

2022 CWCOG ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the Board of Directors Chair – Paul Helenberg

It has been a pleasure to serve as the Chair of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments for a second term, and I just want to take a moment to say thank you for putting your trust in me to lead this remarkable organization these last two years.

One of the most exciting things that came to mind about 2022 was the outcome of the Regional Transportation Planning Organization's collaboration on the Regional Transportation Improvement Program. Their joint efforts leveraged 5.9 million local dollars into \$222 million state funds and \$388 million federal dollars bringing about much needed improvements to our region's road system.

The progress on economic development projects within the Cowlitz and Wahkiakum regions was no less impressive as we saw local ports capture funding for key projects that will grow the region's capacity for economic resilience. The project list tracked by the CWCOG showed a total committed funding level of over \$87 million with the expectation of over 4,900 jobs upon buildout.

As the CWCOG continues its work as it has done since 1961, the leadership of the agency continues to be fully committed to supporting us, its members. Thank you for your continued commitment to the work of our region and to the CWCOG itself. I look forward to seeing what our partnership will bring in 2023.

Message from the Executive Director – Bill Fashing

Marking time, it is hard to believe this is my eighth annual report with the CWCOG. After all the interruption brought on by COVID, 2022 finally gave us a break allowing us to get our bearings back, to once again get out and facilitate in-person interactions between members, and jump start efforts in our major programs.

2022 brought small wins such as the establishment of the Spirit Lake, Toutle/Cowlitz River Collaborative, and the award of a \$90,000 grant to support the Collaborative's efforts; distribution of over 800 copies of the First Responder Family Handbook to our local responders concluding a two-year support effort; and the Human Services Transportation Policy adoption which sets project goals for the next five years. It brought some losses too as we moved away from small city planning allowing us to fully focus on bringing our major programs back up to pre-COVID activities and participation.



The beginning of a new year brings renewed energy and effort with 2023 being no exception. The CWCOG will be working to create comprehensive safety action plans for Cowlitz County agencies under a new grant program while also leading efforts to update the regional trails plan to boost tourism opportunities. Staff will be working diligently on the long-range Regional "Moving Forward" Transportation plan that will replace the 2018 version, and the new five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), under development in 2022, will be finalized in 2023.

As we enter the new year, I and our staff are looking forward to continuing our support of our member agencies in order to enhance our region and build more livable communities.

TRANSPORTATION

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) and Outreach

The CPT-HSTP, approved in December of 2022, identifies public transportation needs for all citizens while placing special emphasis on addressing the needs of the underserved members of our region over the next four years. The plan update process brought together transportation service providers, social service agencies, transit riders, and many others to identify service gaps and strategies to address them. As part of the plan update outreach process, the CWCOCG hosted 19 public input meetings to gather input on transportation needs within the five-county region to be included in the CPT-HSTP. Seventeen meetings were held in-person and two were held virtually. In addition to the meetings, a survey was conducted to gather more information, and 281 responses were received.

Mobility Management



The Mobility Management Program hosted 14 training events, attended 9 community events, and made several updates to the mobility management webpage to improve user interaction! Training events included a series on Accessible Transportation Resources, demonstrations from transportation software companies, and visiting classrooms to educate students about the benefits of using public transit with community events ranging from Back-to-School Nights to health resource fairs, hiring events, and more! The goal of participating in these community events was to connect with the community where they are, provide information about the program, and educate on transportation services in their area. We look forward to everything that the Mobility Management Program will bring to our community in 2023!

Accessible Transportation Resources Training

Five virtual training events were held in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific, Lewis, and Grays Harbor Counties to educate the public transportation users on accessible transportation resources. Attendees included the public, human service agencies, and elected officials. The resources covered included the new CWCOCG Mobility Management webpage, transit provider websites, and other available local and regional tools. Participants were able to see a trip planner work in real time, learn how they can watch their bus's progress online, and how to request a travel training appointment.

Short, educational videos that will walk the viewer through each resource will be uploaded and available on the CWCOCG's YouTube channel in 2023.

Transportation Priorities Survey

The Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) update started in earnest in 2022 along with the launch of a Transportation Priorities Survey, a major public outreach to gather information for the plan. The data gathered was used to better understand local transportation system needs and help prioritize future funding for projects over the next twenty-plus years. The CWCOCG tried a new approach to community outreach when it mailed about 30,000 postcards to households within the five-county and Rainier, Oregon areas asking them to participate in the survey. Targeted areas represented more overburdened communities as identified by federal environmental justice data. 50% of survey respondents were part of the postcard outreach efforts, and greatly assisted in gathering feedback from people who likely had never heard about the M/RTP.



Transportation Project Awards

The CWCOCG Board of Directors approved more than \$3.2 million in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding for four projects as follows: 1) \$389,000 for the Allen Street Corridor Transportation Study, City of Kelso; 2) \$1,034,176 for the Tennant Way Corridor Traffic Signal Improvements, City of Longview; 3) \$380,597 for the Gun Club Road Sidewalk and Bike Lane, City of Woodland; and 4) \$1,472,712 South Cloverdale Road, Cowlitz County. The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) Board approved a federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Set-Aside (Transportation Alternatives) award of \$310,000 for the CWCOCG to complete a five-county Regional Trails Plan.

Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative (SLTCRC)

Organized in 2021, the SLTCRC began program operations in 2022 after receiving Department of Ecology funding mid-year. The funds allowed the CWCOC to engage a project facilitator and, in conjunction with the Collaborative, revisit, design, craft protocols, and approve an information system and organizational tool to keep the Collaborative informed of projects and their status. The system will help stakeholder agencies track and monitor the various projects impacting the watershed.

In October, the group conducted a field tour of the focus area, which included guided tours of key features and facilities. Thirty-seven individuals attended the all-day session. The purpose of the tour and subsequent lunch panel discussion was to improve the overall understanding of the issues at ground zero and facilitate a shared understanding of the challenges and ongoing work needed to address flooding, fish passage, and sediment issues.

Career Exploration Expo



In October, the Agency participated in the 2022 Career Exploration Expo organized by the Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce. The Expo brought together employers and high school students to discuss career opportunities and the education required for the various career paths. Thousands of students attended the Expo with a number stopping at the CWCOC's booth to learn about planning and leading community growth.

As part of the experience for attending students, a job-shadowing opportunity was made available with partnering employers. The CWCOC had the opportunity to host a student for a two-day period in which, the student was able to participate in two key agency projects: the Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative (SLTCRC), and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). They had the occasion to join staff in a meeting of the SLTCRC and a high-level planning meeting related to the CEDS Committee. CWCOC staff enjoyed the opportunity to host this learning opportunity for the next generation.

Lower Columbia Investment Network

The premise of the LCIN is to connect small business owners and individuals looking for local investment opportunities with small businesses needing financing. Whereas, the vision of a Lower Columbia Investment Network (LCIN) was formed in 2021, it wasn't until 2022 that the program really began gaining momentum.

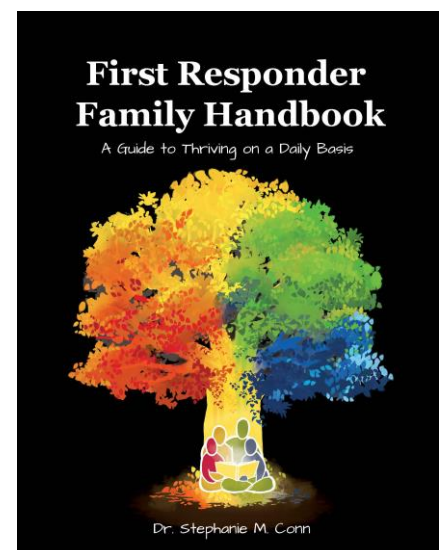
Lender and recipient networking events began in the first quarter of 2022 with the first meeting focusing on women lenders partnering with women owned businesses. The second quarter brought in small business courses offered in cooperation with Lower Columbia College (LCC). While the remainder of the year's focus was creating connections through in-person visits to local chambers, Economic Development Councils (EDC), and LCC while networking with local businesses.

First Responder Family Resources

2022 brought about the culmination of a two-year effort to put crisis management resources into the hands and homes of our first responders during the COVID pandemic and de-fund police movements of 2020 and 2021. The First Responder Family Handbook – A Guide to Thriving on a Daily Basis, authored by first responder clinician Dr. Stephanie Conn, was put into print and over 800 copies disseminated to all branches of Cowlitz County's first responder agencies.

An on-line version can be found here:

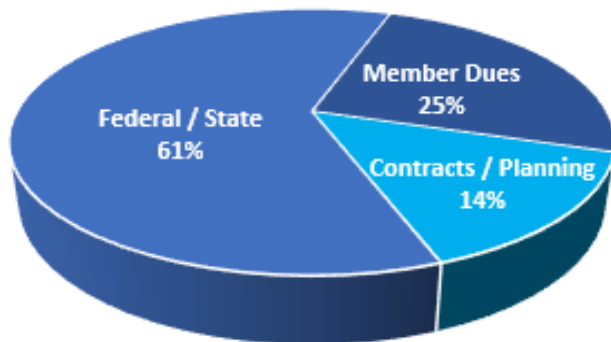
https://www.firstresponderfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/First-Responder-Family-Handbook_Online.pdf



FINANCE, STAFFING, & MEMBERSHIP

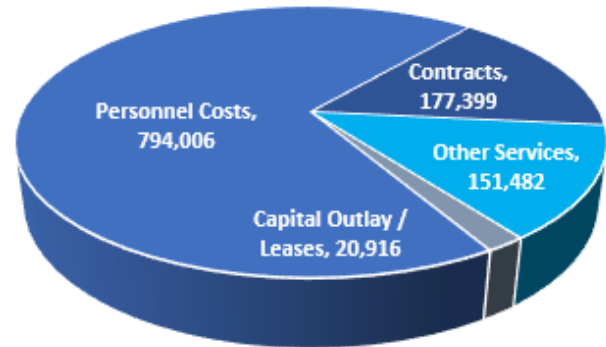
Finance

2022 Revenues
\$1,125,859



Federal / State	684,591
Member Dues	277,471
Contracts / Planning	163,797
Total Revenues	1,125,859

2022 Expenditures
\$1,143,803



Personnel Costs	794,006
Contracts	177,399
Other Services	151,482
Capital Outlay / Leases	20,916
Total Expenditures	1,143,803

Staff

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
Anisa Kisamore, Director of Administration
Rachelle Nugent, Business Administrator
Monica Seidl, Project Specialist P/T
Marcella Smith, Planning Assistant (11/22)*

Ken Pearrow, Transportation Planner/GIS (05/22)*
Robert Stevens, Transportation Planner
Keshia Owens, Community Development Planner (06/22)*
Brandon Robins, Economic Development Planner
Lauren Read, Mobility Management Coordinator

*Resigned/Term

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

Associate Members

911 Public Authority
City of Rainier Oregon
Cowlitz Economic Development Council
Cowlitz Transit Authority
Housing Opportunities of SW Washington
Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce
Lower Columbia College
Lower Columbia Community Action Council
Wahkiakum Chamber

Affiliate Members

City of Battle Ground
City of Camas
City of Washougal

Special Members

Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
Cowlitz County PUD
Wahkiakum PUD 1
Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue
Cowlitz County Fire District 1
Cowlitz County Fire District 5

Port of Kalama
Port of Longview
Port of Wahkiakum District 1
Port of Woodland
Three Rivers Regional Wastewater Authority

Castle Rock School District
Kalama School District
Kelso School District
Longview School District
Woodland School District