



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Regional Leaders Examine 5G and the Future of Mobility in the Pacific Northwest**

SEATTLE – Technology of the future is here, but it needs infrastructure to succeed. At the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region’s (PNWER) 2019 Economic Leadership Forum, participants heard from experts in the field of Automated, Connected, Shared, and Electric (ACES) vehicles and 5G networks about the promises and challenges of these technology innovations.

The session on ACES vehicles was led by Bruce Agnew, of ACES Northwest Network, and featured Tom Alberg, Madrona Venture Group; Bryan Mistele, INRIX; Fran Dougherty, Microsoft Automotive; and Jennifer Harper, Energy Northwest. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure was a critical piece of this session, as speaker Jennifer Harper from Energy Northwest explained how energy companies in eastern Washington and smaller communities were working to install charging stations for the benefit of both local residents and out-of-town visitors. “There was a lot of interest from those communities to install fast-charging infrastructure and apply for state grant funding,” said Harper.

Autonomous vehicles were a dominant topic of conversation, with speakers Alberg, Mistele, and Dougherty discussing different aspects of autonomous vehicles. Alberg and Mistele spoke to the practical applications of autonomous vehicles, highlighting the ways that ACES “advanced together can save lives, decrease traffic congestion, reduce carbon and increase productivity for employers and employees.” Alberg was initial investor in Amazon and just retired after 23 years on the Board. Dougherty helped participants understand how Microsoft was working to create foundational code that could be used in all autonomous vehicles, allowing car manufacturers to then customize the final 25%. This foundational code would allow vehicles to communicate better, while still allowing manufacturers to maintain branding and individuality.

The technology used in autonomous vehicles will increasingly rely on 5G networks, which were discussed at length during the session moderated by Washington State Representative Vandana Slatter. Azmeena Hasham of Verizon explained the ways that 5G networks will build off of existing 4G networks - not replace them - and how moving to 5G is necessary to combat the increased connectivity we are experiencing in our daily lives. Michael Boyle from the Western Building Exchange reiterated this point, informing participants that the fiber optic cables needed to transmit data were at maximum capacity, and that taking advantage of short-wave technology would alleviate some of this burden.

Ultimately, with 5G and autonomous vehicle technology and everything in between, the Pacific Northwest has the knowledge, the skilled workforce, and the know-how to push forward and

adopt these innovations. According to Kim Zentz, CEO of Urbanova in Spokane, adoption of these technologies has the potential to make life better for people. "We will be successful when we have healthier citizens, safer neighborhoods, smarter infrastructure, more sustainable environment, and a stronger economy," Zentz says, and 5G is an important tool in reaching these goals.

Cities are competing for 5G infrastructure because as early adopters they may have the opportunity to spawn new 5G applications and innovations, that will have future global markets.

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### **ABOUT PNWER**

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public/private non-profit organization created by statute in 1991. Member jurisdictions include Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington, and the Canadian provinces and territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success; and serve as a conduit to exchange information.