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Skagit 911 Reports Challenges to Service

Mount Vernon, Wash. – Skagit 911 has identified challenges to the service it provides to process 230,000 calls a year for fire, emergency medical service, law enforcement, and disaster agencies. The agency covers 1,731 miles and 132,000 residents in Washington State. It's the ninth busiest county in the state of Washington when it comes to 911 calls.

The agency completed a critical assessment and capital improvement plan that identifies needed public safety improvements. For example, some of the technology and equipment is outdated and needs replacing. There is no radio coverage in some parts of the county, and 911 needs added capacity to serve first responders. All critical systems require upgrades to protect against cybersecurity attacks, as well.

Skagit 911 is funded by a one-tenth of one percent sales tax, a 911 tax on phone bills, and agency fees. It operates under a balanced budget with limited reserves for emergencies and has passed all its independent audits by the state. The Skagit 911 Board of Directors is considering a one-tenth of one percent sales tax increase to fund public safety improvements. Several counties in Washington have passed the same measure to fund critical infrastructure needs, including Snohomish, Cowlitz, Kitsap, Thurston, and Whitman Counties.

Many voters believe sales tax funding is a fair way to fund the 911 system because it also applies to retail visitors from Canada and neighboring counties. Sales tax in Skagit County would still be lower than Snohomish County, and comparable to Whatcom County.

The measure could be on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot. This will be a public process, and the community is invited to take part. More information on Skagit 911 and the proposal can be found on the agency's website at www.skagit911.us.

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Skagit 911 is the first number you call in an emergency. It is the 9th busiest in the state for 911 calls. Dispatchers respond to an average of 230,000 calls a year. The agency dispatches all calls for fire, emergency medical service, law enforcement, and disaster agencies in Skagit County. The agency provides family-wage jobs to 45 people covering 1,731 miles and 132,000 residents – a 13% population increase since 2010.

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