

3 Stakeholder Engagement

Public and stakeholder input is an essential element in the transition plan development and self-evaluation processes. ADA implementation regulations require public entities to provide an opportunity to interested persons, including individuals with disabilities or organizations representing individuals with disabilities, to participate in the self-evaluation process and development of the transition plan by submitting comments (28 CFR 35.105(b) and 28 CFR 35.150(d)(1)). There were three primary goals for the public outreach activities prior to adopting the plan:

- Meet Title II requirements for public comment opportunity.
- Inform the public about the County's plan and processes regarding removal of barriers to accessibility within the right-of-way. Provide information to assist interested parties to understand the issues faced by the County, alternatives considered and planned actions.
- Obtain public comment to identify any errors or gaps in the proposed accessibility transition plan for the public rights of way, specifically on prioritization and grievance processes.

3.1 Engagement Methods

3.1.1 Public Meeting

A public meeting was held at Luke's Community and Education Center on July 30, 2019. The meeting was widely advertised on the Whatcom County Web Page, local radio, and to attendees and speakers at a Whatcom County Hearing on June 18th, 2019. Despite adequate advertisement and public notification less than 10 members of the community were in

attendance. The objective of this event was to reach a broad cross-section of community members to introduce them to the plan, ask them about barriers and gaps in the public right-of-way, to start to define what is most important to the public. Materials included a large map of the County and a board defining potential priorities. Participants were able to use the figures to provide input on priority infrastructure and locations. A full account of the findings can be found in **Appendix A**.

3.1.2 On-Line Survey

With the assistance of a consultant, Whatcom County developed a 19-question on-line survey that was available from June 30, 2019 – August 30, 2019. The survey gathered community feedback from over 90 community members. The survey asked for specific feedback on several important items related to accessibility. Participants were asked to identify barriers they have experienced on pedestrian facilities in the County, as well as types of barriers, barrier locations, and other accessibility issues. There was a detectable difference between perceived barriers for persons with disabilities, and those without disabilities. Persons with disabilities showed hospitals and park access as their highest priorities, while those without put a higher emphasis on community services. Appendix A contains a detailed summary of all comments received.

3.1.3 Focus Group

The County hosted two 90-minute focus groups on October 1st and 3rd of 2019. The focus group meetings were offered to interested members of the community to review the initial comments received to date through the open house and survey as well as provide deeper feedback on aspects of

accessibility in the County including specific locations, types of issues, and priorities.

The focus group was provided with a facilitation guide as well a map of the County showing the transit routes, a set of priorities, the PowerPoint and flip charts. Appendix A contains a detailed summary of all comments received.

3.2 Meeting ADA Standards

Per 28 CFR 35.150(d)(1), public involvement is required as follows: A public entity shall provide an opportunity to interested persons, including individuals with disabilities or organizations representing individuals with disabilities, to participate in the development of the transition

plan by submitting comments. A copy of the transition plan shall be made available for public inspection.

The Draft Whatcom County Transition Plan was made available for public review and comment for a period during the months of March and April 2021. A link to the draft plan was provided on the County's project website.

Title VI Nondiscrimination Law

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a Federal statute and provides that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. This includes matters related to language access or limited English proficient (LEP) persons.