Each summer, cities, towns and counties prepare their 2020 budget. One of the resources for this process is the MRSC (Municipal Research and Services Center) compiled report on sales tax allocation, and population increase/decreases.

While this document is not directly applicable to port districts, the population estimates included provide interesting insight on growth trends and changes throughout the state, and also forms the basis for a portion of state shared revenue distribution for cities and counties.

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) determines population estimates for all cities, towns, and counties annually by April 1. The Secretary of State certifies them by July 1, and they are then distributed to state agencies responsible for making revenue allocations to local governments.

Per MRSC’s guidance document, OFM’s April 1, 2019 population estimates show that the state’s total population now exceeds 7.5 million, an increase of almost 119,000 (1.6%) over the past year.

Based on OFM numbers, the average population increase over the past decade has been 91,300 people per year, exceeding the previous decade’s average of 83,000 per year by more than 10%.

Most of this increase (90,000 people) is driven by migration (more people moving into Washington than out). The remaining 29,000 people, is attributed to natural increase (births minus deaths). Natural increase is dropping steadily - 2018’s natural increase was 19% lower than 2017, and 31% lower than 2009 (the last peak).

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The WPPA is actively engaged in creating our shared agenda and strategy for the 2020 legislative session and it’s time to discuss our process and test ideas for legislative action.

For the first time, we’ll be offering a teleconference option for our meeting cycle.

We are not abandoning face-to-face communications, but do hope offering wider options will enable more people to participate in the discussion, and enable all of us to hear from more varied voices from our port community.

Please join us, as your input is critical to the development of a legislative program representing our common interests and a unified voice. Our next teleconference will be held on Thursday, September 5 at 10 AM.

To participate via web, go to https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/320533669.

To participate via phone, dial 571-317-3122 and enter participant code, 322-533-669.
Growth remains concentrated in the five largest metropolitan counties – Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane. However, OFM notes “momentum continues to shift to other [smaller] metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties.” The five largest counties represent over 65% of Washington State’s population, with 20% in other metropolitan counties (100,000–300,000) and the remaining 15% in nonmetropolitan counties (populations less than 100,000).

In total, about 4.91 million people (65.1%) live in cities and towns, with the remaining 2.64 million (34.9%) living in unincorporated areas. On a numerical basis, incorporated areas grew by almost 75,000 people last year, compared to almost 45,000 in unincorporated areas.

However, unincorporated areas actually grew more quickly (1.71%) than incorporated areas (1.54%), which is the first time that has happened since 2005.

Washington state’s fastest-growing county between 2018 and 2019 was Franklin County – with 2.35% growth.

State-shared revenue distributions made by the Office of the State Treasurer are adjusted quarterly to reflect shifts in population due to annexations. These numbers aren’t typically significant... the more significant impact is on core revenues including property and sales taxes, which increase for the cities and towns affected and decrease for affected counties. Visit the WPPA Blog for the breakdown of counties with the highest and lowest sales tax distribution increase over the past ten years.

For further details, visit the OFM April 1, 2019 population estimate, or visit the MRSC Tax and Population Data site.