Forecast.”

As is shown earlier, the EIS does *not* examine the current growth forecast.

- **Based on projections for both jobs and employment, the “rural” areas of the County represent the County’s second largest Growth Area. No examination of this growth area to the level accomplished for the UGAs, and necessary to meet the requirements of the GMA appears to have been accomplished. That is a fatal flaw in this EIS.**

PAGE 1 – 3

The term “rural study areas” is defined as a generic phrase lumping together very different kinds of lands specifically differentiated by the GMA. How does this EIS differentiate between specific uses meant to be accommodated on “rural lands” (population and job opportunities) as defined by the GMA and the more generic “rural study areas” including Agriculture, Forest and Mineral Resource lands?

PAGE 1 – 3 and many others

According to the GMA, “...opportunities to both live and work in rural areas” are to be “fostered.” Both population and employment allocation scenarios assign demand elements to the rural lands. Why is no analysis of the rural lands in terms of where population and employment opportunities are expected to be taken advantage of included in the EIS analysis?

PAGE 1 – 3 and many others

If no analysis of likely population and employment patterns in the many and diverse rural areas of Whatcom County is not provided, how can transportation, governmental services and other analysis needs have been adequately accomplished?

PAGE 1 – 3 and many others

Geographically, Whatcom County contains dozens, perhaps hundreds, of discrete land forms. If no analysis of likely population and employment patterns in the diverse geographical areas of the County exists, how can important environmental issues be assessed and commented on?

PAGES 2-18, 2-22 and throughout

Depending on the Alternative chosen, the rural lands of the County may have more growth than any UGA save Bellingham assigned to them. **The terms “Low, High, Moderate and Moderately High” are meaningless in an analysis context. A numerical context similar to that supplied for the other “growth areas” must be provided for informed decision making.**

How much land supply for the variety of uses expected to be made of it by residents, is available in the rural areas of the County?

How much residential supply?

How much supply for each of the jobs producing categories also examined in the context of the UGAs?

What is the proximity of the supply to the demand?

Is the supply in each area adequate to meet the demand?

What are the environmental consequences of lack of proximity to jobs and/or an inadequate land supply in the rural areas to accommodate the jobs in each category expected to be required by the population to be accommodated in the rural areas?

PAGE 4.6-20 and others

Regarding the Rural Element Update: If this EIS assumes a sub-set of the rural allocation will be identified for LAMIRDs designated as part of the rural element update, why is there no quantification of the land supplies specifically available in those LAMIRDs discussed here?

Jobs are assigned to the rural element – how much land supply is available for jobs and where?

Housing is assigned to the rural element – if LAMIRDs are a subset to which homes are assigned, how many homes and where?

How will the Comprehensive Plan guide growth to the LAMIRDs rather than to the rest of the rural lands and or resource lands?

PAGE 4.6-20 and others

How can the EIS purport to provide analysis of transportation patterns, residential patterns and other growth accommodations if there is no analysis of the carrying capacity of the LAMIRDs assumed to accommodate some portion of the future growth or of where that growth is likely to occur?

PAGE 4.6-20 and others

If LAMIRDs are assumed to provide accommodation, how much of the county's growth will be assigned to which areas and what are the environmental impacts associated with the growth assigned each LAMIRD?

- **This EIS is meant to inform UGA population and employment allocation decisions, UGA sizing decisions and a variety of other decisions required by GMA. The day after testimony regarding this EIS is due, a hearing, at which citizens are expected to provide informed testimony about UGA population and employment allocation decisions, UGA sizing decisions and a variety of other decisions required by GMA, will be held. How does this EIS comport with the requirements of SEPA if the primary decisions to be driven by this EIS have already been made?**

PAGE 2 – 8 and others

The purposes, goals and objectives of the ten year review as illuminated by this EIS are stated in numerous places and numerous ways throughout this EIS (pages 1 – 1 and 2-2 are just two examples). Despite the fact this EIS is meant to inform the process of achieving the various purposes, goals and objectives of the ten year review, as put forward in this EIS, the decisions meant to be informed by this EIS have, in large part, been made in advance of the publication of the EIS. How can "County and cities...conduct individual public reviews to develop UGA-specific proposals for growth and land use designations," before the EIS meant to inform those proposals is even released in draft form?

PAGE 2 – 9 and others

SEPA does not allow a decision to be made and then justified by an EIS designed to assure the decision arrived at prior to the EIS is supported. As is pointed out in 2.5.3, “SEPA requires government officials to consider the environmental consequences of actions **they are about to take...**” (Emphasis added) Can an EIS addressing allocation decisions already made based on a Land Capacity Analysis that does not yet exist meet the requirements of SEPA?

- **Two days after the closing date for testimony on this EIS the County’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will meet to discuss data and assumption shortfalls in the Land Capacity Analysis and make adjustments to the LCA methodology called for by the cities, and others, in public testimony the week before and the day after the close of testimony on this EIS. That means neither the LCA methodology nor the LCA results this EIS is based on in large part can be valid because neither has been decided on and all parties agree significant changes are needed. That is a fatal flaw to this EIS.**

PAGE 2 – 9 and others

The current DEIS extensively utilizes an out of date Land Capacity Analysis released in draft form in February. There have been at least three updates since then (March 6, March 22, and April 22) with at least one additional update planned before the Final EIS is released.

In fact, the final methodology to drive the LCA has not yet been determined.

How can the outdated information presented in the DEIS be utilized by the public to provide informed comment on the adequacy and/or findings of the DEIS when outdated information is the foundation on which the DEIS is built?

PAGE 2 – 9 and others

The County readily acknowledges the Land Capacity Analysis is incomplete. Still, people count on an EIS to provide accurate information and, once released in final form, an EIS provides a basic reference document for decision makers. **How does this Draft EIS ensure that decision makers such as planning commission and county council members do not use the information in this Draft EIS to make UGA sizing decisions?**

PAGE 2 – 24 and others

This EIS expressly declared one of the ten-year review tasks as planning needed to “Revise the (County Comprehensive) Plan to extend the planning horizon from the year 2022 to the range of 2029 – 2031.” Utilizing the ten-year review to rework the County, and by extension, the City Comprehensive plans means all the kinds of work required for any Comp. Plan update process must be accomplished to complete the ten-year review.

That being said, how can the purported Land Capacity Analysis provide useful information absent consideration on a city-by-city basis of the mix of housing types between single family, multi family and special needs pointed to on this page as a factor that could, “...alter the balance of land supply and demand.”

**To inform decision making at the level this EIS calls for, analysis of things like the mix of housing types desired city by city, and unincorporated by unincorporated UGA, must be addressed in the Land Capacity Analysis, analyzed and made available to the public and decision makers.**

- **Phasing**

PAGE 2 – 10 and others

The first paragraph under 2.5.4 speaks to WAC 197-11-069(5). The WAC does not appear to “encourage” phased review but rather to set out the conditions under which a phased review might be “appropriate” if the lead agency desires a phased review. What are the County’s reasons for choosing to do a phased review?

PAGE 2 – 10 and others

The GMA requires Comp. Plans and the regulations needed to implement the plans be adopted concurrently and that all aspects of the plans be internally and externally consistent. What are the “subsequent” implementing actions being considered as appropriate for the phased approach as differentiated from those required on adoption of a new Comp. Plan to achieve consistency?

- **Public participation**

PAGE 2 – 11 and others

The GMA requires early and continuous public participation in planning. How does the mere issuance of a **draft** EIS a few days before formal proposals for wholesale change in the County’s planning approaches with wholesale impacts on the Comprehensive Plans of both Cities and Counties that are supposed to be informed by this EIS address the GMA requirements for early and continuous public participation?

- **The GMA required Cities and Counties to base their analysis on “permitted densities” yet much of the analysis in this document assumes future uses on lands those lands are not permitted to accommodate. This is a fatal flaw in this EIS.**

PAGES 4.5-3 and 2-22

Table 4.5-2 recounts “Existing Land Use” classifications in the Urban Growth Areas. More than 14% of the UGAs are in Agriculture, Fishing/Mining or Forestry classifications. These zones, in terms of residential or commercial uses contain no “permitted” uses. Table 2 – 6 charts, extensively, the “Potential Additional Development In Urban Growth Areas by Alternative.”

The permitted densities on land zoned for these classifications in UGAs is generally one unit per five acres.

Are the lands zoned for Ag. Fishing/Mining and Forestry in the various UGAs throughout the County accounted for in Table 2 – 6? If they are, is the density assigned them one unit per five acres or some other density. If some other density is assigned, why is the permitted density not utilized?

If these lands are assumed to have the capacity to accept higher densities than they are zoned for, what are the environmental impacts if the lands are never rezoned or, are rezoned to levels lower than they were counted on to accommodate?

- **While many analysis decisions may have to be based on “educated guesses” or “informed opinion,” where simple fact is available, simple fact must at least be considered. Simply asserting something as though it is a “fact” does not rise to the standard required of educated guess or informed opinion.**

**Where simple assertion is substituted for examination of demonstrable facts, this EIS is fatally flawed.**

PAGE 4.6-13

An Environmental Impact Statement, even a programmatic statement, must be based on analysis rather than simple assertion. Statements like, “Encourage a variety of housing types including affordable housing” with a discussion point claiming that, “All alternatives provide capacity for housing. New growth forecast assumes more opportunities,” must be supported by analysis. Capacity for housing in a GMA context like the one outlined as the purpose of this EIS for the ten year review requires analysis of a range of housing types to accommodate all economic segments of the community. What analysis allows a finding that affordability and a range of housing types have been addressed by this EIS in each of the UGAs?

PAGES 4.6-14, 4.6-21, 4.6-22 and many others

The statement is made, “However, under each alternative, most UGAs are greater in size than required for the population allocations.” Much of the underpinning of this EIS is based on that assertion, yet the land capacity analysis is not expected to be completed until after the Final EIS is completed and no analysis of housing types, employment types and other issues has been accomplished and/or applied. Even the methodology is not fully firmed up as meetings on that issue are taking place two days after the closing of public comment on this DEIS.

Both cities and individuals have pointed to deficiencies in the land capacity analysis that will result in substantial change in the LCA analysis. How can a broad assumption like that contained in the cited statement be utilized as a primary analysis point in the EIS when the analysis the statement is based on is incomplete, yet to be vetted by either the public or the cities and, is likely to see considerable alteration?

- **SEPA does not allow an EIS to be created to justify already made decisions.**

PAGE 4.6 – 14 and others

Comment is made throughout the EIS regarding the fact that the UGAs are generally oversized to accommodate the population likely to be assigned to them. No land capacity analysis has been completed, the capacity analysis used in the document is an early version that has been subsequently revised on several dates, even County staff has agreed that version is inaccurate, and no population projection has been made. Is it possible this EIS represents a potential violation of SEPA in that conclusions are drawn without appropriate analysis or public comment and then the EIS needed to drive those conclusions is produced?

- **This EIS assumes violations of GMA will continue to exist after adoption of the ten year review adjustments to the Comp. Plan laid out in the rationale for the EIS. This is especially true of capital facilities plans. As the conclusions of the EIS must assume full GMA compliance in assessing environmental impacts, this EIS is fatally flawed.**

PAGE 4.6.17 and others

As explained best by the Central Hearings Board in language consistently repeated in one form or another over the years by the other boards, “The lack of a fully completed capital facilities plan is more than a conceptual shortcoming – it is a fatal legal defect in a comprehensive plan. It alone is sufficient cause for the Board to find

that the land use element and every other component of a plan violates the requirements of the Act. [Bremerton, 95-3-0039c, FDO, at 77.] “

This EIS seems to assume existing plans will fill the gap between the old plan and the newly adopted Comp. Plan. **That might have worked had there been GMA compliant existing plans. Because no existing plans assure development of the UGAs in the planning period they were adopted to serve, no plans are available to act as stop gap measures.**

This EIS reviews the 1997 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. That plan is in the final six years of the 1995 – 2015 planning period it addressed and, according to the law (36.70A.070(3)) was required to contain a capital facilities plan that could ensure “...the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent.”

The Hearings Boards have all agreed with the principle that, “The choice of what is funded during a six-year financing plan cycle is a discretionary choice of the County. It is not for Petitioner to decide which projects are to be funded in a six-year cycle. So long as the needs identified in the CFE are reflected in the capital improvement program, the scheduling of their implementation, including the delay of project to later years, is a discretionary choice of the County. However, the County should be mindful that those needs identified in the 20-year Plan (CFE), ultimately must be addressed (funded and implemented) at some point during the original 20-year life of the Plan. [McVittie IV, 00-3-0006c, FDO, at 14-15.]”

In 2008 no Urban Growth Area in the County has the ability to ensure growth can take place throughout the UGAs by 2015 and no Capital Facilities Element, including the County’s addresses the issue.

What have the environmental impacts of an inability to serve growth throughout the County’s Urban Growth Areas been?

What Comprehensive Plan amendments to the County Comp. Plan are necessary to assure the schedule is met?

What would the environmental impacts associated with on-going delay be in terms of City and County abilities to address the requirement that planned for growth be enabled UGA wide by 2015?

A failure to adopt complete capital facilities plans in association with the new Comprehensive Plan this EIS addresses would necessitate continued non-compliance for Whatcom County along with critical funding for projects associated with environmental enhancements.

What would the environmental impacts of a continued loss of funding over a period of years be on Whatcom County’s environment, economy and quality of life?

- **The purpose of a ten year review of a Comprehensive Plan is to actually review the past ten years of growth in the County in the context of what we thought would happen and in the context of what actually did happen. That review is to be used to inform our examination of the ability to accommodate our next 20 years of growth. This EIS does not provide for a review of the 11 years since the adoption of the 1997 Comp. Plan at all. Instead, it selects from a menu of review periods that could be seen as self-serving. To the extent this EIS does not review time frames for which solid data is available and useful in planning for the future, this EIS is fatally flawed.**

Various pages and approaches:

Five or six different time frames are utilized to analyze data either directly in this EIS or, as the underlying time periods used in developing the base data this EIS uses as its foundational documentation.

By picking and choosing, this EIS not only risks being seen as self serving but also misses the real opportunity to provide important insights into what has happened early in the ten year review under scrutiny here. Why are so many time periods used in the analysis protocol when solid data is available to allow for similar time frames to be used to arrive at trends capable of informing this EIS in important ways?

**Why is data for the actual period under review not analyzed?**

Almost no analysis based on the time under review (1997 – 2008) is provided at all.

Some conversation has been offered that this lack is due to lack of data.

Two facts are important here.

First, the law has required a ten year review since its inception. Lack of data is inexcusable.

Second, the County offered a significant data package as testimony in the Bellingham Urban Fringe challenge just last year. If that data was inaccurate it should not have been used as testimony. If it was accurate, it should have been utilized as a baseline in this process.

Because the 1997 Comp. Plan was Whatcom County's first under GMA, events since the adoption of that plan have the potential to provide invaluable insights into the impacts various land supplies have on achieving GMA goals.

Why was the time period under review, for the most part, ignored in this EIS?

**If analysis 1997 – 2008 is not utilized, why isn't data tied to and trended to the same time frame addressed in the current Comprehensive Plan (2000 – 2008)?**

While some data dealing with 2000 – 2008 is reported in this document, almost no trending for the period 2000 – 2008 is reported.

This is particularly troubling in that one of the "No Action" alternatives is a trended alternative yet the data provided is not based on trending but, rather on an existing situation overlaid on a non-trended population figure.

As just one of many examples, OFM data is easily available for a range of examination protocols. We know how many persons lived in Whatcom County and its cities in 2000 and how many lived in the same places in 2008. We also know how many homes existed in Whatcom County and its cities in 2000 and how many lived in the same places in 2008. Simple division tells us how many persons are, on average, accommodated by each new home built.

The City Comp. plans are also revealing and, given the stated actions this EIS is supposed to address, must be considered in the review. Bellingham, for example, has a stated objective on housing 1/3 of its future population in single family housing and 2/3 in multi-family. The City has testified it cannot meet that objective.

Does this EIS address those kinds of objectives in the context of the City analysis required by GMA to analyze the impact shortfalls in existing land supplies might have on the ability to accommodate growth over the next 20 years?

We do not believe it does - why not?

**Important data is extrapolated using a time frame not only isolated completely from the other time frames used in the EIS but, demonstrably deficient in terms of usability.**

One of Alternative Y's major features is its focus on "Densities...similar to the patterns achieved in the last 5 years."

That means densities 2003 – 2008 are used in the analysis of growth patterns provided in the EIS.

In 2004 the City of Bellingham made a radical change in its UGA infrastructure service. The City decided it would no longer provide service in the UGAs without annexation.

Data provided by the County in this process and emphasized in the data the County provided in testimony to the Growth Management Hearings Boards in 2008 demonstrates the action appears to have resulted in drastic shifts in growth patterns away from Bellingham and into the County.

Analysis of growth since 1997, testified to in the public forum, or even analysis of growth 2000 – 2008 provided by Whatcom County, emphasizes the shift.

The ten year review is, in this case, actually an 11 year review. Dramatic shifts in growth patterns appear to have taken place in the last four or five years of the review period when compared to the growth patterns occurring in the first six or seven years.

So why is the time frame where the least GMA compliant growth appears to have taken place analyzed in isolation from the time frame when the most GMA compliant growth appears to have taken place?

Because the phenomena was pointed to in public testimony shouldn't at least perfunctory analysis and trending have been accomplished?

**Many data points from a single year are utilized to ostensibly represent "trended" or "current Comp. Plan" data. Where reliable information is available to allow trending, why is that information not utilized?**

Perhaps one of the most striking examples of the problems arising when a single year is utilized to represent a trend can be found on pages 4.10.44 and 4.10.45 of the EIS.

Here, the student to household ratio for each school district in the County is reported for 2008.

That ratio is extended through the end of the planning period and applied to each school district to project potential deficits or surpluses in capacity.

If similar data from five, eight, or eleven years ago had been obtained (the Superintendent of Public Instruction does keep records and makes them available to jurisdictions) it would have been seen that many school districts are actually losing students while others are essentially growth at a snail's pace if at all.

Trending of the information from earlier reports reveals that the actual number of new students per housing unit built in, for example, Bellingham averages about 10% the Student/Household ratio reported for 2008 and overlaid on the analysis for 2029/31.

In some districts the number is actually a negative number with increased populations not even replacing students in the school districts.

Similar errors are created when, for example, a single year is selected to represent household size without trending being utilized.

**In some cases, no year at all is utilized – an arbitrary number, unsupported by data, is selected.**

As is pointed out earlier, there is no number in the Current Comprehensive Plan that could be utilized to project a population of 234,917 for 2029/31. While a scoping document could be imagined in which that number is selected for investigation, the number would have to be chosen for some reason, a reason explained in the scoping document, and **could not be characterized as a “current comp. plan alternative” nor utilized, without explanation about likely changes that would occur as a result of the artificially chosen number, to analyze existing patterns of growth in Whatcom County.**

Also, as is pointed out earlier, there is no data available that would allow a population of 258,448 to be analyzed as a “trended” comp. plan number. While the 258,448 number is the OFM mid-range projection for Whatcom County for 2029, it is not a number reflecting actual trends in the County. Again, that number could be legitimately be selected as a number to examine, but, it **cannot be characterized as a “no action” trended number without explanation about likely changes that would occur as a result of the artificially chosen number, to analyze existing patterns of growth in Whatcom County.**

**This review would have benefitted significantly by the addition of baseline information. When household size is discussed, why not include a household size number for 1997? When the number of housing units is discussed, why not include a number of housing units existing in 1997, or 2000 or whatever year the existing household size is being discussed in the context of? Presumably, this analysis could not have been achieved without these kinds of baseline numbers. Why not include them for public use in developing informed testimony? Only a page or two would be required to list these important starting points for discussion.**