

**The Future We Choose:
State of Snohomish County**

**Angel of the Wind Event Center
March 21, 2018**

Thank you, Patrick, for that kind introduction. I appreciate everything you and the Economic Alliance do for our community.

I'd also like to thank the US Navy; our friends in Labor; Mayor Franklin, Mayor Smith, Mayor Nehring, Mayor Thomas, Mayor Earling; the Tulalip, Stillaguamish, and Sauk Suiattle Tribes; County Councilmembers; State Legislators; Everett Community College, Edmonds Community College, Washington State University, and my fellow Huskies at UW Bothell.

I'd also like to offer a special thank you to our Deputy County Executive, Marcia Isenberg. Please stand up, Marcia. She has been a great advisor for more than a decade and rock-solid Deputy Executive over the last two years. After a long and distinguished career in public service, she will be retiring later this spring. I wish her well and hope she'll still take my phone calls from the beach.

I'd also like to thank the Executive staff and our Department Directors. Please stand up. They work long hours for our residents. They are a great group of professionals, and I'm proud to work with them on your behalf.

Great things are happening in Snohomish County!

As you may know, I was a fisheries biologist before I ran for public office. One of my first and favorite jobs was working up at the Verlot Ranger Station, walking the back country mapping and assessing the streams and rivers that produce our salmon.

I could see across the county evidence of our history of hard work, entrepreneurship, and energy, the efforts that make our county great. I also saw the rich abundance that provides a sacred home for Native Americans.

We live in the most beautiful part of the world, and I want to keep it that way. And this isn't entirely selfish. Our tourism industry is major contributor to our economic health. It is right up there with aerospace and agriculture for total economic impacts. I want to show you a recent

video about our efforts to improve tourism-related activities along the Skykomish and Snohomish rivers.

Impressive work being done!

In order to advance our tourism efforts, this morning I signed an Executive Order on Tourism. I want to bring more strategic focus to our tourism efforts and ensure we are doing everything to increase tourist dollars coming into Snohomish County. I'd like to announce that I will be holding a Tourism Summit later this year. This will give us an opportunity to get stakeholders together to strengthen this sector and determine what more we could be doing. Look for more details in the next month or so.

We are all very fortunate to live here in a place with a rich history, abundance, and deep beauty, and we have an obligation to ensure the future is as rich, abundant and beautiful.

Today, I want to talk about: public safety, our continuous improvement efforts, fiscal responsibility, economic development, transportation, and planning for growth.

1. Public Safety

One of the challenges we face is ensuring that this beautiful place we call home remains safe.

Public safety is the highest priority of county government. In fact, last year we added five new deputies to the sheriff's office.

Over 76% of our general fund budget is dedicated to law and justice.

I appreciate the partnership I have with our hard working Judges, Prosecutor Roe, and Sheriff Trenary. I also am thankful every day for the deputies and corrections officers who put their lives on the line for us. Please join me in thanking our partners in the justice system and our first responders. [Lead clapping]

Much of what we do in county government is essential but not very dramatic. One great example is the consolidation of the county's two 911 organizations. This move will give the county seamless 911 coverage, saving lives and money. I strongly support these types of consolidations. As Snohomish County grows, so must our public safety infrastructure. And as we grow, we must look for efficiencies.

Part of that infrastructure is the Snohomish County Emergency Radio System or SERS. This is the system that allows first responders to communicate. When someone is in distress anywhere in the county, the SERS system allows for instant radio communications for our first

responders. In a major disaster, this will be the lifeline that will save lives and help us recover more quickly.

Unfortunately, our current analog system is obsolete and parts for it will cease being produced in the next few years. Therefore, we must as a county decide whether and how we want to invest in a new system.

We need to give the voters an opportunity to decide whether they want to invest in a new system.

These are not glamorous issues but the bread and butter of how we take care of our community and build the future we choose.

2. Opioid Epidemic Response

Snohomish County is projected to grow by an additional 250,000 residents by 2050. As we grow, there are some growing challenges. One is the significant impact that the opioid epidemic is having on our communities.

We see the epidemic in our population of homeless living in our cities and in rural camps. We see it with needles in parks and on school grounds. We see it with nuisance properties. We see it in the overdoses of loved ones and neighbors.

We have one-sixth the overdoses in the state and yet only one-tenth of the population. We had to get creative and do more to address the problem.

In November, I partially activated our emergency management system to deal with the epidemic. When we see the extraordinary level of death and community suffering facing us, we had to use the best tools at our disposal.

In partnership with the Sheriff and Health District, we established the Multi-Agency Coordination Group. This group brings together almost everyone who has a role to play in the crisis.

We immediately developed common goals and objectives. This alone has helped us tremendously by getting everyone pulling in the same direction. As the Sheriff likes to say, we are now all in our proper swim lanes, focused on those things we can do best.

I am extremely proud of the work of our Human Services Department. MJ, would you please stand up? Mary Jane is our Director of Human Services and does a great job managing very complex programs. Every day her team is working to get people into treatment, find housing, assist our veterans and seniors, and otherwise reduce human suffering. They have been

working hard for a long time on the epidemic, and we want to continue to give them our support.

Later this spring, we plan to open the Diversion Center. This is another outgrowth of our strong partnership with the sheriff. It's a fairly simple idea: when people ask for help, we need to give them a safe space so that they can do all of those things necessary for recovery: access treatment, arrange visits with doctors, find housing, and receive training for a job. We will divert them from our criminal justice system into something that will tackle their problems, not just treat the symptoms. If we want people to transition from a life on the streets or in homeless camps, we must provide an alternative. Our jails are not an effective alternative to treatment. The jail might work for some but not all. It is merely one piece of the puzzle.

We are very grateful to Senator Palumbo, Representatives Hayes and Robinson, and the other members of the Snohomish County delegation for all of their hard work organizing support from the legislature for the Diversion Center. And thank you to Governor Inslee for his consistent support over the last two years. We can't solve this problem on our own, and we hope our innovative approach may be a model for others in the state.

We are also very pleased that we are expanding the Office of Neighborhoods to the north. With the leadership of Sheriff Trenary and Councilmember Nehring, as well as Mayors Nehring and Tolbert, we will now have teams of law enforcement and social workers conducting outreach in Arlington and Marysville. This model is working, and we should continue to expand it where and when possible. By teaming social workers with law enforcement, we have more flexibility in getting people the help they need and enforcing our laws.

3. Continuous Improvement/STEP Initiative

Every initiative that I have launched over the last two years has been focused on improving our community and how we do business.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Japan to see how the Toyota Company revolutionized industry by developing lean manufacturing system.

They found that by empowering every employee—from the CEO to production line workers—they were much more adaptable, better able to compete, and provided a much better product. Any worker can stop the production line if there is even a minor problem – and they are expected to. A team leaps into action to resolve the problem and ensure it does not happen again or create a further problem down the line.

Snohomish County has over two thousand employees. Too often in the past, they were not adequately empowered to solve problems. In many parts of County government, there was a

culture that was averse to allowing our front-line employees to take ownership of solutions and build better solutions for the public we serve.

In 2016, I launched our STEP Initiative to bring Continuous Improvement techniques to the county. This is a long-term program designed to empower managers and employees with tools for continuous improvement. Built on Lean and Six Sigma practices in the private sector, the core components of continuous improvement focus on improving levels of service by defining, measuring, and analyzing processes with data in order to make process improvements. This approach will ultimately improve customer service and internal communications, equipping staff with the tools they need to adapt to future challenges.

We have now begun the hard work of changing our culture and improving customer service.

Boeing also has a long history with continuous improvement, and I'm proud that they have partnered with us to bring their expertise to our efforts.

Lynnwood's own Kaas Tailored has done a fabulous job of instituting a continuous improvement model. We are also learning from their experience.

My goal is to transform Snohomish County government. Many of the processes and procedures have not been updated for decades. When we ask the question "Why do you do it that way," the most common refrain is often, "That's the way we've always done it." We want to give employees and managers the tools to look hard at every process and figure out how we might do it better.

We are already seeing results. Our Planning and Development Services has cut down the time of permitting from months to weeks. By going on-line and pushing hard to improve processes, they are delivering their services better and more quickly. At the same time, employees feel energized, since they can eliminate barriers to doing their work.

A critical part of continuous improvement is to deliver services to the public more quickly, efficiently, and effectively. At the end of the day, I want our staff to be happier in their work and our citizens happier with the services we deliver.

Our residents deserve the best from us, and we are working hard to give them just that.

I appreciate the full support of the County Council and the efforts of other elected officials for this initiative.

4. Fiscal responsibility

One of the primary reasons I ran for county executive was to make sure that we are being fiscally responsible.

I have a few principles that I believe should guide our budget process.

- First, we need to look systemically at the county budget to ensure we are being wise with taxpayers' money. One-off budget gimmicks don't work, but long term systemic solutions do.
- Second, we need to ensure that when the next downturn of the economy hits, we are prepared. We can't afford to increase hiring, if we haven't planned how to pay for it. By taking responsible steps today, we can insure we won't face layoffs tomorrow. It is extraordinarily disruptive to lose significant institutional knowledge and subject area expertise.
- Third, we need to work collaboratively as a team in the county to find ways to ensure we are being fiscally responsible. I am grateful that the county council has joined me in charting a path forward for constructive dialogue on developing the 2019 budget. Together, we will be making decisions based on the realities of our economy.
- As an example, our decision to undertake necessary renovations to the courthouse, rather than build a new building, will save taxpayers somewhere in the range of eighty million dollars. We are working hard to constrain costs and adjust to ever-escalating expenses resulting from the building boom. But at the end of the day, we will be able to improve safety, make the building more resilient, and give our justice system the space they need for an ever-growing county. In August, we plan on a groundbreaking. I hope to see you there.

5. Economic Development

Part of our planning for a growing population is doing all we can to build a diverse, resilient, and healthy local economy.

Back in 2016 I launched our Economic Development Initiative. We identified sector leads in nine key areas to simplify our outreach efforts and make it easier for businesses to reach us. In our county's history, we have been dominated by single industries, and we must do what we can to make our economy more diverse. This in turn makes our economy more resilient.

One of the areas where we excel is in aerospace. Not only are we the center for global aviation, home to the largest manufacturing plant in the world, but we are on the cusp of beginning commercial air service at Paine Field.

This will be transformative for Snohomish County. Our residents will be able to fly out of a local airport, and businesses looking to invest will now have another reason to consider Snohomish County. We also expect a significant number of tourists to fly into Paine Field. It will mean our local economy is more resilient and that we have another tool to use for attracting businesses.

The land for Paine Field was cleared in the mid-1930s from timberland. Since then, and over the last eighty plus years, there have been quite a few major milestones: nothing as important as 1966 when the airport was given to Snohomish County and when Boeing starting the 747 program. But in 2001 we saw the idea of commercial service be seriously proposed as an economic stimulus; and now in 2018 we expect commercial air service to start later this year.

Today, Paine Field is the most important economic engine in the county.

We are very proud that Alaska, United and Southwest Airlines have chosen to fly from Paine Field. They are great partners, and the twenty-four flights per day they have proposed will give us easier access to the world.

We are also proud that Paine Field is primarily a general aviation airport and the home to the aerospace industry. We don't expect that to change. We are just adding a capacity to the airport that will give us more options.

We are confident that Paine Field will remain the primary home of Boeing's wide-body manufacturing program.

We hope the newest addition to that program will be the proposed New Market Airplane or the 797.

And we know that there is no better place in the world to manufacture that plane than right here in Snohomish County.

We have the best workers, the most creative engineers, world-class training facilities, and topnotch infrastructure.

Last fall, I launched an Aerospace Task Force to make sure Snohomish County was using all of its assets to our advantage. I appreciate the partnership of Mayor Franklin, the County Council, and other key leaders as we work to land the NMA right here in Snohomish County. Later today the task force will be meeting again to continue charting our strategy for success.

I am also proud to be part of the statewide effort launched by Governor Inslee. We will do all we can to bring this next generation plane right here to Paine Field. And just think: Boeing employees working on the NMA would be able to fly right out of Paine Field. No long treks to an airport through some of the most congested roads in the country.

I am a true believer in regional collaboration. That is one reason why I have been a strong supporter of a regional economic development entity to help increase our profile and bring greater focus to our economic development efforts. We always do better when collaborating.

One area of opportunity we are exploring is bringing investments for cross-laminate timber to the county. Some of our rural areas continue to suffer with a weaker economy, and CLT offers the opportunity to do some very targeted economic development. It is a great bridge between our natural resource dependent areas and a high-tech product.

Speaking of high-tech, I hope you saw the announcement last year of Comcast's investment in high-speed fiber in the Marysville and Arlington MIC. Thanks to our partnership with the Economic Alliance, these opportunities become realities. We will work with partners in the private sector to do all we can to attract infrastructure and investment in our economy.

Another new effort at the County is a partnership with the NASA Space Grant Consortium for STEM internships. We are very excited to bring interns to Snohomish County, launching them on their STEM careers. We appreciate the work the NASA Consortium is doing to help us reach interested college students.

One important sector is that covering our veterans and military.

I appointed Josh Dugan lead that sector, and he's done a fabulous job. Please stand and be recognized Josh. Josh is a Navy veteran and senior manager in PDS.

Josh is spearheading an effort on county campus to build a Wall of Honor for those who have served in the armed forces.

And he was instrumental in drafting and passing legislation this year that will allow the public to donate hunting and fishing licenses to disabled vets.

We will continue to do our part to honor the service of our veterans and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Agriculture is another key sector in our economic development initiative. Some of you may know Linda Neunzig—please stand, Linda—our dynamic and accomplished agriculture coordinator.

This morning, I signed an Executive Order to further strengthen our work in agriculture. Our farms, ranches, and timber industry remain vital parts of our economy and our community. We never want to lose sight of our need to produce food in our own community, protecting our self-sufficiency.

We will continue to do what we can to protect all of our natural resources, preserving them for future generations, and strengthening our economy.

6. Other County Achievements

I could go on for hours about all the exciting things happening in Snohomish County including:

Improved Transportation Options

Local

- Neighborhood Initiative: pedestrian safety and choke points.
- East West Corridors

Regional/State/Federal

- Highway 2 trestle
- Highway 2 safety improvements, Highway 9 and 522
- Light Rail to Lynnwood in 5 years with the groundbreaking next year. Mayor Earling and Everett Councilmember Roberts, would you please stand up? They have been great regional leaders for improved transportation choices for our residents.
- Light rail to Everett
- BRT lines

Planning for growth

- 250,000 more people in next 20 years.
- Held Vision 2050 Summit.

- Planning for where and how
- Infrastructure, housing, jobs and transportation

7. Conclusion

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about our great county, the place we call home. I could go on for hours. We have an amazingly rich history and we have an equally bright future ahead of us.

As I mentioned earlier, we should always remember our rich history of entrepreneurs, farmers, teachers, loggers, machinists, and countless others who created this community. We must harness the same energy and optimism that powered our rise to create the future we choose. We must be in charge of our own destiny.

8. Thank you