

White Paper #2: Cornerstones of Projections – Future Population

by Mike Skehan- PLIC Secretary

This second in a series of white papers presented by PLIC is intended to promote discussion at our April 12th, 2018 Town Hall meeting. Three options for vessel size were presented at the March 14th Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC) Open House meeting by KPFF-Group under contract to Whatcom County Public Works (WCPW), leading up to a ferry replacement decision by the Council in June of 2018. Informing that decision were a series of documents used to estimate what Whatcom County and Lummi Island population and travel demand would be in the future. Key in those documents is the revised Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Whatcom Council of Governments Mobility 2040 Study. Other studies of Island growth have been completed by others and were considered by KPFF-Group. Synopses of those findings follow:

OFM (Office of Financial Management) Washington State has projected total State population will grow at 1.3% through 2040, from 7.1 million residents to 9.3 million, or 1.3% annually.

Whatcom COG (Council of Governments) and our federally designated MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) recently completed its Whatcom Mobility 2040 Study, which estimated Lummi Island would add 90 households by the year 2040, from 490 to 580, or 0.64% annually.

Whatcom County recently updated its Comprehensive Plan (8/9/16) using Berk Consulting to forecast population through 2036. Lummi Island is lumped into areas designated 'Outside the UGA' (Urban Growth Area) where future growth is discouraged. Berk estimated the county as a whole would grow at 1.3% annually and areas outside the UGA would grow at 1%.

LIFAC (Antholt, 2015) estimated population using the above citations, and then modified it for local circumstances such as retirees, stagnant wages for middle class, higher housing costs, and other factors. Estimates of population growth ranged from a high of 1.7%, medium 1.3% and low of 0.7% through 2030, noting a higher probability in the medium to low range.

Steer Davies Gleave, as part of KPFF-Group, used all of the above studies in developing its econometric model of future demand for Lummi Island. Additional details from other data sources tested the sensitivity to various population segments and expected growth rates within each group, including birth and death rates and net migrations to the island by age groups. Further, the model used fare changes and cash/punch sales to test various sensitivities to changes in each.

Essentially, it shows island population growth slowing over the years from a high of nearly 2% annually in 2000 to 0.14% by 2040. Losses in the 60+ age category of <0.52%> are offset by gains in the under 20's of 1.1% and 20-59 group of 0.47%.

KPFF is suggesting our ferry ridership will grow in the years 2030-2040 by 0.95% for pedestrians and **0.76% annually for vehicles and drivers**. As vehicle space is the limiting factor to determine our vessel size, the 0.76% number was carried out to the year 2060 in its presentation, which is near the vessel's midlife range.

Our next white paper (#3) will discuss vessel size options presented at the March 14th, 2018 LIFAC public meeting and how that relates to traffic demands. In June 2018, the County Council will receive KPFF's, Whatcom County Public Works and LIFAC's recommendations and decide what ferry alternatives to develop. Making your transportation needs and opinions known at this critical junction will greatly help insure our future. Please join us at the Town Hall Meeting on April 12th, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Beach School.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD