



MEMORANDUM

TO: Growth Management Coordinating Council
 FROM: David Stalheim, Director
 DATE: February 25, 2009
 RE: Council Action on EIS Scope and Alternatives

Overview

A joint hearing with the Whatcom County Council and the Planning Commission took place at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2009. Approximately 47 persons testified. Additional citizens and agencies provided comment letters.

The purpose of the hearing was to solicit comments regarding the scope of the environmental impact statement (EIS) being prepared for the 10-Year Urban Growth Area (UGA) review, including the proposed EIS topics and Alternatives and potential mitigation measures. The hearing packet describes the EIS process, proposed topics, and alternatives and is not repeated here.

The following table describes the key scoping comments that require review and direction by the Planning Commission and ultimately the County Council.

Table 1. EIS Scope Comments

Alternatives	EIS Topics
Study a low growth alternative at 220,000 – the OFM low	Add to topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light and noise • Fiscal issues
Study above the OFM most likely for a good “bracket” – most likely should be in bulls eye	Address Suitability Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alluvial Fan Hazards • All sensitive watersheds
Do not study Columbia Valley as a LAMIRD	

Whatcom County Planning Commission

The Planning Commission recommended including 4 alternatives in the EIS analysis for the 10 year UGA review: the 3 alternatives described in the scoping document used for the public hearing, and a 4th alternative which would be identical to alternative X, but would use a population projection of 220,000, near the low end of the OFM population range for 2029. The no action alternative will use a population projection of 234,900, which is the current adopted population projection for 2022. Alternatives X and Y, which are designed to test two different types of land use strategies, would both use a projection of 258,000 so that the differences in effects from the land use strategies would be identifiable.

The Planning Commission was unanimous in its recommendation to add consideration of a 4th alternative. While it was clear that not all commissioners felt that a projection of 220,000 people is a reasonable final choice, they all felt very strongly that given the strong public support for that projection, it is important to at least include it in the EIS for comparison purposes, so that there could be no argument that the alternative wasn't considered.

The Commission also recommended to include:

- an analysis of light and noise impacts of the various alternatives in the EIS,
- include marine waters in the water quality section,
- address migration and other socio-economic conditions reflected in the current economic conditions facing the county, and
- address mitigation measures for Urban Growth Areas reflected in their policy recommendations for the Bellingham Urban Growth Area.

Whatcom County Council

The Whatcom County Council considered the Planning Commission recommendation on February 24th. The following is their decision on the EIS scope:

Alternatives: The Council rejected adding a fourth alternative (studying the OFM Low). The three alternatives outlined for the February 17, 2009 hearing are now considered the final alternatives for EIS purposes. The population range county-wide reflected in those alternatives are 234,917 to 258,448. How this range is reflected in each UGA is attached to this memo.

Scoping Topics: The Council rejected expanding the scope to include noise, light and glare. The Council accepted other details of the Planning Commission recommendation to study within the existing scope of the EIS.

Next Steps

The consultant team have begun preparation of the draft EIS. The draft EIS is anticipated to be released for public review and comment in the beginning of May. A six-month time extension request will likely not change the release date of the draft EIS, but could allow for a longer public and agency review period prior to publishing a final EIS.

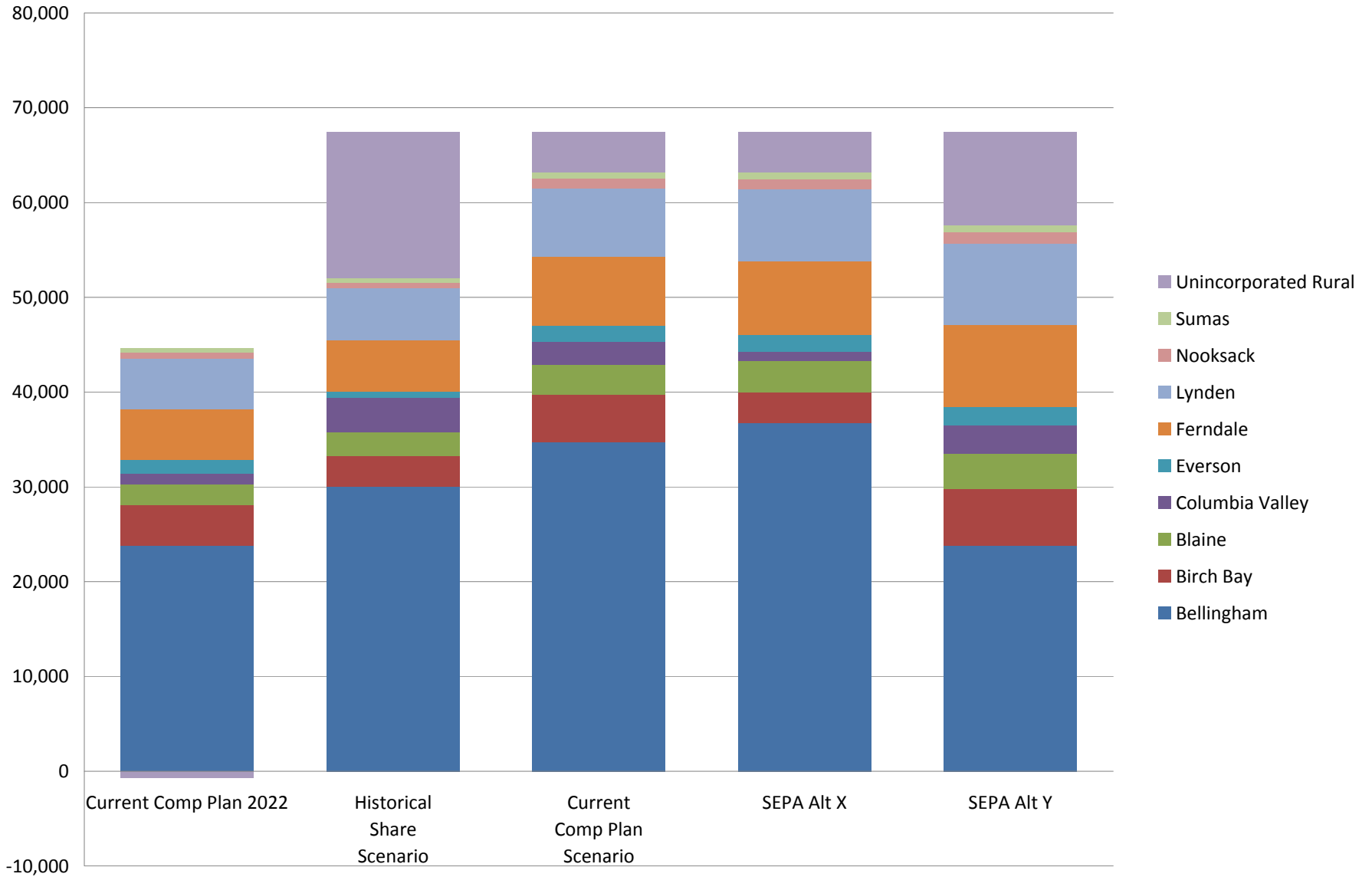
COMPARISON OF 2031 POPULATION ESTIMATES UNDER DIFFERENT SCENARIOS: 258,448 FORECAST

2031 Allocated Population Under Various Growth Scenarios

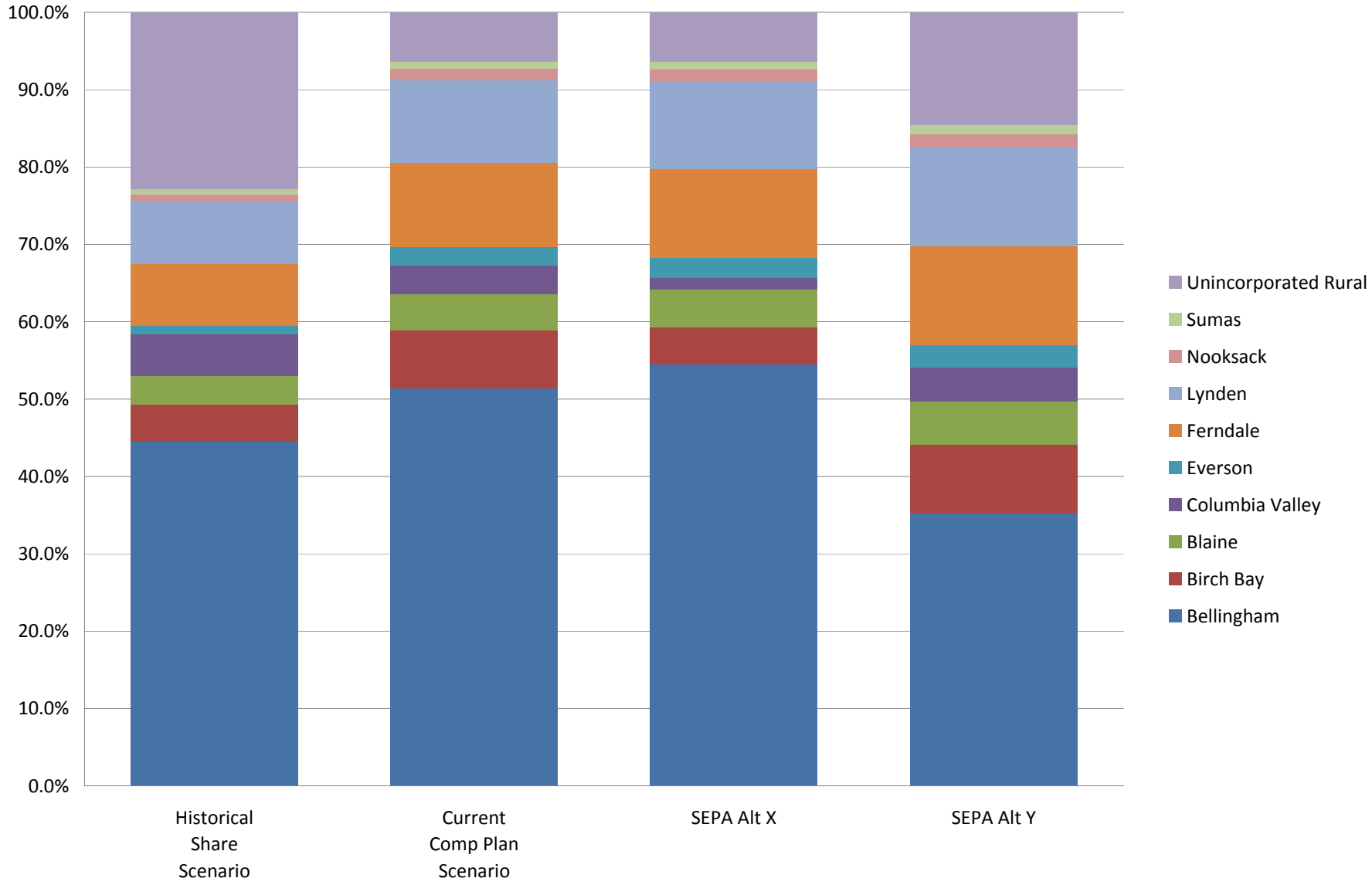
AGGREGATED STUDY AREAS - UGAS AND CITIES COMBINED

Study Area	2008 Population	2022 Population	2031 Population: Phase 1		2031 Population: SEPA	
			Historical Share Scenario	Current Comp Plan Scenario	SEPA Alt X	SEPA Alt Y
Bellingham	89,284	113,055	119,301	123,963	126,028	113,055
Birch Bay	5,290	9,619	8,529	10,357	8,529	11,307
Blaine	5,754	7,942	8,236	8,887	9,074	9,474
Columbia Valley	3,924	5,000	7,608	6,410	4,924	6,876
Everson	2,395	3,912	3,072	4,035	4,133	4,343
Ferndale	12,019	17,322	17,390	19,336	19,772	20,707
Lynden	11,613	16,900	17,129	18,838	19,269	20,192
Nooksack	1,137	1,881	1,692	2,113	2,171	2,296
Sumas	1,279	1,669	1,799	1,947	1,986	2,072
Unincorporated Rural	58,304	57,617	73,692	62,561	62,561	68,127
<i>LAMIRD Areas</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Other Unincorp. Rural</i>	58,304	57,617	73,692	62,561	62,561	68,127
Total Whatcom County	191,000	234,917	258,448	258,448	258,448	258,448

Population Growth Allocation Comparison



Comparison of Population Growth Shares by Alternative



Total Population Allocation Comparison

