

2019 Annual Report

From Our Director: Bill Fashing

As we transition into the New Year, it is heartwarming to see consistent progress across the CWCOG programs. The CWCOG strives to make incremental improvements in our membership services for the betterment of our overall community and fiscal soundness. With the support of our member agencies and commitment and dedication to work together as a region, we will continue to develop and increase our area's success as we move into the future.

Below are just a few of the significant accomplishments from 2019 that we will build on into the next year.

Organizational planning efforts during 2019 included an emphasis on community outreach. In addition to conducting an economic vitality survey, the CWCOG participated in both the Wahkiakum and Cowlitz County fairs sharing information on regional programs and activities and seeking information from area residents on current regional issues. We played a key role in preparing and marketing for the 2020 Census by facilitating Complete Count Committee meetings and working with regional stakeholders.

Transportation staff worked to enhance the online version of the Regional Transportation Improvement Program mapping projects and completed the Intelligent Transportation System Architecture within the Metropolitan Planning Organization regional area.

The agency added \$50,000 to our unreserved fund balance and has adequate funding to cover its long-term retirement and leave liabilities.

With the addition of the Wahkiakum PUD as a member of the Board of Directors, our voting membership increased to twenty-three (23) and our overall membership to thirty-six (36).

The CWCOG was able to finalize a major update of the agency website following the design of our new logo in 2018

I encourage you to keep reading as our annual report lays out many more organizational accomplishments from the past year and I want to take the opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and other committee members for their time and efforts working to support the region through the CWCOG.



From Our Chair: Dennis Weber

The CWCOG is fast approaching its 60th anniversary! By being committed to serving the needs of our members and the citizens of the region, the organization has continued to move forward together with our members to enhance our region.



For the third year in a row, the organization welcomed a new member to our ranks. The Wahkiakum Public Utility District is the latest to join the CWCOG, and we are pleased to welcome their voice and participation on our Board of Directors. Our diverse membership ensures that the concerns and needs of the community are truly being addressed regionally.

Despite staffing challenges, the organization has effectively realigned its economic development planning in collaboration with the federal Economic Development Administration; secured transportation planning funding and, with it, addressed how the region can avoid sanctions when there are unavoidable delays. In addition, we have continued our medical insurance pool for smaller entities, contracted planning activities for several small towns, and expanded revolving loan activities with the City of Longview's program.

As I look back upon 2019 and the progress the organization has made, I am struck by the resilience of the region and our ability to move forward despite the obstacles that inevitably arise and hamper progress. We can learn a great deal from our history, but it is up to each of us to plan for and write the future that we want to see. Your engagement in the CWCOG supports unified vision for planning that we are all working to achieve.

Whether we call ourselves the Governmental Conference or the Council of Governments or a new name in the years to come, I am confident that the need for addressing challenges and seeking opportunities on a regional scale will continue well into the next 60 years as well. Thank you for your support and participation in the CWCOG. I look forward to 2020 and the ability to continue to work together to address the needs of our community.



Member Services and Community Connections

2020 Census Complete Count Committee

In preparation for the 2020 Census, the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments met with interested stakeholders in the first executive meeting of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Complete Count Committee on June 20, 2019. The Complete Count Committee comprised of a broad spectrum of government and community leaders from education, business, healthcare, and other community organizations.

CWCOG staff has conducted outreach to promote census participation. Specifically, it has worked with area libraries who will assist area residents to complete their census questionnaire by making computers available on Census Day for the public to use.

The objective of the 2020 Census is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place. With a Complete Count Committee, we can create localized messaging that resonates with our community. With a clear and concise messaging and outreach, the Complete Count Committee looks forward to taking on the task of motivating residents in the community to fill in and return their Census forms on April 1, 2020.

United States
Census
2020

Community Outreach

During 2019, CWCOG increased their visibility within the community by participating in several events including the Regional Career Expo coordinated by the Southwest Washington STEM Network and the Kelso-Longview Chamber, county fairs in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, and the Tourism and Business Expo coordinated by the Kelso-Longview Chamber.

At the Regional career Expo staff talked to area students about the types of jobs available at the CWCOG and the skills needed to be successful. The event included 72 area employers and an estimated 2400 students.

At both county fairs and the Tourism and Business Expo staff shared various program materials and resources with the community. Foot traffic at the fairs assisted in gathering responses for the Economic Vitality survey.

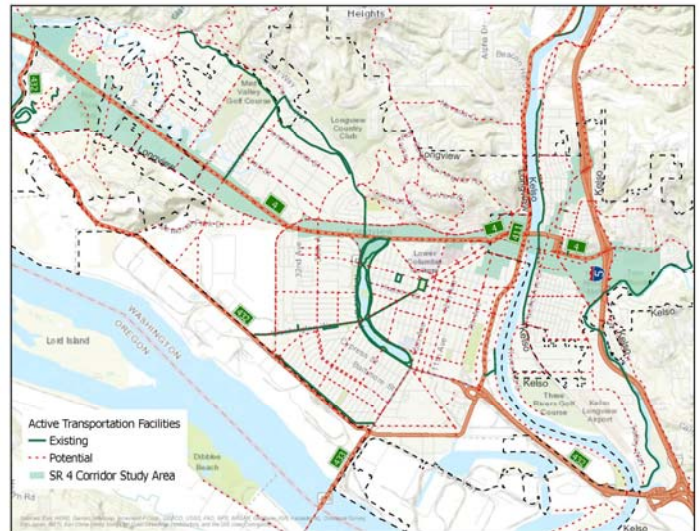
New CWCOG Website

The CWCOG launched a new website in October! It includes pages for each program run by the agency, a document library, and a page for data and resources. The website provides access to

current plans and documents related to CWCOG programs, board member lists and agendas, and a user-friendly way to provide comments on documents up for review. Also featured on the homepage is a calendar of events and access to the Weekly Reader posts by the Executive Director.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

In 2019, CWCOG GIS staff completed multiple GIS projects for our members. Some of these included creating models and maps identifying suitable locations for electric vehicle charging stations in the RTPo area, an online ArcGIS map of the Six Rivers Trail system to view on mobile devices, and a review of the 2020 Census Participant Statistical Area Program boundaries in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Other notable projects included preparing maps for the SR4 Corridor study, creating infographics presenting demographic data for regional fire districts, mapping citizen trail recommendations in Wahkiakum County.



Small Business Finance 101

CWCOG brought several speakers to the area to present at an event titled “Small Business Finance 101” on December 9, 2019. Participants learned the relevance of a business plan, how to enhance credit, and about funding options for starting or growing a business. Speakers included the CEO of Impact Capital Management, and a representative from Evergreen Business Capital. This event was part of the efforts of the Economic Development District, of which CWCOG is lead agency for, to provide educational opportunities to entrepreneurs within the region.

Transportation and Economic Development

Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)

Work was completed on the Regional ITS Architecture and staff is working to create a website using the RAD-IT database.

This Regional ITS Architecture is a roadmap for transportation systems integration in the Longview-Kelso-Rainier metropolitan area. The architecture was developed through a cooperative effort by the region's transportation agencies, covering all modes and all roads in the region. Developed and maintained by the CWCOCG on behalf of all of the transportation providers and users in the region, it represents a shared vision of how the systems will work together in the future, sharing information and resources to provide a safer, more efficient, and more effective transportation system for travelers in the region.



Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) Awards

\$5,318,660 of federal funds was awarded under the STBGP to six agencies for seven projects. These included:

- Castle Rock: \$470,996 for Dougherty Drive NE Reclamation
- Cowlitz County: \$416,525 and \$500,000 for South Cloverdale Road Improvements
- Longview/RiverCities Transit: \$590,000 for Downtown Transit Center
- Cowlitz County: \$300,000 for South Cloverdale Road/Confer Road Intersection Improvement
- Kelso: \$1,500,000 for West Main Street Realignment, Phase two
- Longview: \$695,775 for 46th Avenue Street Improvements
- Woodland: \$845,364 for Lakeshore Drive Pavement and Pedestrian Improvement

Revolving Loan Fund Task Force

A Revolving Loan Fund Task Force was established in 2019 and meetings were held to plan for the enhancement of the existing revolving loan fund resources available within the region. Work has begun in efforts to explore the expansion of the RLF functions of the organization. The CWCOCG/Longview Revolving Loan Fund Plan was updated in 2018 per Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration requirements. The document is available at cwcog.org.

Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program Awards

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) Board awarded a total of \$960,449 of federal funds under TA in February and September 2019 to adjust budgets of five existing projects and to re-distribute funds returned from two projects. TA awards in 2019 went to:

- Castle Rock: \$299,852 for the Six Rivers Regional Trail Improvements project in February
- Grays Harbor County: \$100,000 for Pacific Beach Main Street Sidewalk Improvement
- Ocean shores: \$277,217 for High Dune Trail
- Long Beach: \$100,000 for Discovery Bay Trail
- Longview: \$43,250 for 30th Avenue ADA Ramps
- Wahkiakum County: \$140,130 for Columbia Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Shoulder

Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness and Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Plan

The majority of work on an Electric Vehicle Readiness and Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Plan was completed in 2019. The primary goal of this plan is to create a resource for future discussions and collaboration to help the region begin to address emerging technologies on a regional level. This plan does not propose any new regional policies or strategies, but parts of this work will inform future policy development during the next update to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The plan will be completed in early 2020.



Economic Vitality Survey

A Regional Economic Vitality Survey was created and marketed for public response. The purpose of the survey was to provide information to the CWCOCG to assist in the efforts to serve its member agencies and improve the economic vitality and quality of place throughout the two-county region. This five-minute survey touched upon issues from economic and community development, to transportation and quality of life related issues. Regionally, 139 responses were received. The CWCOCG participated in both the Cowlitz County and the Wahkiakum County fairs to provide information on the organization and seek input in this survey.

CWCOG Members

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

Port of Kalama
 Port of Longview
 Port of Woodland
 Wahkiakum Port 1
 Castle Rock School District
 Kalama School District
 Kelso School District
 Longview School District
 Woodland School District
 Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue
 Cowlitz Fire District #5
 Cowlitz Fire District #1
 Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
 Cowlitz Public Utility District
 Wahkiakum Public Utility District*

Associate Members

Lower Columbia College
 Lower Columbia Community Action Program
 Cowlitz Economic Development Council
 Cowlitz Transit Authority
 Housing Opportunities of SW WA
 Kelso-Longview Chamber
 Wahkiakum County Chamber
 City of Rainier, OR
 911 Public Authority

Affiliate Members

City of Camas
 City of Battle Ground
 City of Washougal
 Three Rivers Regional Wastewater Authority

*New in 2019

2019 CWCOG Staff

Management

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
 Anisa Kisamore, Business Administrator

Support

Chalaina Kroll, Project Assistant P/T (07/19)*
 Lauren Read, Planning Assistant
 Rachelle Thomas, Administrative Assistant/HR (01/19)*

Planning

Ken Pearrow, Transportation
 Robert Stevens, Transportation
 Matt Roth, Community Development
 MaryJane Melink, Community Development P/T (01/19)*
 Skip Urling, Community Development P/T
 Peggy Skeahan, Community Development/Wellness P/T
 *Resigned/Retired

2019 Finances

Beginning FB*	405,482		
<u>Revenues</u>		<u>Expenditures</u>	
Federal / State	\$419,345	Personnel Cost	\$548,761
Dues	\$269,336	Contracts	\$135,393
Contracts/Planning	\$91,860	Other Services	\$84,195
		Capital Outlay/Leases	\$5,747
Total Revenues	\$780,541	Total Expenditures	\$774,096
		Unreserved Funds	\$300,000
<i>*Fund Balance</i>		Ending FB*	\$111,927

