

BILL ##**SUBJECT
GMA/ Energy Element**

PROBLEM: The demand for energy (electricity and fuel) continues to increase throughout the state. Recent events across the country demonstrate the vulnerability of our economies to sudden energy blackouts as well as price hikes. Much of the money spent to purchase fuel in the state is exported to other economies. The current layout of communities facilitates energy dependence that is increasingly becoming a burden on the very poor. Current dependence on single-occupancy vehicles has contributed directly to greater air pollution (and a related spike in asthma rates) and greenhouse gases (that cause climate change). Issue analysis and energy related programs are generally addressed independent of their physical framework. A whole system approach to community planning that is integrated with utilities planning is absent in Washington state.

BACKGROUND: The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires jurisdictions to plan for their physical framework every 10 years through a comprehensive planning process. This process does not include a discussion of how the physical layouts of cities, subdivisions or buildings impact the communities' demand for energy, or release of greenhouse gases. Existing research and data document the following: how these phenomena are inter-related and can be measured; policies, tools and technologies for reducing the demand, and lowering and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions; and incentives for doing so.

ANALYSIS

1. The state grows by roughly 130,000 people per year and a demand for additional 300 MW of energy every year. In less than 50 years we will more than double our state's population – should we double our energy infrastructure (plants, 15,000 miles of transmission lines, substations) to accommodate this growth?
2. The transportation sector is the largest and fastest growing energy consumer. Petroleum claims nearly 40% of Washington State's Energy consumption (6 billion gallons a year) and the roughly \$18 billion that consumers pay for this each year ultimately ends up in other countries.
3. If community plans ignore this infrastructure issue it could have unfortunate land use implications in terms of more land dedicated to new power plants and transmission line rights of way; environmental implications of unabated greenhouse gas emissions and other air, water and soil pollution; greater vulnerability as potential for service disruption and line/plant failure increases concomitantly; and economic ramifications in terms of inefficient economic investment into old technologies and land, missed opportunity for economic revitalization through alternative technologies, as well as greater economic burden on the state's poor.
4. Other communities such as Denmark, Sweden, and Brazil have greatly reduced their fuel imports and greenhouse gas emissions through smart planning, programs, policies and funding.
5. Washington state residents are eager to reduce their energy consumption and carbon footprints as witnessed by the editorials in local papers and the increasing numbers of non-profits that have emerged that focus on these issues.
6. To date, this issue has not been systematically tackled.
7. Communities can take small inexpensive steps to upgrade their regulations and assign land uses that can help them reduce their energy consumption.

Source for Items 1-2: EIA SEDS

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

- Adds an Energy Element within comprehensive plans that can only be required if the program is funded by the state similar to the Parks and Recreation and the Economic Development elements.

SECTION PROVISIONS

Sec. 1. Amends RCW 36.70A.070. Comprehensive Plans – Mandatory Elements. Suggests a new subsection (9) that describes the contents of the proposed element.