Whatcom County

Request for Comments on
Scope of Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the
Whatcom County Adult Corrections Facilities and Sheriff’s Headquarters

Description of Proposal: The Whatcom County Adult Corrections Facilities and Sheriff’s Headquarters, an Essential Public Facility, would provide law enforcement infrastructure and public safety resources in Whatcom County over the next 15-20 years. The principal project elements would be: Adult Jail, Jail Support Area, Sheriff’s Headquarters and Services Building. The proposed project may be constructed in multiple phases. The first phase would open in 2017 with up to 660 beds. Based on a needs analysis through 2040, it is anticipated that a future phase might occur after 2030 which could bring the facility to approximately 800 beds total. Additional phases could occur after 2040, but would be based on a future needs analysis.

The County has determined that a 40-acre site on LaBounty Road north of Sunset Road in Ferndale is the Preferred Alternative. A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is being written that retains relevant analysis from the 2010 DEIS and adds information pertaining to the newly added site. The SEIS will also include public comments made during the 2010 comment period.

History: The Jail planning process began in 2008 when Whatcom County conducted a siting study to identify potential candidate sites for the project. Eight sites were originally analyzed. From this list, two sites were selected for environmental review: the “DNR site” (Site 5) on Curtis Road and a 72-acre site northwest of Bellingham Airport (Site 4) west of Kope Road, south of Slater Road. In October 2010 a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was issued by Whatcom County for the proposal. The DEIS was circulated for a public comment period which concluded on November 19, 2010. The Kope/Slater Alternative (Site 4) was subsequently withdrawn from consideration. Further work on the EIS was suspended as additional alternatives were sought and analyzed.

On April 26, 2011 the Whatcom County Council approved a resolution establishing a Jail Planning Task Force (JPTF). The JPTF was comprised of local citizens, County Administration, Sheriff’s Office and Health Department staff. In June 2012, Whatcom County issued a Request for Jail Site Property Proposals to broaden the alternatives available for consideration. Eleven sites were proposed from which one (LaBounty Road) was selected as an additional alternative.
The second alternative reviewed in 2010 (DNR Site/Site 5) was withdrawn from consideration in April 2013.

Proponent: Whatcom County Administrative Services Department, Facilities Management

Location of Proposal: The preferred site is located approximately ½ mile northwest of the I-5/Slater Road interchange, north of Slater Road on the west side of LaBounty Road.

Lead Agency: The Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department and Ferndale Planning Department are co-lead agencies (197-11-944). Whatcom County is the nominal lead.

EIS Required: A supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c) and will be prepared. The 2010 Draft EIS and other materials indicating likely environmental impacts can be reviewed at our offices (addresses below) and on our website at: http://www.whatcomcounty.us/jailsiting/index.jsp

The lead agency has identified the following areas for discussion in the SEIS:

Earth (Geology, Soils),
Water (Surface water, Floodplains),
Plants and Animals (impacts to plants and animals and habitat),
Energy and Natural Resources,
Environmental Health (e.g. hazardous materials),
Land and Shoreline Use (relationship to existing land use plans and to estimated population),
Light and Glare,
Aesthetics,
Historic and Cultural Preservation,
Transportation (traffic, parking, movement/circulation of people or goods, traffic hazards),
Public Services and Utilities (fire and police, communication, water, sewer/solid waste, other governmental services including electricity and natural gas).

The Supplemental EIS will discuss alternative site plans on the LaBounty Road site and a "No Action" alternative that assumes improvements to the existing site in downtown Bellingham.

Scoping: Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the SEIS. Comments are specifically requested on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required.

Written comments: Comments on the scope of the EIS should be sent to Michael Russell, as indicated below and must be postmarked on or before May 30, 2013. Emails will also be accepted at the following email address: newjail@whatcomcounty.us.

Scoping Meeting: A public meeting will be held on Thursday, May 16, 2013, from 7:00 to 8:30pm, at the Horizon Middle School Forum/Auditorium, 2671 Thornton Road, Ferndale,
WA to receive verbal comments on scoping. Doors will open at 6:00 to allow time for the public to view preliminary site plans and ask questions of City and County representatives. Comments received at this meeting will assist in determining the issues and alternatives to be analyzed in the SEIS. Written comments will also be accepted at this meeting.

Contact Name and Address:  
Michael Russell  
Whatcom County Facilities Management  
316 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
(360) 676-6746

Responsible Official:  Tyler R. Schroeder

Position/Title:  Current Planning Supervisor/Designated SEPA Responsible Official

Address:  5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, Washington 98226

Telephone:  (360) 676-6907

Date:  May 7, 2013  
Signature:  

Whatcom County Adult Corrections Facilities and Sheriff's Headquarters  
Scoping Notice