



COWLITZ-WAHKIAKUM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (CWCOG)

Board of Directors ~ Regular Meeting / Hybrid

Port of Longview / 10 International Way, Longview, WA 98632

Video Conferencing ~ Zoom

Thursday January 22, 2026, ~ 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attendance:

General/Alternate Member Representatives

Steve Ferrell, Cowlitz County
Past Chair Paul Helenberg, City of Castle Rock
Adam Smee, City of Kalama
Chair Mike Karnofski, City of Kelso

Lee Tischer, Wahkiakum County
Mark Letham, Wahkiakum County
Kalei LaFave, City of Longview
Brittney Michaelson, City of Woodland

Special/Alternate Member Representatives

Vice Chair Troy Stariha, Port of Kalama
Robert Wile, Port of Woodland
Bill Hallanger, Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue
Chris Fritsch, Castle Rock School District
Asha Riley, Woodland School District
Debbie Stanley, Three Rivers Regional Water Authority

Scott Anderson, Port of Wahkiakum
Dean Takko, Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
Steve Taylor, Cowlitz County PUD
Gene Healy, Wahkiakum PUD 1
Patti Bowen, Longview School District

Associate/Alternate Member Representatives

Darr Kirk, 911 Public Authority
Jim Seeks, Cowlitz Transit Authority
Mike Karnofski, Cowlitz Economic Development Council
Bonnie Delaney, Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce

Scott Jorgensen, City of Rainier
Rachelle Burch, Housing Opportunities of SW WA

Affiliate/Alternate Member Representatives

None

Legislative Representatives

John Anderson, Governor Bob Ferguson’s Office
Cameron Kockritz, Deputy District Director, Representative Gluesenkamp-Perez’s Office
Tanisha Harris, Outreach Director, Senator Cantwell’s Office

Other

Alyssa Joyner, Workforce SW WA
Laurie Lebowsky, WSDOT Regional Representative

Matthew Pahs, Federal Highway Administration

Visitors

Kirk McKnight, Wahkiakum Eagle

Miriam Halliday, Workforce SW WA

Staff

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
Anisa Kisamore, Administrative Director
Stacey Lane, Administrative Resource Coordinator
Monica Seidl, Project Specialist
Rachelle Nugent, Target Zero Manager

Gabe Reese, Transportation Planner
Robert Stevens, Senior Transportation Planner
Megan Wirtz, Mobility Management Coordinator
Dena Francis, Administrative Assistant, Contracted
Sam Shogren, Comm Development Planner

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and would like to be considered for NHFP funding need to be submitted via the consolidated regional list by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the RTPO.

Motion: Bob Wile moved to approve Resolution 26-03 NHFP Regional Priority List as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

6. Presentation

A. 2025 State of the Workforce Report

Miriam Halliday, Director of the Southwest Washington Workforce Board, presented the 2025 State of the Workforce in Southwest Washington. She reported significant bi-state collaboration between Southwest Washington and Northwest Oregon regarding work availability and accessibility. Workforce investment areas and agency goals were presented with a focus on key challenges, supporting youth through the Career Technical Education programs in High Schools, and strengthening the overall Regional Industry workforce in the key target sectors. Improving skills, overcoming entrance barriers, job availability, and wages across Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties to meet projected growth over the next decade will all be critical factors for the region's long-term success. Ms. Halliday shared data on the top employment industries within these counties, along with average pay ranges, noting that most industries continue to pay below Washington State's livable wage standard. Members were directed to the online Self-Sufficiency Calculator at <https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/calculator/> for details on how a livable wage is determined. The presentation concluded with information identifying anticipated growth industries for the next ten years, including manufacturing, clean energy, healthcare and social assistance, government, retail, hospitality, education, and construction.

7. Executive Director's Report

A. 2026 Human Services Transportation Plan Survey- 2026 Transportation Access Survey*

Due to time constraints following the presentation, the Executive Director report was skipped.

8. Executive Committee Report

A. Executive Committee Regular Meeting Minutes September 25, 2025

Chair Mike Karnofski highlighted two key items from the Executive Committee meeting minutes from September 25, 2025: the work done on the 2026 budget, and the recently completed Executive Director performance evaluation.

9. Legislative & State Department(s) Reports

- A. Tanisha Harris, Outreach Director for Senator Cantwell's Office, reported that they have obtained approval for the City of Longview \$1M funding request for the fill line in the city's water reservoir, and additional funding for Mt. St. Helen's (MSH) sediment control projects. She noted that the Senator's Office received the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) response letter to the request for dredging in the Cowlitz River, and that the office is following up on several MSH related items.

The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies (THUD) and Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) are currently considering two local projects for funding: the City of Kelso's Catlin and West Main Housing and Community Center project, and the Cowlitz PUD Northwest power grid resilience project.

There is a new request form available for the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA), Tanisha stated she will send it to individuals who have requested it.

The Senate voted to reauthorize the National Landslide Preparedness Act, which has now moved to the House for a vote. Senator Cantwell has introduced the Disaster Zone Energy Affordability Investment