

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

From the Director:

"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together." - James Cash Penney

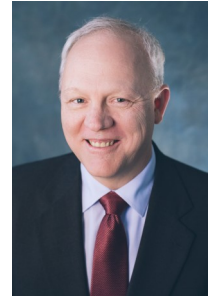
No truer words were spoken. 2016 marked a year of small yet impactful successes for our agency. Not successes in terms one usually attributes to business such as financial status or large contracts or staffing increases, benchmarks related to success in most industries; but ones that take strides in building membership connections, strengthening relationships, and growing the agency in a way that continues to bring meaningful *value* and *support* to its members.

As the year marked my second as the Executive Director of the CWCOG, I found myself diving more into the history of the agency to understand where we have been in order to strategize where we need to go. It was encouraging to see years of successes not measured by money, but by the continued collaboration of our local entities working together to improve our region. This history lesson also further impressed upon me the importance of the CWCOG to continue to *serve* the regional and local planning needs of its membership, but also the importance of looking to the future and assessing the agency's potential

to build upon these core services.

In 2016, such building blocks took the shape of convening the AWC Strong Cities pilot program; participating in the 100 Day Challenge To End Family Homelessness; aiding school district members in applying for a regional grant to address student homelessness; collaborating with member agencies in the areas of housing and transportation during the 40 for 2020 project; building stronger relationships with our members through meaningful agency-applicable discussions on services; working closely with state/federal agencies to improve and refine local processes that led to more meaningful reporting which in turn leads to more opportunities for local funding. These small successes in partnership with our stakeholders are stepping stones that can lead us into a new phase for the CWCOG, one that I am excited to be a part of.

It has been a year of learning, of "joining forces" and for growth—building blocks that will lead us into 2017 and some exciting new prospects of working together.



From the Chairman:

The CWCOG, throughout its long history, has fulfilled an important function in connecting and bringing together counties, cities, special purpose districts, and school districts allowing these diverse entities to focus on our shared interest in the development of the communities of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum and beyond. The organization has allowed us to access expertise and provided support for important work in infrastructure, community development, and economic development that would otherwise be economically out of reach for many of the smaller entities represented.

As the board president for 2016, I have been honored to be a part of a period of sharpening for the CWCOG. It has been a year that has presented some challenges organizationally but through the steady leadership of the board and our executive director, Bill Fashing, we are stronger and our mission is clearer as we move into 2017.



Transportation

Completed Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment accomplished the following objectives: (1) identified a regional long-range proposed bicycle and pedestrian network; (2) generated a list of short-range top priorities by county; (3) analyzed bicycle and pedestrian crash data; and (4) advanced the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan's (RTP) active transportation goal and its policies by developing long-range active transportation strategies for the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) five-county region.

Between January and May 2016, online surveys were conducted by residents from all five counties to provide input on their county's bicycle and pedestrian facilities. CWCOC staff worked with the public, stakeholders, and the TACs from all five counties to identify the proposed regional bicycle and pedestrian network; a total of 721.75 miles of routes that would provide the highest level of destination access.



Travel Demand Model

CWCOC made strides in updating the Travel Demand Model (TDM). Eco Resource Management Systems Inc and Transpo were hired to help in the process. The TDM is designed to evaluate the amount of traffic under specific conditions of land use, transportation services, and price. This information will aid in long-term transportation planning and will serve as a resource for cities and the counties within the metropolitan area. Project is slated to conclude in 2017.

Stakeholder Connections

Met with public transportation stakeholders across the region to implement and further the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) and incorporate key planning priorities and strategies from the CHSTP into the RTP.

Submitted a list of local freight projects to be added to the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan, a crucial step in qualifying for local funding and seeing these high-priority projects completed.

Collected data and traffic counts for the Longview/Kelso/Rainier planning area.

Continued to play a key role in getting SR432 designated as a critical freight corridor by WSDOT.

Developed long-range strategies for the four emphasis areas of the Regional Transportation Plan

Active Transportation Emphasis Area

Staff worked with Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and stakeholders to identify a proposed regional active transportation facilities network, select top priority corridor/projects in the region, and develop regional long-range planning strategies to implement the active transportation goals and policies of the RTP. The 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment was developed as part of these efforts.

Public Transportation Emphasis Area

Staff worked with transit stakeholders to identify transportation connectivity gaps in order to access essential services and develop strategies that will implement the public transportation goal and associated policies of the RTP.

Roadways Emphasis Area

Staff worked with TACs and WSDOT's Southwest and Olympic regions to develop long-range strategies that will help implement the roadway safety and vitality goals and associated policies of the RTP.

Freight Emphasis Area

Staff worked with the MPO and RTPO jurisdictions and multi-modal transportation providers in the creation of a freight stakeholders group to assist in the development of long-range strategies and to implement the adopted economic competitiveness goal and associated policies found in the RTP. These strategies will be finalized in the first half of 2017.

Housing

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

The final draft of the Cowlitz County 10-Year Plan was submitted to and recommended by the Housing First! Coalition for adoption by Cowlitz County. The plan mirrored several elements of the Washington State Housing Strategic Plan for Homelessness and addressed the requirements for low-barrier shelter services, participation in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and coordinated entry programs.

4th Annual Project Homeless Connect (PHC)

The 4th Annual PHC Event held in January served over 315 individuals, and coincides with the federally mandated Point-In-Time count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons.

100 Day Challenge

Cowlitz County was selected as one of three in the state to participate in the 100-day Challenge to End Homelessness. The effort was funded through the Vulnerable Family Partnership and worked to bring best practices to the groups. The program brought front-line workers to the table to assist in making systemic changes to address the needs of those facing homelessness.

Community Development

City of Castle Rock and Castle Rock School District #401 Park & Recreation Plan Update

CWCOG completed the update of the consolidated park and recreation plan for Castle Rock and saw it through to adoption. The completion of the plan is a crucial step in qualifying for state funding for park and recreation facilities.

Port of Woodland Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements Environmental Review

CWCOG produced an environmental checklist for the Port of Woodland as part of its updated comprehensive plan.

Longview Comprehensive Plan Update Process

CWCOG provided professional assistance and data to the City of Longview as it began updating its 2006 comprehensive plan to address contemporary issues and concerns. The plan is scheduled to be completed in 2017.

Kaiser Active Living Grant

Together with project partners Pathways 2020 and Cowlitz County Health and Human Services, the CWCOG oversaw the development of a Healthy Communities by Design toolkit. This toolkit is designed as an aid to developing communities that promote healthy and active living, and was presented at two community events in November. The efforts towards this was funded through a grant through Kaiser.

Strong Cities

The CWCOG was selected as one of three locations to run a pilot program for the Association of Washington Cities' Strong Cities Initiative. The CWCOG convened its member cities in a comprehensive discussion on key issues of concern to cities, and developed a list of regional legislative priorities.

Stakeholder Connections

The CWCOG completed a US Department of Commerce grant application at the request of area districts with Kelso School District in the role of applicant. The grant would provide funds to help address a variety of challenges relating to their homeless student populations. Though the grant was not awarded, the effort promoted positive discussions and better understanding of the issues school districts face in keeping children in school when faced with homelessness.

2016 brought another successful year for the Medical Rate Stabilization Pool. Members who participated saw a 2.79% renewal rate in comparison to the double digit increases in some parts of the nation. The local pool continues to be the program Kaiser Permanente holds as a prime example of the benefits of pooling and wellness planning.

The CWCOG coordinated with several other jurisdictions on submitting responses to the federal filing proposing abandonment and removal of the Patriot Woods/Columbia and Cowlitz rail line, supporting its acquisition and conversion to a rails-to-trails project.



Economic Development

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Performance Report

The annual CEDS update performance report included expanding and updating the current CEDS, elaborating on required elements that were added since the last CEDS update, and updating the projects list for the region. Following publication of the update, the EDA began efforts to fund an Industrial Load project for the Port of Chehalis. The outcome of this effort was an invitation by the EDA for the Port to submit an application for \$2.5 million.

SWEDD Boundary Revision

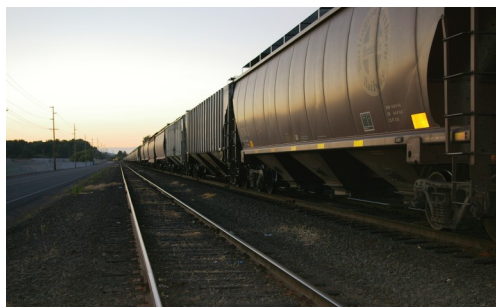
CWCOG submitted the boundary revision request complete with amended Interlocal Agreement revision and Board approved operational procedures to the US Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration. This request is the last step in solidifying the Cowlitz, Lewis, Wahkiakum boundary revision for the local Economic Development District.

Stakeholder Connections

CWCOG staff provided SWEDD members with bill tracking during the state legislative session and federal and other grant opportunities throughout the year.

New member investment schedule was introduced and approved to be included in an investment policy to be drafted and brought before the Board in 2017.

New reporting mechanisms were put in place for participating members to report in-kind match required by EDA's Planning Partnership Grant.

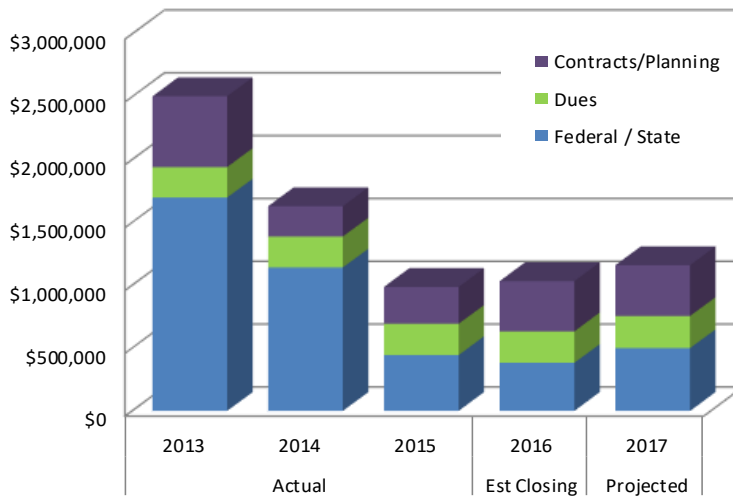


Member Activities

During 2016, CWCOCG assisted our members in a number of ways. A sampling of data requests filled by staff included:

- ◆ Longview—Shelter Data
- ◆ Castle Rock—Zoning Map
- ◆ Kelso/Longview—Wayfinding analysis copy
- ◆ Cowlitz County—Trails GIS Data
- ◆ Cathlamet—Demographic information for Comp Plan
- ◆ Longview—Special Needs Housing List
- ◆ Kalama—Shoreline Environmental Designation Map
- ◆ Longview/Kelso/Rainier—Demographic Overview
- ◆ Highlands Neighborhood—Census Data

Finances



Beginning Fund Balance \$311,284

Revenues

Federal / State \$383,018
 Dues \$250,529
 Contracts/Planning \$399,543
Total Revenues \$1,033,090

Total Resources \$1,344,374

Expenditures

Personnel Cost \$643,930
 Contracts \$146,211
 Other Services \$155,957
 Capital Outlay \$32,054
Total Expenditures \$978,152

Reserve Funds \$150,000

Ending Fund Balance* \$216,222

* Includes \$70,000 in Kaiser Grant Funds not yet expended

New Accounting Software

BIAS Software was awarded the contract for upgrading the CWCOCG's 16 year old accounting software. Staff began the side-by-side transition late in the year with the hopes of closing out 2016 and starting 2017 with the new software.

Our Staff

Management

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
 Melissa Taylor, Planning Manager (*07/16)
 Anisa Kisamore, Office Administrator

Support

Rachelle Nugent, Admin Asst/ HR
 Stephanie Helem, Admin Asst/Finance (*12/16)
 Chalaina Kroll, Project Asst

Planning

Deborah Johnson, Economic Development
 Judith Donovan, Transportation
 Scott Pouder, Community Development (*06/16)
 Sam Rubin, Community Development
 Don Mathison, Community Development (P/T)

*Resigned

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

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
 Longview Housing Authority
 Lower Columbia CAP
 Lower Columbia College
 Kelso Longview Chamber
 Wahkiakum Chamber

Affiliate Members

City of Battle Ground
 City of Camas
 City of Washougal