

Input Themes and Responses

The consultation process revealed strong support for the scope and general direction of the RSS and the aspirational nature of the document. The following sections provide responses to input themes aimed at further enhancing the RSS.

Vision Statement

There is support for the scope and direction of the draft vision. Some suggested that the vision be expressed more succinctly.

Response: Rewrite the vision statement more succinctly as follows: “We advance health and prosperity in the Capital Region and grow more resilient, affordable and responsive to climate change by fostering inclusive, compact, transit-oriented communities that support cycling and walking, and by expanding local food production, and protecting natural areas.”

Priority Areas

Online feedback identified the top three priority areas as being: 1) improve transit and active transportation, 2) preserve rural areas, enhance farm/food security and 3) avoid sprawl, and create compact, complete communities.

Response: Public identification of top priorities reaffirms the overall thrust of the RSS which emphasizes the integration of transportation (especially transit and active transportation) and land use, and containing growth and creating compact, complete communities. The RSS proposes significant new initiatives aimed at supporting agricultural and food systems. The RSS could further strengthen these areas through text revisions that more strongly draw out these themes.

Desire for Ambitious Targets

Staff solicited feedback on 17 targets. The online feedback revealed that on all but two targets, there was majority agreement that the targets noted in the plan were “about right”. For the two targets where there was not majority agreement, the feedback was that the targets should be *even higher*. The desire for more ambitious targets centered on the topics of “complete/compact communities” and “active transportation”. A desire for more ambitious “complete/compact communities” and “growth containment” targets was also expressed by a number of stakeholder groups and supported by the IAC/DPAC/SRT.

Response: Strengthen the targets for ‘complete, compact communities’, ‘active transportation’ and growth containment. For example, a two tiered target could be developed for compact, complete communities – one that sets a target for a share of regional dwelling unit growth within Growth Centres and a second that sets a broader target for share of regional dwelling unit growth located within a five minute walk of a mixed-use centre.

A number of respondents who would like a higher growth containment target made reference to earlier reporting out on the RGS 90% target that indicated that the region has been coming close to or exceeding this target (State of the Region Report 2008). More recent calculations indicate that from 2003-2014, approximately 80% of dwelling unit growth was located within the Growth Containment Area. In light of this, a target of 90% represents a progressive target; however, consideration could be given to increasing the target.

The 'active transportation and transit' target of 42% of all trips by 2038 being made by walking, cycling and transit is derived from the Regional Transportation Plan. It is an ambitious target relative to 2011 levels of 23%. The target could be increased to 50% if carpooling was also considered.

Requests for Additional Targets

Some respondents indicated a desire for the target list to be expanded to include the topics of local food production, water conservation and renewable energy.

The importance of increasing local food production was expressed by online respondents as well as by the RTE, one stakeholder group and 14/36 individual email submissions. Related to this, requests to not just "maintain" but also "expand" the ALR came from 3/8 stakeholder groups, including the Capital Regional Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable Society. Please note additional comments on this subject under the section dealing with 'Municipal Councils Input'.

Inclusion of a water conservation target was suggested numerous times and seen by some (including the RTE) as a more meaningful target than the proposed target (defer the need for expansion of regional water supply areas or reservoirs). One municipal council commented that the water target is inconsistent with proposals to allow water outside the Growth Containment Area.

The RTE has also recommended inclusion of a renewable energy target similar to that used by the City of Vancouver.

Response: Develop targets for local food production, water conservation and renewable energy.

Requests for Removal of Some Targets

While there was a desire for the target list to be expanded on some fronts, there were also those who suggested removal of some targets so as to focus on those most directly within the CRD's and member municipalities' sphere of influence. The targets mentioned most frequently as candidates for removal were those relating to poverty reduction and jobs. Staff notes that there are additional targets that are also only tangentially impacted by CRD or municipal action (e.g., zero emission vehicles).

Response: Revisit targets outside CRD (and/or member municipalities') sphere of influence or clarify where the sphere of local government influence is very limited. Consider including some of these 'targets' as indicators that are reported on in the monitoring and indicators program. In this context, they would serve to provide a broader context through which progress on achieving targets could be assessed.

Concern about Sprawl

Concern about the prospects for sprawl resonated from multiple sources. There was expressed desire that, as the RSS is broadened to deal with a wider range of issues than the RGS addressed, the document not lose sight of the need to strongly and effectively address growth management issues. Many commented that the CRD should use the RSS as a means to curtail sprawl, particularly into rural or natural areas. The potential for water services in rural areas to increase sprawl was of particular concern for many.

Response: Revise the RSS text to more strongly draw out the important relationships between addressing issues such as climate change and creation of compact, complete communities. The section below and Attachment 9 describe how areas identified for

potential water servicing have been reduced in size and how concerns regarding water servicing will be addressed.

Differences of Opinion on Water Servicing (See Attachment 9 for further details and analysis)

In the context of both concern about sprawl and protection of natural areas, there was extensive discussion of the provision of water services outside the Growth Containment Area. Both those who were for and against the policy wording proposed in the October 2014 (revised) draft noted concerns about the potential for any extension of water services to trigger sprawl. Only a very small number of online respondents indicated that they wanted water servicing extended to support exurban growth/economic development. Port Renfrew has been identified by one respondent and the Electoral Area Director as an area for economic development that should be acknowledged in the RSS.

The issue of water servicing outside the Growth Containment Area has been the subject of examination and discussion by the DPAC in eight meetings over a period of 18 months without a clear consensus arising. At its meeting on March 4, 2015 (Attachment 3), the majority of DPAC members indicated support for one of several options that would allow for some extension of water services beyond the Growth Containment Area. Each option discussed provided for extension of water services within municipal boundaries and specific areas in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (JdF EA). All options also required that municipalities and the JdF EA establish strategies for containing growth within the Growth Containment Area and limiting growth and development on Rural Lands and Natural Resource Lands Policy Areas. To date, three out of five municipal councils that have provided detailed comment on the draft RSS have indicated that they do not support the extension of water services beyond the Growth Containment Area. The EA Director has advocated for water services within the JdF area.

Response: Revise the RSS to identify a Growth Containment Area for Port Renfrew and reduce the Rural Settlement Areas for East Sooke and Otter Point to be consistent with settlement areas identified through OCP processes. The question has been taken as far as it can be at the staff level and will require political direction to advance. Given the diversity of opinion and the potential for the issue to stand in the way of adoption of the RSS, staff proposes that a process led by a third party facilitator be undertaken with Directors and municipal Councils through a Council of Councils workshop.

Requests for Additional Content

Some provincial, municipal and economic development stakeholders have requested that the sections of the RSS dealing with the economy and economic development be strengthened. For example, there could be more emphasis on the diversity of the economy and key growth sectors such as marine-based industries, educational institutions, clean technology industries and tourism. Other stakeholder groups, including some with economic-related mandates, have, however, expressed satisfaction with coverage of economic content.

Response: Revise the RSS to enhance content in response to the above comments.

Transportation Systems

One theme from online respondents was the need to improve transportation systems between communities to reduce traffic congestion. This concern was reinforced by submissions from some interest groups who expressed concern that the RSS does not adequately address the transportation needs of the region. Many suggestions focused on improved transit, walking and cycling options. Some interest groups commented that the RSS should make stronger statements in support of an east-west rapid transit system. Suggestions were also made for road infrastructure improvements.

Response: The RSS builds on the transportation policy recommendations of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) which sets out a long-term plan for addressing regional transportation issues. The RTP identified an east-west rapid transit corridor and this is supported in the RSS. Transit improvements rely upon continued collaboration with provincial agencies. (Action 3.3.7) The RSS integrates land use and transportation policies in order to support the development of compact, higher density, mixed-use communities that will be able to support higher levels of transit service in future (Policy 3.3.) The RSS also supports further exploration of the creation of an expanded transportation service authority that will better address the transportation needs of the region.

Infrastructure

Comments were also received by some respondents and interest groups regarding suggestions to more fully address regional infrastructure, including sewage treatment. These views were reinforced by legal advice that recommended that the RSS provide more information regarding regional infrastructure (e.g., sewage, landfill and water services).

Response: Revise the RSS text to provide more information regarding regional infrastructure.

Remarks from those Questioning the RSS

Some respondents (though not the majority) expressed concern about: affordability of the proposed actions (cost to government and individuals); the role of the marketplace and individual free choice; and whether the topic areas were appropriate roles for the CRD/government. Some also questioned whether it would be possible to achieve the ambitious targets.

Concern has been expressed by four DPAC members that the RSS is beyond the scope mandated through the LGA and too weighted towards carbon/GHG emissions, environment, food/agriculture and sustainability issues and does not adequately address socio-economic, land use and transportation basics.

Response: It is noted that the RSS sets out a long-term strategy and does not commit the CRD, local municipalities or provincial and federal agencies to commit resources to implement specific actions. The costs of specific proposed initiatives will be addressed through business planning and budgeting processes.

Legal advice has confirmed that the draft RSS lies within the mandate set out in the LGA for a regional growth strategy. RSS text can be revised to clarify agency responsibilities and focus municipal actions related to regional context statement to only those actions that address the minimum requirements of the LGA (e.g., land use, transportation and socio-economic matters). Other proposed municipal actions that advance the broader sustainability objectives (e.g., climate change, food systems, etc.) of the RSS could be moved into the 'municipalities are requested to' category.

Comments regarding Implementation and Governance

A number of online respondents, interest groups and stakeholders raised questions regarding implementation of the RSS. Some perceive the proposed actions to not be sufficient to achieve the ambitious targets. As well, the concept of amalgamation into fewer municipalities was a recurring theme.

Response: At this point, it is not possible to know if the proposed package of actions will ultimately deliver on the targets. However, a strong monitoring program with annual reports to the Board will provide information on an ongoing basis and will provide regular

assessment of progress and create opportunities for course corrections if adequate progress is not being made towards achieving the targets.

The RSS is a collaborative statement of future aspirations for the region. It sets out actions for the CRD and local municipalities. It also identifies a number of actions that provincial and federal agencies, and sometimes, municipalities, are requested to support. Achieving the targets will require the combined efforts of all parties since each jurisdiction has different mandates and responsibilities. A number of actions outlined for the CRD are ambitious and have the potential for far-reaching benefits, such as taking a leadership role in the provision of clean, renewable energy, transportation planning and advancing food security initiatives. Local municipalities are responsible for land use management and are accountable to local constituents regarding progress on land use related targets such as containing growth and how much growth is focused in walkable mixed-use centres. Finally, achieving the targets also depends upon the allocation of resources to commit to specific proposals and this is achieved through business planning and budgeting processes undertaken by the CRD and local municipalities.

Municipal Council Input

Input has been received from five municipalities to date.

Some municipal councils and DPAC members have suggested that the RSS is overly prescriptive as it relates to content for regional context statements and that the regional land use policy maps are too specific with respect to Growth Centres.

Response: Revise the preamble wording for municipal actions in response to legal advice; show Growth Centres symbolically on the RSS land use policy area maps; and revise the amendment process to delete references to Growth Centres.

Additional Municipal Council Comments

- Agriculture – Various views have been expressed regarding the ALR. One municipal council has requested that a map specifically identifying ALR lands be included in the RSS. Another municipality supports retention of agricultural lands. On the other hand, one municipal council has expressed the view that the role of the CRD and municipalities regarding ALR lands has been overstated and a preference expressed that wording be softened and that instead the province's regulatory role be more fully acknowledged.
- Emergency management – One municipal council has commented that this section of the RSS should focus on CRD assets (not local).
- Rural Settlement Areas (RSA) Land Use Policy Area – One municipal council has expressed concern that this will lead to further fragmentation of rural lands. It is noted that proposed revisions to the Regional Land Use Policy Areas maps reduce the size and extent of RSAs.
- Regional transportation authority – One municipal council has expressed support for the concept philosophically.
- 'Nature Needs Half' - One municipal council has requested that how the concept relates to private lands be clarified.
- Protection of groundwater and surface water – One municipal council emphasized the need to protect ground and surface water, the need for more local control and a resilient approach to managing water services.
- Climate change target – One municipal council expressed the need to clarify how GHG emissions are calculated.
- Implementation – One municipal council has noted the need for an implementation plan.

- Mobility Hub – One municipal Council requested a new 'Rural Mobility Hub/Park and Ride' location on the Langford/Highlands border.
- Municipal flexibility regarding secondary dwelling units – One municipal council has flagged implications of potential secondary dwelling units as having a potential impact on growth that may affect their regional context statement.
- Minor amendment process – One municipal council is not supportive of a minor amendment process.
- Provincial and federal government roles for industry standards regarding public health and environmental protection – One municipal council supports strengthening RSS wording relating to this topic.
- Unprotected Green Space – One municipal council cautioned that removing this land use policy area (as per RGS) may result in the loss of green space protection.
- 'Sustainable growth' – One municipal council expressed the view that growth should be managed and references to 'sustainability' should be used with caution.
- Additional content - One municipality has requested inclusion of a specific reference to placemaking within the context of the diverse nature of communities in the region. Another municipality requested that reference be made to the carbon sequestration value of wetlands in sections dealing with the carbon sequestration value of forest lands.

Response: Staff will review and consider all municipal input received to date as well as additional input received until mid-June in making RSS revisions and report back to the Board with a comprehensive response once input has been received from all municipal councils.

There is strong support amongst municipal stakeholders for more time for municipal councils to provide their input, including four municipal councils. In some cases, municipalities would like to seek input from local residents and stakeholders prior to providing input on the RSS. The District of North Saanich has requested that CRD staff co-host a community meeting with the District of North Saanich and the North Saanich Residents Association to review and discuss the draft RSS (Attachment 15). A key issue of interest is the extent of the RSS Growth Containment Area as previously proposed by the North Saanich Council.

Response: Provide additional time for municipal council input and a Council of Councils workshop as per the workplan (Attachment 14).