

August 5, 2025



# Comprehensive Plan Climate Element Overview

Benton County Planning Commission

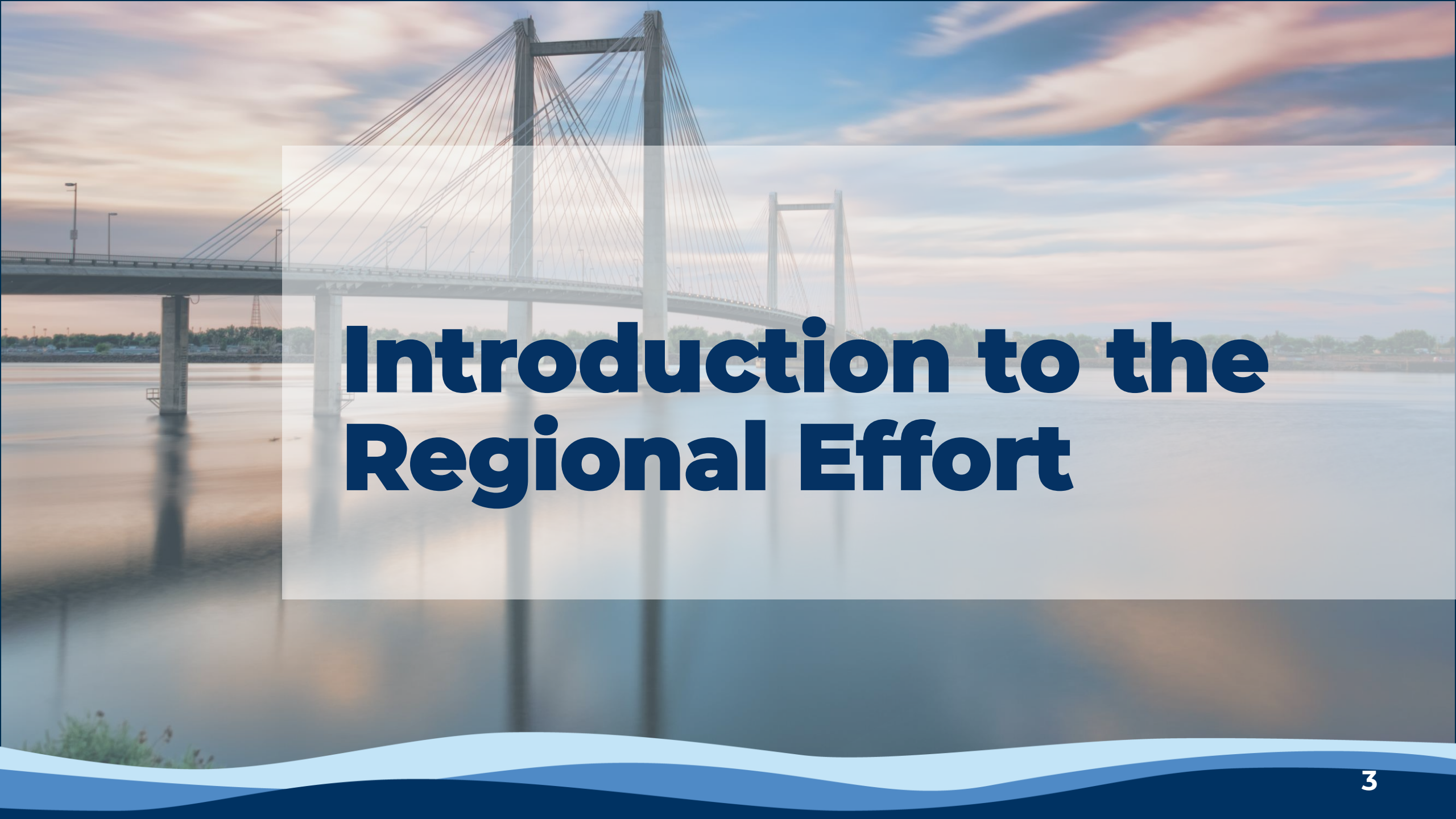
Cascadia Consulting Group  
White Bluffs Consulting



This work is supported with funding from Washington's Climate Commitment Act. The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. Information about the CCA is available at [www.climate.wa.gov](http://www.climate.wa.gov).

# Agenda

- **Introduction to the Regional Effort**
- **State Requirements for Climate Planning**
- **Climate Element – Key Components**
- **High-level Key Findings**
- **Snapshot of the Draft Goals & Policies**
- **Next Steps**

A photograph of a cable-stayed bridge spanning a wide river. The bridge has two tall, white, A-frame pylons with numerous stay cables. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The water is calm, reflecting the bridge and the sky. The text "Introduction to the Regional Effort" is overlaid in a dark blue, bold font on a semi-transparent white rectangular background.

# **Introduction to the Regional Effort**

# Regional Climate Change Approach

**The Tri-Cities Region is developing a strategy to address natural hazards related to climate and to reduce emissions.**

- Five jurisdictions are working together to do this work, with support from the Benton Franklin Council of Governments.
  - Benton County
  - Kennewick
  - Pasco
  - Richland
  - West Richland
- Climate Policy Advisory Team
  - Community members who review materials and provide feedback and insights on practical strategies.



# Regional Approach → Jurisdictions

- **We anticipate each jurisdiction will adopt:**
  - Region-wide policies agreed upon by all jurisdictions.
  - Locally-specific policies and strategies for individual implementation.
- **Analysis will inform both regional and local policies:**
  - Climate impacts assessment
  - Audit of existing policies
  - Vulnerability assessment
  - GHG inventory, wedge analysis, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) study





# **State Requirements**

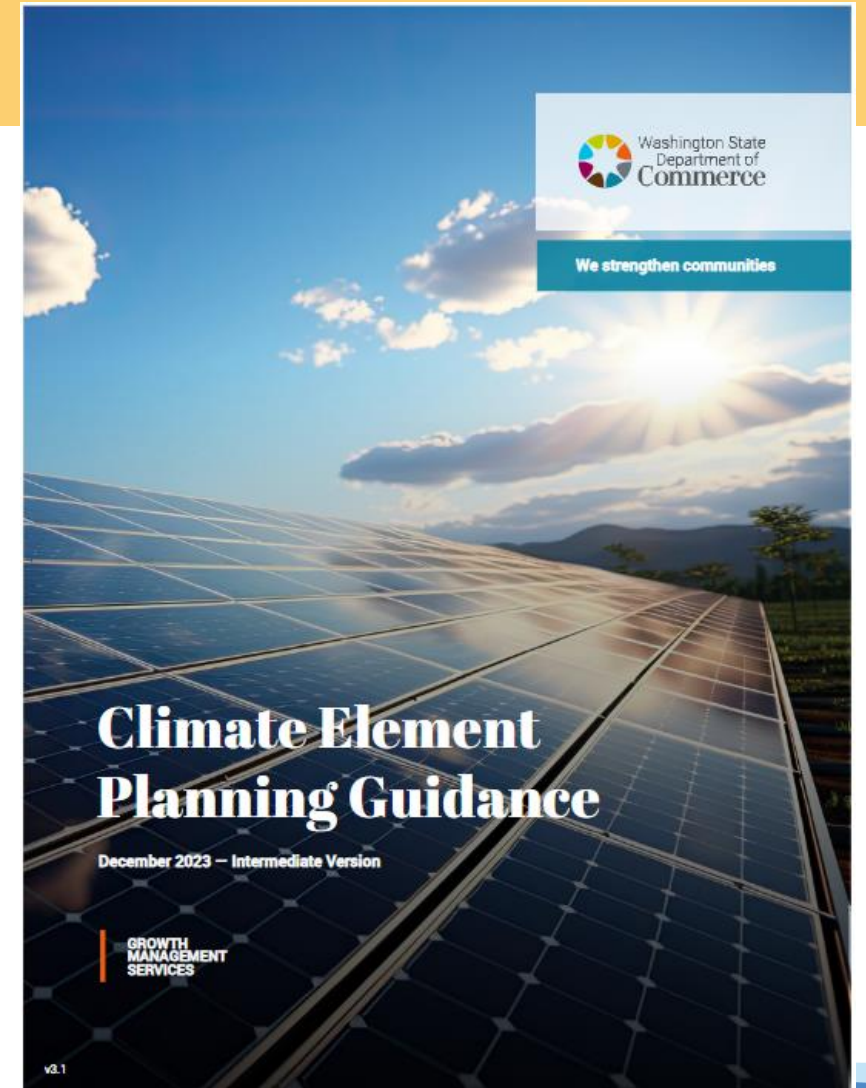
**HB 1181 & the Growth Management Act (GMA)**

# State Climate Element Requirements

This regional project fulfills the Growth Management Act requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(9) and RCW 36.70A.095 and helps jurisdictions meet new state requirements to address climate in their long-range plans for growth and development.

Under **HB 1181**, each jurisdiction must integrate a climate element into its comprehensive plan, including:

- A **resilience sub-element** that includes goals and policies to improve climate preparedness, response and recovery efforts.
  - Required for all cities and counties.
- A **greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions sub-element** that includes goals and policies to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled.
  - Required for cities over 6,000 residents



# Comprehensive Plans & the Climate Element

## The Tri-Cities Regional Climate Element will be:

- Compliant with GMA and HB-1181 requirements.
- Informed by data and community engagement.
- Integrated with other plans & other comp plan elements.
- Supported by community, county staff, and decision-makers.
- Clear, feasible, and provides path to implement.



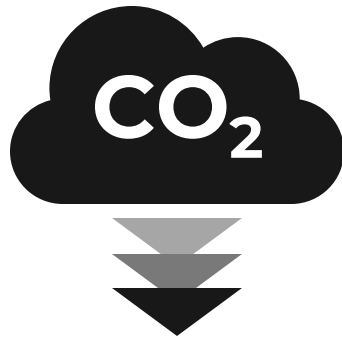
# **Climate Element – Key Components**

An **emissions reduction sub-element** is required for 11 of the state's largest and fastest-growing counties and their cities, and includes:



A **resilience sub-element** is required for all jurisdictions planning fully under the Growth Management Act, and includes:

**Emissions Reduction Measures** to reduce GHG emissions and per-capita vehicle miles traveled



**Adaptation Measures** to improve resilience to climate impacts like flooding, heat, smoke, & wildfires



**Attention to Vulnerable Populations** including but not limited to: racial or ethnic minorities; low-income populations; populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and populations of workers experiencing environmental harms. [RCW 70A.02.010 \(14\)\(a\)\(b\)](#).

# Resilience Sub-Element: Minimum Requirements



**Requirement 1:** Address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change (flooding, drought, heat, smoke, wildfire, etc.).

**Requirement 2:** Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas to foster climate resilience, as well as areas of vital habitat for safe species migration.

**Requirement 3:** Identify, protect, and enhance community resilience to climate impacts, including social, economic, and built-environment factors.

# GHG Emissions Reduction Sub-Element: Minimum Requirements



#1

Reduce **overall GHG emissions** within jurisdictions without increasing emissions elsewhere in WA

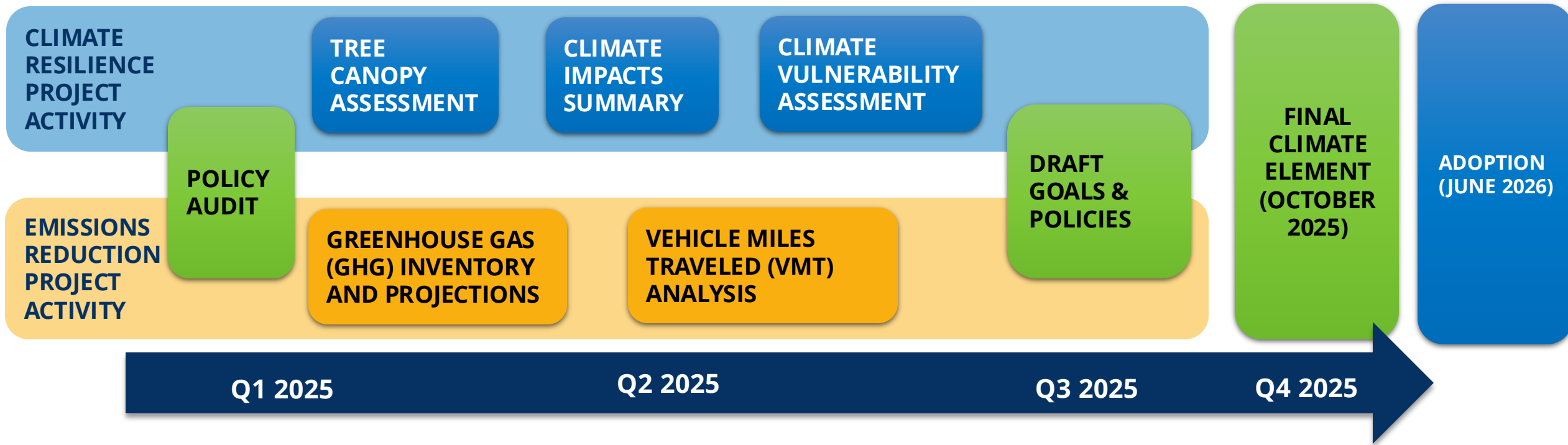
#2

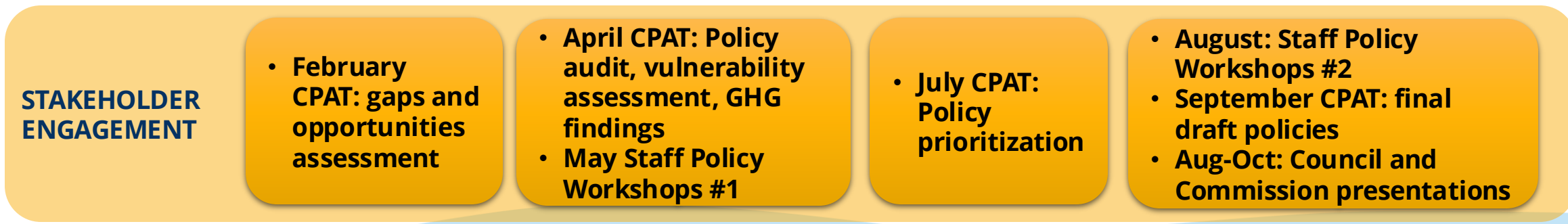
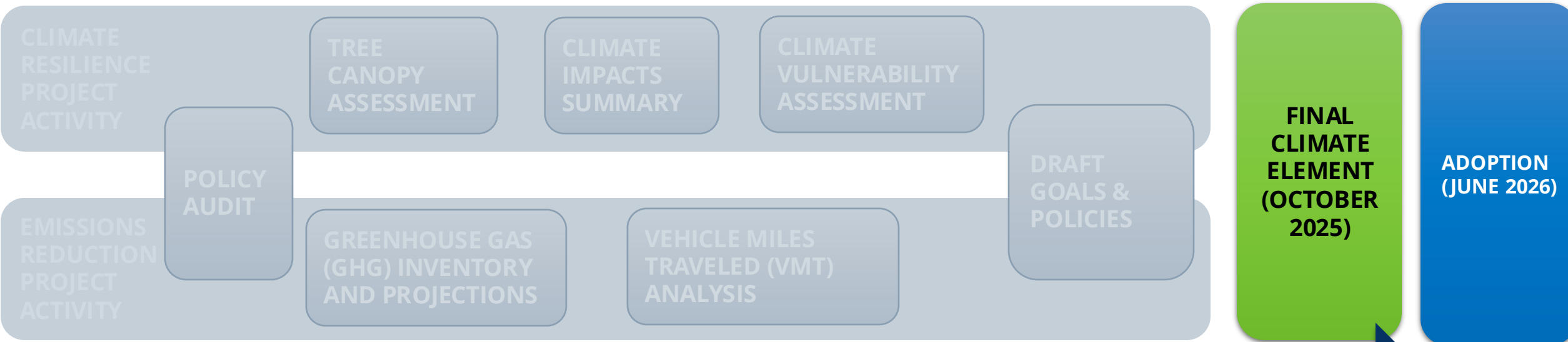
Reduce **per-capita VMT** without increasing emissions elsewhere in WA

#3

Prioritize reductions that **benefit overburdened communities** to maximize co-benefits

# Climate Element Timeline





*Clarifying questions?*



# High-Level Key Findings

# Community Engagement

- **Experiences from extreme weather events:**
  - Financial impacts, changes in hobbies and activities, physical health impacts
- **Concern for weather impacts:**
  - Wildfires and wildfire smoke, increased temperatures and extreme heat, drought, wind
- **Support for resilience strategies:**
  - Increase shade and tree canopy, natural areas for flood control, affordable heating/cooling

# Key Hazards Facing Benton County

## Extreme Heat



Higher annual average temperatures, increased high summer temperature.

## Wildfire & Smoke



Higher wildfire frequency and severity; more wildfire smoke and poor air quality.

## Extreme Precipitation



Increased flooding, more frequent and intense rain events.

## Drought



Less summer rain and reduced snowpack.

# Benton County Vulnerabilities

- **Wildfire**

- Property owners in wildfire risk areas.
- Residential and agricultural burns increase wildfire risk and contribute to poor air quality.

- **Drought**

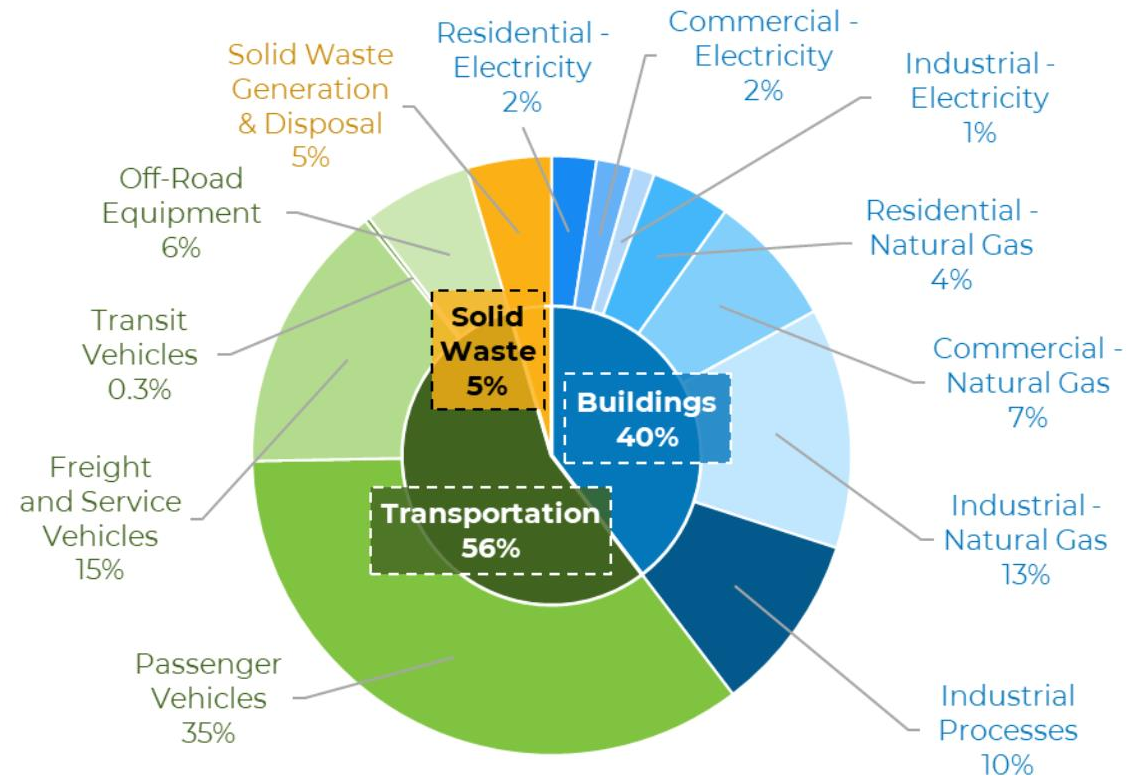
- Agriculture-centered economy and growing population.

- **Flooding**

- Washouts, erosion, slides, and undermining of county roads.

# GHG Emissions in Benton County

- **Largest sources of emissions:**
  - On-road passenger vehicles
  - On-road freight and service vehicles



***[Place holder for VMT Findings]***

# Existing Policies in Benton County

- **Policy trends:**

- Prioritize community well-being with recreational spaces and natural areas.
- Water and natural resource protection.
- Farming and water usage including water conservation and stormwater management.
- Firewise land use patterns and critical area protections to reduce wildfire risks.

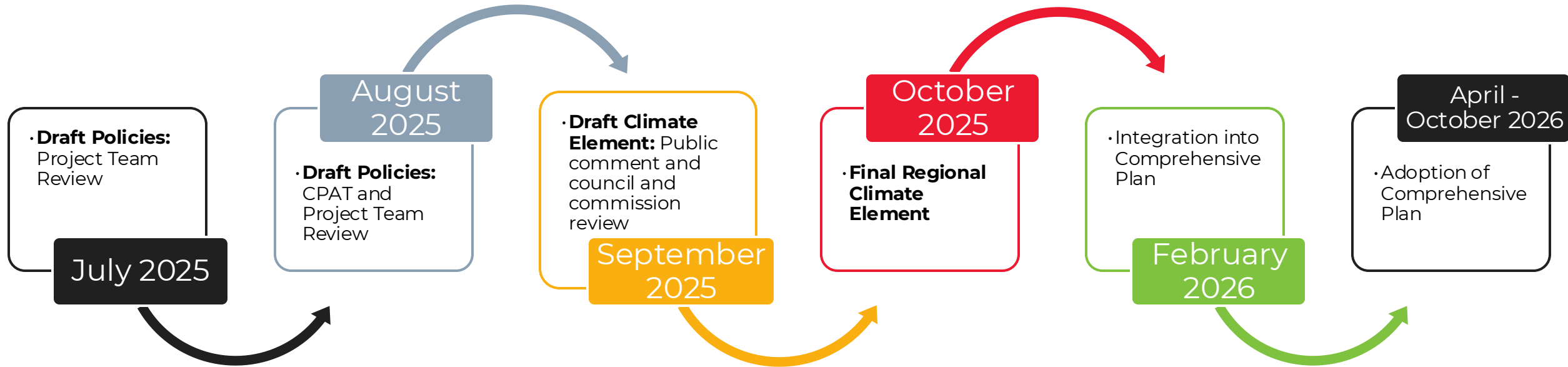
- **Policy gaps:**

- Affordable housing and transit-oriented development.
- Water management strategies during drought or low snowpack.
- Ecosystem protection particularly with Tribal involvement.
- Carbon sequestration, waste reduction.



# **Snapshot of Draft Goals and Policies**

# Policy Drafting Timeline



# Resilience Sub-Element: Policy Requirements



- **Develop at least one climate resilience goal and policy:**
  - For each **climate-exacerbated hazard** that is relevant to **the Tri-Cities Region**
  - Within each of the 11 of **Commerce-identified priority sectors**

Priority Sectors	Includes...
<b>Zoning &amp; Development</b>	Site use, design, and other development facets
<b>Water Resources</b>	Water quality and quantity
<b>Ecosystems</b>	Land and water species and habitat
<b>Transportation</b>	Multimodal travel and infrastructure
<b>Emergency Management</b>	Preparedness, response, and recovery
<b>Health and Well-being</b>	Community well-being and engagement
<b>Buildings &amp; Energy</b>	Generation, transmission, and consumption
<b>Cultural Resources &amp; Practices</b>	Historic sites and cultural resources and practices
<b>Economic Development</b>	Business continuity, opportunities
<b>Agriculture &amp; Food Systems</b>	Production and distribution
<b>Waste Management</b>	Materials recycling and disposal

# GHG Emissions Reduction Sub-Element: Policy Requirements



- **Develop goals and policies to:**
  - **Reduce emissions** (both total and per-capita emissions)
  - Utilize **mitigation strategies** to address the following sectors: Transportation, Buildings & Energy, Zoning & Development

## Mitigation Strategy

VMT reduction

Multimodal transportation/TOD

GHG Emission Reduction Crosscutting

Building decarbonization

Carbon Sequestration

Waste reduction/diversion

*Option 1: Show the policy document and briefly orient members to what is in the document*

*Option 2: Share the goal of each sector (see example on following slide)*

*Option 3: share general policy themes (see following slides)*

# Resilience Sub-Element: Policy Themes

- Address wildfire and wildfire smoke, extreme heat, drought, and flooding.
- Improve multimodal transportation options and access, protect natural and critical areas, protect water resources

# GHG Reduction Sub-Element: Policy Themes

- Reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency through land use and transportation strategies such as supporting energy efficient appliances and home retrofits
- Expanding waste and recycling programs

*Option 4: Examples of draft goals and policies (see following slides)*

# Water Resources, Ecosystems, Agriculture, and Food Systems



**Draft CE Goal 3:** Protect the viability of the region's water resources, ecosystems, and agricultural economy by promoting resilience to extreme weather and climate-related hazards, while balancing regional water needs and ecosystem health.

**CE-3.8:** Protect and enhance resilience of surface and groundwater quantity and quality, recognizing that water resources are essential to the public health, safety and welfare, economic growth, and prosperity of the Tri Cities Region and its jurisdictions.

# Health & Wellbeing and Emergency Management



**Draft CE Goal 5:** Protect community health and well-being and enhance emergency preparedness, response, and recovery from the impacts of climate-related hazards, focusing resources on the people and places most at risk to these hazards.

**CE-5.1:** Ensure critical infrastructure is resilient to natural hazards such as flooding and extreme heat and implement related area-wide and jurisdiction-specific mitigation actions in the regional hazard mitigation plans.

# Transportation, Zoning & Development, and Land Use



**Draft CE Goal 7:** Promote housing diversity and compact, walkable development near transit and expand safe, reliable, and low-emission transportation options for all residents, with the goal to reduce per-capita VMT 5% below 2022 levels by 2050.

**Policy CE-7.7:** Implement and seek alignment with the following plans to support regional transportation GHG emissions reductions: BFCOG Regional Active Transportation Plan; BFCOG Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Transition 2045); BFCOG Regional Bicycle Plan; BFCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; other Comprehensive Plan elements.

*Discussion:*

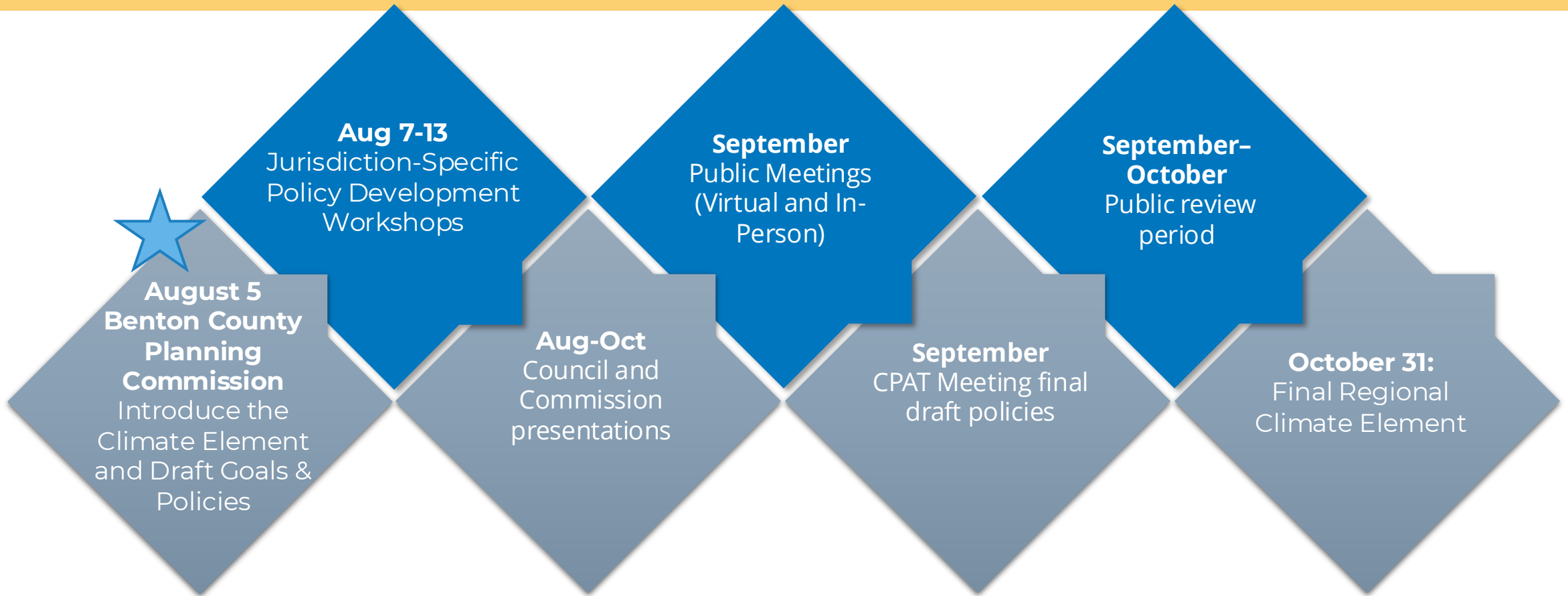
*Are there any major gaps in the goals or policies? Is there something important that's not addressed?*

*Are there groups of people that would be most benefited or burdened by a particular policy?*



**What's Next?**

# Upcoming Activities



# Collaboration with Comp Plan

