

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

From Our Director:

As the Executive Director, it is exciting to see partners and collaborators from different walks of life stand together to build a stronger region for all our citizens. The boundaries of cities, towns, and counties do not matter as we work to improve the economic realities of the region.

The CWCOG is here to provide tools and opportunities to make profound, positive impacts on the region. It is designed to act on a broader level than its members do on their own. But, for the process to work, it is necessary to come together and jointly work for a better way of life, environment, jobs, education, and a more engaged citizenry.

The employees of the CWCOG are your employees and we are excited to participate and lead in regional efforts to meet the needs of our members. Whether it is working to provide a solid transportation foundation, enhancing economic development focus and direction, or simply providing basic demographics for the latest grant request - we are here to assist. We believe what we do at the CWCOG does make a difference and we are grateful to have the opportunity to serve the region.

The 2017 Annual Report provides a glimpse into the activities and accomplishments of the organization during the year. We hope it provides you with a sense of the breadth of the activities we address in a given year and the future opportunities that await the regional approach to community building. Thank you for your on-going support and participation as regional, long-term planning is important to the future of our communities.



From Our Chair:

It is challenging to summarize all of the work of the CWCOG into words that truly convey to the citizens of the region all that the agency does. Just to list the programs of the organization as including transportation, economic development, community planning, and member assistance doesn't begin to scratch the surface. It is exciting to know the work we, as members, contribute to and engage in now will, over time, have a positive impact on our communities in the future.

CWCOG's region consists of two counties, 31 municipalities, districts, and organizations, and in 2017 a population of 106,388. Our economy is diverse and includes manufacturing, medical, tourism, international trade, and other sectors of value. We, as a region, have the same concerns and needs as larger communities including quality of life issues, transportation, water quality, deteriorating infrastructure, economic resiliency, K-12 education, aging population, workforce preparedness, broadband, health care, environmental, housing, sustainable food systems, and project permitting to name a few.

Since our establishment in 1961, we have remained committed to providing quality services to local government for the betterment of the region. We have morphed and changed to meet the challenges of the region and will continue to do so in the future to ensure relevancy and accountability to our members.

As local public entities continue to see increasing responsibilities and challenges while facing growing needs with limited budgets, the mission of the CWCOG is more critical than ever. Whether it is support or long-range planning, addressing the growing needs of economic development or transportation, general administration, or assistance with grants, we want to be a key resource for getting the job done.

The CWCOG support system is intended to broaden the foundation for each of its members. It provides regional connections, assistance with census and data resources, and access to programs and activities beyond the boundaries of its members.

I, personally, want to thank you for your support of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments.



Member Services & Community Connections

CWCOG Medical Rate Stabilization Committee

CWCOG worked with members to improve employee health and wellness and address on-going challenges of the health care costs of our members. Encouraging trends: 7.3% average increase over last 10 years vs. 13% national average; loss ratio of 76% vs 120% at start of program; average adjustment of only 2.3%. Those participating recognize that encouraging wellness initiatives and healthy behaviors, health benefit rates will continue to stabilize with lower annual increases than the national average.

Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA)

The CWCOG engaged in the promotion and participation in the LUCA. It is the only opportunity for tribal, state, and local governments to review and comment on the U.S. Census Bureau's residential address list for their jurisdiction prior to the 2020 Census. Participation in the LUCA operation helps ensure an accurate decennial census count for communities and ensure the region receives an appropriate share of the \$400 billion in federal funding distributed yearly.

Member Engagement

The Executive Director facilitated the Woodland City Council Annual Retreat aiding in setting the leadership goals for the jurisdiction

Letters of support gave voice to several regional projects including support grants for the Six Rivers Trail, RiverCities Buses, SR432 / California Way project, and WSDOT action on SR4 safety issues near Cathlamet.

CWCOG members supported the 2017 Community Report Card which provides data and statistics to the membership for funding applications and tracks progress on key community health trends.

Attendees of the National Smart Growth Conference under the Kaiser Grant reported back new and progressive ideas to the region to be used in future planning efforts.

Updated Public Participation Plan

The update document outlines the CWCOG's policy on federal and state law requirements for public participation within the agency's major Transportation and Economic Development programs and set general project standards.

Governor's Summit Career Connected Learning

The CWCOG sponsored the regional gathering of the Governor's Summit on Career Connected Learning with WSU Extension. The event included local discussions on career-connected assets, gaps, and possible action steps and priorities to move the initiative forward.

Census Data for Grant Writing Workshop

The Census Data for Grant Writing Workshop was a hands-on training facilitated by the CWCOG and designed to help participants learn about Census tools that would add value to grant writing efforts.

Resiliency Training

CWCOG hosted the *Building Resilience in Southwest Washington: Perspectives from the Local to Regional Level* early in the year. Washington State Emergency Management Division and the University of Oregon Community Service Center provided insightful presentations on resilience for regional economic development. Efforts were begun to integrate efforts to support communities and businesses before, during, and after an incident. Participants learned the importance of leveraging existing resources to effectively match need with assets, building on existing assets to promote industry diversification, business adaptability, and to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Walkability Training

The CWCOG in partnership with the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund and Pathways 2020, brought in Dan Burden to engage the community on street design, public safety, economic development, and land-use planning to create a holistic vision for healthy communities that are pedestrian and bicycle-friendly. Mr. Burden conducted five walkability audits, spoke to the CWCOG Board, keynoted the Pathways 2020 annual meeting, and met with leaders from the region on walkability.



Community Development Forum

The CWCOG facilitated a Community Development Forum bringing together housing and community development representatives, community leaders, and others together to discuss community development programs and funding available through the State of Washington.

Neighborhood Revitalization & Advocacy Power

The training event was hosted in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity and the Neighborhood Resource Coordinating Council focusing and funded through the Kaiser Northwest Health Foundation grant project. This event brought together community members to discuss and learn about the underlying causes of neighborhood distress, asset-based community development, community organizing, and more.

Transportation

Projects

Requested 4.51 miles of SR 432 to be designated as a significant freight corridor was a success! Only 81.66 miles total were awarded by the State of Washington. The designation allowed the City of Longview to apply for and receive \$5.3 million for the SR432 / California Way intersection project.

Conducted traffic counts in the Longview/Kelso/Rainier area to assist local city planning efforts and inclusion in the Transportation Demand Model. The count included a total of 25 intersections.

Plans and Models

Completed the Transportation Demand Model update used to assist in long-term planning of the transportation needs of the Metropolitan Planning Area. (MPA). The model is used to understand traffic impacts within projects under consideration.

2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) chapter updates were completed and vetted through the five technical advisory committees (TACs) within the RTPO region.

Completed the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the 2018 state fiscal year.



New Transportation Planning Tools Created

A new transportation tool to enhance public awareness and access to information on projects listed in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) document was created. Projects are listed as part of an ARC/GIS on-line web map whose link is available through the CWCOG website.

Contracted with Transpo to create a basic Bike and Pedestrian Model Software Program to assist with planning within the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

Freight

The CWCOG established a Freight Advisory Committee to address freight related issues and provide input to the State of Washington for consideration in the update of the State's Freight Plan. Local ports and a handful of private sector transportation industry representatives provided input. This was an integrated effort between the Transportation and Economic Development programs.

Director Fashing was appointed to the Washington Freight Advisory Committee and assisted with review of projects and the ranking process for National Highway Freight Plan for which City of Longview received \$5.3 million in funding.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) Awards

STP funds were awarded for both Washington and Oregon Projects. The STP is a federally-aided transportation program, which provides flexible funding used by states and localities for transportation improvement projects and planning. In Washington, the board approved projects for Cowlitz County entities totaling \$5,192,852 and in Oregon \$236,022.

- ◇ Spencer Creek Business Park Surface Street Improvement \$912,359
- ◇ Huntington Avenue South Overlay \$823,393
- ◇ West Main Street Realignment Phase 2 \$1,500,000
- ◇ I-5 Interchange with SR 503 \$600,000
- ◇ Washington Way & 15th Avenue Corridor Traffic Signal Improvements \$180,000
- ◇ Transportation Feasibility Study, Exit 21
- ◇ SR4 Ocean Beach Highway - W Main Street Realignment and Traffic Signal Interconnect \$610,000
- ◇ Downtown Transit Center \$567,100
- ◇ "A" Street Safety Project \$226,022
- ◇ Planning Services \$10,000 over two years.

Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program Awards

TA funds were awarded for Washington projects within the five-county region. The TA is a federal transportation program which provides flexible funding used by states and localities for projects which focus on alternative transportation methods including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to transit projects. In Washington, the RTPO Board approved projects totaling \$1,481,322.

- ◇ Exit 49 Pedestrian Improvement Phase II \$225,938
- ◇ Main Avenue Sidewalk Improvements \$302,203
- ◇ City of Kelso - Grade Street Road Diet \$278,000
- ◇ Eshom Road Safety Improvement Project \$43,250
- ◇ Boone Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility \$245,531
- ◇ Point Brown Sidewalk \$311,400
- ◇ Hoffman Street Pedestrian Facility \$75,000

Regional Planning

CWCOG provided planning services to the City of Longview and Cathlamet with updates to their City Comprehensive Plans.

Created a Bike and Pedestrian model for the Longview/Kelso/Rainier area.



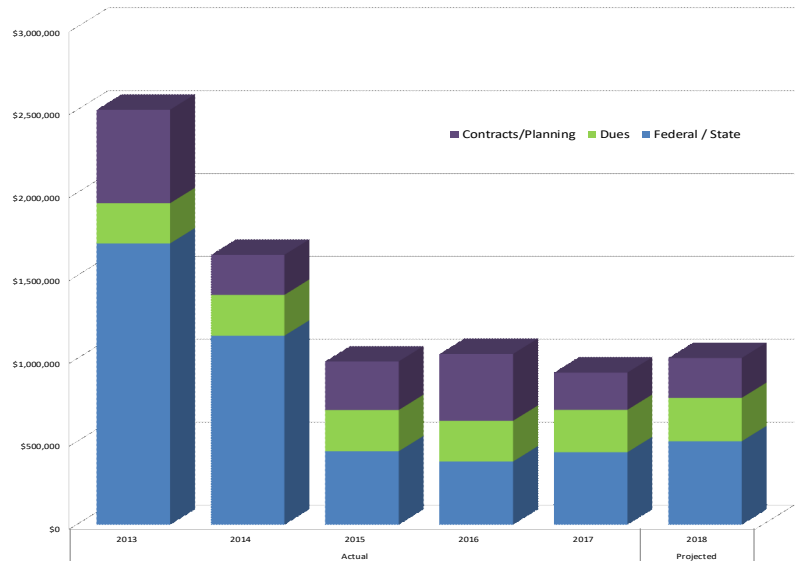
Economic Development

2017 saw the end of the long established, three-county Economic Development District (EDD) and the beginning of efforts to establish a two-county CWCOG EDD. The CWCOG membership voted unanimously in support of a two-county district officially bringing it under the legal umbrella of the CWCOG. In order to do so, the CWCOG applied for, and was awarded, a \$70,000 planning assistance grant supported by \$46,600 in cash and in-kind match commitment from members. The funds allowed for the agency to move forward on the lengthy district designation application process and writing of a new five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Six public meetings were held to gather member and community input on regional priorities from which a regional economic development project list was developed to be included in the new CEDS.

Finances

Beginning Fund Balance	\$360,324
Revenues	
Federal / State	\$439,042
Dues	\$255,539
Contracts/Planning	\$224,667
Total Revenues	\$919,248
Total Resources	\$1,279,572
Expenditures	
Personnel Cost	\$547,675
Contracts	\$255,341
Other Services	\$161,094
Capital Outlay	\$32,684
Total Expenditures	\$996,794
Ending Fund Balance	\$282,778
Reserve Funds (Included In FB)	\$150,000



Our Membership

General Members

- Cowlitz County
- Wahkiakum County
- City of Castle Rock
- City of Kalama
- City of Kelso
- City of Longview
- City of Woodland
- Town of Cathlamet

**NEW in 2017!*

Special Members

- Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
- Cowlitz PUD
- Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue
- Cowlitz Fire District 5
- Castle Rock School District
- Kalama School District
- Kelso School District
- Longview School District
- Woodland School District
- Port of Kalama
- Port of Longview
- Port of Woodland
- Wahkiakum Port District 1

Associate Members

- City of Rainier, OR
- Cowlitz EDC
- Cowlitz Transit Authority*
- Housing Opportunities of SW WA
- Kelso Longview Chamber
- Lower Columbia CAP
- Lower Columbia College
- Wahkiakum Chamber

Affiliate Members

- City of Battle Ground
- City of Camas
- City of Washougal
- Three Rivers Wastewater Plant*

Our Staff

Management

- Bill Fashing, Executive Director
- Anisa Kisamore, Office Administrator

Support

- Rachelle Nugent, Admin Asst/ HR
- Lauren Read, Planning Asst (P/T)
- Beth Lampman, Finance Asst (P/T)
- Chalaina Kroll, Project Asst (P/T)

Planning

- Deborah Johnson, Community Development
- Don Mathison, Community Development (P/T)
- Ken Pearrow, Transportation
- Robert Stevens, Transportation