



Making a difference...together

Report to the Planning and Protective Services Committee  
Wednesday February 27, 2008

---

**SUBJECT**

Options for the RGS 5-year Review

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide options for moving forward on the 5-year review of the Regional Growth Strategy.

**BACKGROUND**

The Regional Growth Strategy has been in place since August 2003. The RGS builds on a number of existing plans and policies, including the *Framework for our Future Agreement* (1998) which set out a regional vision based on local OCPs, and the *Regional Green Blue Spaces Strategy*. The RGS represented a collective commitment to a 25-year plan of action designed to achieve compact urban growth, surrounded by rural areas, resource lands and open space.

Regional Growth Strategies in BC are based on legislation which promotes a collaborative, bottom-up approach to regional cooperation. It does not give the regional districts authority to engage in regional planning, but enables them to carry out a coordinating and convening role in regional growth management. Regional policy is applied only to the extent that the member municipalities collectively choose to apply it to themselves and to hold others accountable to the mutually-agreed upon provisions.

The RGS is also subject to the provisions of Part 25 of the *Local Government Act*, which outlines the process for initiating, consulting, approving, monitoring, amending and updating a RGS. The CRD RGS implementation chapter contains a provision to: *At least once every five years, consider whether the Regional Growth Strategy should be reviewed for possible revision and amendment*. This report responds to that provision and presents options for revising the RGS.

Justification for the Review:

Since the adoption of the RGS in 2003, changes have occurred which warrant, at minimum, an updating to the RGS:

- The RGS implementation section I-6 contemplated an Interim Update to the RGS to incorporate the urban containment boundary for Sooke and relevant policy provisions pertaining to the sub-strategies (TravelChoices and Housing Affordability). The proposed interim update was modified

last year to deal only with the District of Highlands amendment. At minimum, the mapping and terminology updates should be incorporated. Where appropriate, policy direction pertaining to TravelChoices and the Housing Affordability Strategy should be reflected in the RGS.

- A Master Implementation Agreement (MIA) was to be developed to establish procedures for the amending, updating and implementing the RGS. It was also to contain guidance on servicing extensions and equitable approaches to financing regional growth. The MIA was intended to come forward as part of the Interim Update, but due to changes in project scope, it was not advanced. Development of the agreement could help address many of the issues associated with the RGS servicing policy and amendment procedures.
- Some of the actions contained within the RGS have been completed and need to be updated.
- Several changes at the provincial level need to be addressed through the RGS, including the requirement to set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets; the need to address the abolition of the Forest Land Reserve and the need to reflect the planning requirements for obtaining gas tax revenues.
- The region has also encountered public and stakeholder reaction to several growth management issues, including changes to the urban containment boundary, water service extensions, the sale of forestry lands, traffic congestion, the absence of light-rail transit in the region, and the growing affordability and homelessness problem.

#### ALTERNATIVES

1. Revise the Regional Growth Strategy using the approach outlined under "Option #1" (See Appendix One). This approach would retain the basic structure of the RGS, but would update the growth projections, mapping, and action items, and address the challenges that have been identified by the Board that pertain to the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA) and servicing extensions.
2. Revise the Regional Growth Strategy in a *phased* approach, as outlined in "Option #2". Phase 1 would include much of the work outlined in "option #1". Phase 2 would include a more IN-DEPTH review of the definition, rationale and policy approach for the RUCSPA as well as other policy gaps identified by the Board.
3. Transition the Regional Growth Strategy using the approach outlined under "Option #3". This approach would include the tasks mentioned above, but would broaden the scope of the RGS to address sustainability and climate change to a greater degree than it currently does now.
4. Direct staff to consider an alternative approach to updating or revising the Regional Growth Strategy.

#### REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

The options provided for consideration differ in terms of project scope, amount of research and public consultation required, and resource requirements (financial, staff and consultants). While the options differ, the underlying objectives are similar. Each option is designed to:

- Identify the shared commitments to addressing regional issues such as mobility and access, patterns of development, environmental health, economic prosperity, housing affordability, regional servicing and infrastructure, energy efficiency and others
- Provide the regional planning justification for gas-tax funding proposals
- Identify priority growth-management related initiatives that require collective action to implement
- Provide a mechanism for developing greater consistency in OCP policy where it affects the regional issues, while respecting municipal autonomy in community building
- Reflect provincial policy directions and requirements
- Acknowledge the opportunities and limitations of the existing RGS legislation, particularly as they pertain to updating and amending a regional growth strategy.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the RGS review depend on which option is chosen. Options #1 and #2 can be completed largely in-house over the next fiscal year, utilizing the existing staff complement and core budget. Both options will require input from the member municipalities and other CRD departments in order to develop the desired policy framework.

The scope of work contemplated in Option #3 would require on going financial and staff resources in FY 2009 and beyond. The need for more detailed analysis of issues and policy gaps may be identified through the review and the consultation process. Where more detailed issue investigations are warranted, but go beyond the anticipated project scope, staff will bring forward requests for supplementary funding through next years budget process. The possible RGS review process is outlined in Appendix one to this report and provides an indication of timelines and order-of-magnitude costs.

If option #3 is selected, staff would also revise the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)* grant proposal that was submitted last year, but was unsuccessful. That application had a very focus on climate change modeling and mapping. Should the Board wish to advance option #3, the proposal could be redrafted to emphasis the integration of transportation, smart planning, and climate change, and include a broad interpretation of sustainability. Staff will also examine other grant program opportunities to support the revision.

#### SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS:

The regional growth strategy is now 5 year old and needs to be updated and revised if it is to have value to the regional district and the member municipalities. The process of revising the RGS will need to focus on the needs and concerns of the regional district and the member municipalities; the

limitations apparent in the document and the legislation; and the emerging policy changes at the senior government level.

The approach to revising the RGS also needs to consider project timing, staff availability, and financial limitations. As such, it is intended to focus the revision on the needs of the decision-makers, affected stakeholders and first nations. The process will use the existing RGS and the RGS monitoring reports as a starting point to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities as opposed to starting with first principles and developing new visions.

It is recommended that the RGS be revised using the approach outlined in Option #3. Utilizing this would provide a balance between long-term policy direction and short-term implementation. By utilizing sub-strategies, implementation agreements, and action plans, a greater portion of the RGS decision-making would rest with the Regional Board, rather than the provisions of the provincial legislation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning & Protective Services Committee recommend to the Board that:

1. The Regional Growth Strategy be revised using the approach outlined in Option #3
2. That staff be directed to prepare a consultation plan and workplan to guide the revision process
3. That the Ministry of Community Services be notified of the CRD's intent to revise the RGS.

---

Tracy K. Corbett, MCIP  
Senior Manager  
Regional Planning

---

Robert Lapham, MCIP  
General Manager  
Planning and Protective Services

---

Kelly Daniels  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Concurrence

COMMENTS: