2009 Legislative Session Underway

By Josh Peters, AICP and Esther Larsen
Legislative Committee Co-chairs

The 2009 legislative session started on January 12th. Unlike last year, when the session set records for the amount of bills introduced during the first week, this year only a handful of bills have been introduced (as I write this January 14th). As of yet, none of the expected climate change bills have been introduced. Some committees are having a hard time filling their agendas.

The legislative leadership set February 25th as the first deadline to move bills out of committee—a much earlier than usual deadline for a 105-day session. In past years, this deadline would have been met with great consternation. Now they seem unconcerned because they do not yet have very many bills to consider. They perhaps realize that they can not accomplish very much this session due to fiscal constraints. Most of the committee hearings currently scheduled covers various aspects of the Governor’s budget proposal. Committees associated with health care and human services are particularly busy right now.

The biggest news so far this session occurred in Seattle where the Governor unveiled the preferred solution to the failing Alaska Way Viaduct. The State promises to provide $2.8 billion for the project but has only $2.4 billion set aside for it. Given the dismal budget outlook, this promise left many legislators shaking.

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their heads. The state transportation budget is looking at a budget deficit of about $500 million this biennium.

Early conversations this session seem to focus on local infrastructure financing tools, such as tax-increment financing and transportation benefit districts. There is also a lot of speculation or hope concerning how a federal stimulus package will be spent and by whom. The Governor recently appointed Dick Thompson, a well-respected Olympia consultant and former budget director and chief of staff, to be the stimulus “Czar” should they need one.

During these early days of the session, few really know what the next few months will hold. We all wait for the March fiscal forecast, which could make a bad deficit much worse or just worse.

APA Washington Legislative Committee

Any Chapter members who are interested in participating in the activities of the Legislative Committee should review the committee’s work program at http://washington-apa.org/programs/legcommittee.

Please contact Josh Peters at jpeters@co.jefferson.wa.us and Esther Larsen at elarsen@spokanecounty.org for more information about this important committee.
Committed to Planning

By Joe Tovar, FAICP

Decades ago, at an APA Conference in New Orleans, I gained some valuable insight into the meaning of “professional ethics” from Dr. Hans Bleiker. “Ethics is not simply a matter of what others would expect of you in a given situation as a member of your profession,” he said. “Rather, it is a matter of what you expect of yourself knowing that you have chosen this as your profession.”

The APA Ethical Principles in Planning and the AICP Code of Ethics provide guiding lights for the practice of planning. Our code places a paramount emphasis on a responsibility to the public interest, coming even before the responsibility to clients and employers. The Planners’ ethic also recognizes a responsibility to the planning profession and our colleagues.

Opportunities for service
It is this latter duty that compels dozens of Chapter volunteers to serve on the board, as officers and members of our Sections, on legislative and conference committees, and ad hoc task forces. Coming up in a few months will be an opportunity for three Chapter members to serve terms as elected state-wide officers. This spring we will have elections for Chapter Vice-President, Chapter Treasurer and Chapter Secretary. Watch for more information in next month’s newsletter!

Serving the public interest is what got most of us interested in planning in the first place. However, the planner’s ethical code is not always an easy one to live by. It will likely create tension and dilemmas if not outright conflict at some point(s) in your professional life. But as Dr. Bleiker might say, “Hey, suck it up. You’re the one who decided to be a planner. You could have been an architect or a lawyer or a rodeo clown, but you chose to be a planner.” Come to think of it, at times during my career I’ve felt like all three!

Mentoring students and young professionals
A subset of the responsibility to the profession and our colleagues is a commitment to contribute time and resources to the development of students, interns and beginning professionals. I am very proud of the many ways that APA Washington has helped meet this special obligation to planning students. In addition to funding annual scholarships to the two accredited planning schools in the state, we also provide for student representation as voting members on the Chapter board, and made student poster sessions an ongoing part of our annual conference. In addition, beginning with the 2008 Conference, we offered significantly discounted student registrations to make it very affordable for students to attend.

I am also pleased with the partnership that the Chapter’s Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) has forged among practicing planners, student planners, and communities in need of pro bono planning.

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services, CPAT co-chair Paula Reeves already has UW students Greg Brey and Christian Williams signed up to work on a project with Royal City, with more students coming on board soon to help with a CPAT project in Goldendale. These CPAT projects provide valuable experience and networking opportunities for the students, as well as low-cost help for smaller communities from Concrete to Zillah.

On the road again

In other news, the Chapter Board will continue to take its quarterly meetings on the road this spring, this time to Bellingham on Friday, March 20. For those of you in the Northwest Section (Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties) this will be a unique opportunity to learn more about Chapter and Section activities, and share a free lunch with your colleagues on the Board. From 10 a.m. to noon, we’ll have updates on the legislative session, upcoming CPAT opportunities, and early planning for the annual conference. Mark your calendar now and look for more details in the March newsletter. For more information, contact Northwest Section President Jennifer Aylor at Jennifer.aylor@cherrycreekenvironmental.com

Until next month,
Keep on Planning in the Free World.
As noted in the January newsletter, an APA Washington task force recently reviewed and commented on a series of state-level reports that were released this fall and winter related to climate change, Puget Sound cleanup, infrastructure funding, critical areas/agricultural areas, and transfer of development rights.

The final letter, titled “Toward a Smart Growth Strategy for Washington,” has been sent to legislators, the Governor, and the directors of CTED and Ecology.

The letter contains four sections. The first section begins with a statement of the need/definition of the problem and describes the purpose of the task force. The second section contains general guidelines to guide the state in its approach toward implementation. The third section contains recommendations for specific statutory changes to enable the Growth Management Act to serve as the organizing framework for action. The letter concludes with an appeal to state legislators to act on these pressing issues and references the Livable Washington reports.

Below is a summary of the two most substantive sections: principles for smart growth and recommendations for legislative action.

Six Principles to Guide a Smart Growth Strategy

The following principles suggest that the combination of the Growth Management Act and statewide smart growth is the mechanism for implementing the recommendations in the Livable Washington reports.

1. **Build on strong public support** for environmental protection and be bold.

2. **Create statutory clarity** by explaining how already mandated planning actions are to be done.

3. **Promote efficient governance** by providing local government with resources and clear standards for issues of compelling state interest and then holding them accountable.

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4. **Focus state investments** on supporting compact development, conservation of key natural resources, and more tools for financing infrastructure.

5. **Promote housing affordability** through a variety of strategies.

6. **Provide resources** for planning.

### Ten Recommendations for Legislative Action

These recommendations are meant to clarify and strengthen the Growth Management Act to allow it to serve as the organizing framework for implementation.

1. Amend RCW 36.70A.020 (10) to recognize the role that compact urban development and multi-modal transportation can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Amend RCW 36.70A.070 (6) to include multimodal transportation strategies in concurrency statutes and include transit-oriented development as a concurrency strategy.

3. Amend 47.80 to require that reductions in vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions be addressed regionally.

4. Amend RCW 36.70A.480 and RCW 90.58 to eliminate the time gap in the protection of shorelines of the state.

5. Amend RCW 36.70A.190 to create “safe harbors” for local governments by making GMA-related WAC rules mandatory.

6. Amend RCW 36.70A.110 to prohibit the expansion of urban growth areas into floodplains.

7. Amend RCW 36.70A.3201 to restore a balance between local decision making and compelling state interests.

8. Amend RCW 36.70A.040 and .280 to require Special Purpose Districts to plan under the GMA.

9. Amend RCW 36.70A.103 and .280 to make state agencies subject to the GMA as part of a statewide smart growth strategy.

10. Provide new local revenue and financing options for cities and counties to support growth and natural resource preservation.

With the letter now delivered, the task force has now sunset. Work will continue through the full legislative committee as we respond to proposed bills that implement recommendations found in these reports.
The Peninsula Section held its first meeting of 2009 at the Guy Cole Convention Center in Sequim, Wash. The meeting was attended by approximately 40 planners, elected officials and planning commissioners. Discussions focused on affordable housing and climate change.

During the group’s introductions, President Berezowsky asked the membership to briefly describe the type of work the various jurisdictions were working on now that the economy has slowed, allowing departments to shift from a major focus on processing permits, to more land use and policy planning efforts. The following summarizes some of the major planning initiatives jurisdictions in the Peninsula Section are focusing on.

In response to the economic downturn, many jurisdictions are looking for ways to stimulate economic development through a variety of planning efforts. The City of Port Angeles has received a grant from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to study strategies to attract new businesses to bolster its economic base. Based on the city’s grant application, the project’s main goal is to create “a vibrant, aesthetically pleasing tourist destination,” according to the AIA.

Nathan West, Economic and Community Development director, has stated that this study will hopefully help the City of Port Angeles devise several strategies with the first being to fill vacant spaces, particularly the upper floors and basements of downtown buildings. A second goal of the study is to devise strategies for providing incentives for building owners to implement design improvements, including vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic options. Another strategy involves encouraging beautification and economic development with sufficient open space and access to the waterfront.

On a larger scale, but with a similar goal in mind, the City of Port Orchard has recently adopted an updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan and issued a Town Center Revitalization Plan. Both plans are aimed at helping the city transition from a big town to a small city, focusing on employment, recreation and economic growth.

The City of Poulsbo is also released a new Comprehensive Plan on January 21st. The Poulsbo plan will help stimulate new economic interest throughout the City, especially in the downtown core and along the Viking Avenue corridor. This corridor has been a historical home to “auto row,” including Poulsbo RV, which has closed—along with a number of other automobile dealerships—due the sagging economy.

The City of Poulsbo and Kitsap County are also in discussions that, if successful, will result in Kitsap County delegating land use permit processing within the unincorporated UGA to the City of Poulsbo. This effort is partially a response to the decline in permitting activity within the county, the forced reduction in county planning staff, and the realization that the city should be responsible for planning and permit approval upon land that will soon become part of the city proper through annexation.

In response to the economic downturn, many jurisdictions are looking for ways to stimulate economic development through a variety of planning efforts.

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A number of other programs, innovative and traditional, are also being discussed throughout the Peninsula Region to assist local government transition through these difficult times. The City of Sequim is in the process of considering adopting impact fees for the first time to ensure that “growth pays for growth,” while Jefferson County is considering a 25 percent or greater increase in permitting fees to help cover the increasing costs of processing land use and building permits.

Port Townsend, in conjunction with Clallam County, has completed the first phase of a study on energy emission auditing to help identify the major sources of harmful and wasteful energy use. By identifying the sources and amounts of these emissions, these jurisdictions will be able to develop plans and strategies to reduce energy consumption and reduce unnecessary emissions into the environment.

These are just a few examples of the projects and programs being addressed during the economic downturn. By pursuing such planning efforts, we will hopefully be better prepared to accommodate growth and development once the market turns.

If you have questions or would like more information on some of the programs mentioned above, contact:

Barry Berezowsky
President, Peninsula Section
Planning Director, City of Poulsbo
360-779-3006
Planning Our Cities GREEN

By Micki McNaughton, CTED
Urban Forestry Specialist

Besides the dignity, grace and beauty that trees bring to our cities, there are many ecological services they provide that are worth literally millions of dollars:

- Air particulate filtration
- Greenhouse gas conversion
- Stormwater mitigation
- Carbon sequestration
- Erosion control
- Slope stabilization
- Moderation of urban microclimates

Trees are long-term, solar-powered, multi-tasking solutions to environmental concerns facing today’s modern cities. Healthy urban trees provide many of the same services as engineered solutions in our communities. In most cases, it would cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars to replace the functions of an urban forest. Urban trees also provide commercial, psychological, social, and health and safety benefits, enhancing our communities and economy in a sustainable, effective way. The recent release of “Planning the Urban Forest,” written by James Shwab and published by APA (available online at myapa.planning.org/APAStore/Search/Default.aspx?p=3913), supports the use of trees and other vegetation as powerful tools to help realize the vision of sustainable, healthy urban areas. The challenge before us as planners and engineers is how to effectively and efficiently incorporate trees into our infrastructure planning.

With the assistance of staff from local jurisdictions throughout the state, the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture is designing a series of half-day workshops to help planners and engineers address that challenge through the integration of urban forestry principles into the planning process. Topics will range from long-range infrastructure planning that incorporates both “green” and “gray” components to practical techniques to protect trees already in place. In addition, PNW-ISA is working with APA to offer Certification Maintenance credits for the workshops. For more information and a schedule of workshops as they become available, contact Micki McNaughton, CTED Urban Forestry Specialist, at 360-725-3080 or mickim@cted.wa.gov.
Planners’ Stories Sought

By Marga Rose Hancock

As part of the 2009 observance of the American Planning Association’s American Planning Centennial, the APA Washington Senior Action Committee (SAC) invites personal observations and insights from all chapter members, from students of planning at Washington universities, and from the larger community, on the history and future of planning in Washington.

The SAC solicits your input to an online survey, in order to generate an ongoing interactive, inter-generational conversation around significant Washington people and plans. Collection of this information takes the first step toward the development of publications and programs addressing the shaping of both the planning profession and Washington communities. Expect to hear some stories, and consider adding your own, as a highlight of at the 2009 APA Washington Conference.

In the manner of an open mike, the Planners’ Stories Editorial Team will review all responses to the survey, and also put them forward for posting on an APA100 Planners’ Stories Web page, at www.washington-apa.org. These stories, along with other resources, will form the basis for a planned series of web and print publications, likely to include oral histories expanding on the information developed from this questionnaire.

CLICK HERE NOW to take the survey.

The Editorial Team will appreciate receiving responses ASAP, but no later than February 13, 2009.

With THANKS TO ALL for sharing YOUR stories.
Resilient Community Planning in the Global Context

Presentations describing community planning practices in China and India, with an exploratory discussion on bridging the gap between Graduate Research and Professional Practice

The Professional Council of the University of Washington College of Built Environments is hosting a special event highlighting recent research in the College. This is an opportunity for all APA members to learn how “resilient community planning” is being practiced elsewhere in the world.

Manish Chalana, MArch, MLA PhD will present his study abroad in India focusing on integrated rural development and planning for remote mountain communities in the upper Himalayas. He will discuss the work that the group conducted in 2008, and plans for the 2009 program.

Dan Abramson, MArch MCP PhD will present on his background in community planning in China, and its applicability to a new UW initiative to undertake sustainable earthquake recovery planning in Sichuan. He will debrief the group on a reconnaissance he made to the earthquake zone in mid-December, and outline a program including an exchange between Puget Sound-area professionals and Chinese counterparts to take place in early May, followed by a summer studio project on resilience in the built environment in China.

A fundamental purpose of this event is to foster better integration of research and academic work at the University of Washington with the local professional planning community’s efforts. As part of the evening’s presentations, professional council members will lead a brief discussion exploring ways to “bridge the gap” between academic work and professional practice to more effectively advance our shared discipline.

Presented by the Professional Council of the University of Washington College of Built Environments.

Event Details:

When: February 24, 2009
5:00–5:30 p.m.: Social open house with displays of student work
5:30–7:00 p.m.: Presentation

Where: Gould Hall, University of Washington, University Way at NE 40th St., Seattle, WA

Info: Call 206-543-7679 or e-mail caupinfo@u.washington.edu for details
Multimodal Transportation Planning in Bellingham, Washington

by Chris Comeau, AICP
Transportation Planner
City of Bellingham, Washington

In 2006, the City of Bellingham developed and adopted a systematic approach to multimodal transportation planning that integrates land use and transportation goals, policies, development regulations, and funding mechanisms to ensure that adequate facilities are available for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and vehicle users.

The Transportation Element of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan contains multimodal transportation goals and policies and a list of approximately 150 related projects, most of which are bicycle and pedestrian projects recommended by the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). In addition, City transportation planners currently collaborate with the regional transit agency, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), to include transit infrastructure and service investments in the transportation network. City and WTA transportation planners also developed long-term “Mode Shift Goals” and continue to work toward reducing the overall percentage of trips made by single-occupant vehicles while increasing the percentage of trips made by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

Over the past 10 years, the City of Bellingham has made significant financial investment in building the multimodal transportation network outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. In recent years, roughly half of the transportation projects in Bellingham’s Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are specific to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and all new or reconstructed arterial streets are required to have bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Each year, transportation planners solicit priority project requests from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and the City’s 24 official neighborhoods. New multimodal transportation facilities are also created through private investment. In order to fund and construct transportation initiatives and improve arterial street standards, however, there needs to be new development to make street frontage improvements including bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

New development in Bellingham is subject to Multimodal Transportation Concurrency regulations that include measurements for pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile facilities. Each year, Bellingham transportation planners measure traffic volumes, transit ridership, and completeness of bicycle and pedestrian continued on page 13
Multimodal Transportation Planning

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networks to establish the number of “person trips available” in each of the 15 Concurrency Service Areas (CSA) throughout the City. Any new development that requires more “person trips” than are available in a particular CSA must fund or construct additional transportation infrastructure or at least implement measurable transportation demand management strategies, to ensure that there are enough “person trips” available in the multimodal transportation network to serve the new development. Consistent with Transportation Concurrency, the City will not accept an application for a proposed development if a developer cannot guarantee enough “person trips” will be available.

Like many communities, Bellingham has faced challenges to comply with the continued on page 14
Growth Management Act (GMA) and the concurrency requirement to adopt, monitor and maintain level of service (LOS) standards for transportation infrastructure. Bellingham transportation planners recognize that it is impossible to promote significant infill development and maintain traditional auto-centric volume-to-capacity LOS standards if they do not allow traffic congestion beyond a theoretical threshold. In fact, denying infill development due to a fear of increased rush hour traffic congestion effectively pushes development to the City’s edges and leads to worsened traffic congestion.

Despite the unpopularity of the message, Bellingham transportation planners publicly communicate that rush hour traffic congestion is a normal condition in urban environments and, while infill creates additional traffic congestion, it also provides opportunities for people to live closer to where they work, shop and entertain themselves, which has the potential to reduce the overall number of automotive trips over time.

Bellingham transportation planners worked with Kirkland-based consultants Transpo Group for over a year and held several public hearings, sometimes amid controversy. The new Multimodal Transportation Concurrency requirements were approved at the end of 2008 and became effective on January 1, 2009.

For additional information regarding multimodal transportation planning efforts in Bellingham, please contact Chris Comeau, AICP, Transportation Planner, Bellingham Public Works Department, at (360) 778-7900 or ccomeau@cob.org.