



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 February 26, 2026 ~ 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attendance

General/Alternate Member Representatives

Steve Ferrell, Cowlitz County
Lee Tischer, Wahkiakum County
Paul Helenberg, Past Chair, City of Castle Rock
Adam Smee, City of Kalama

Mike Karnofski, Chair, City of Kelso
Kalei LaFave, City of Longview
Brittney Michaelson, City of Woodland

Special/Alternate Member Representatives

Troy Stariha, Vice Chair, Port of Kalama
Evan Jones, Port of Longview
Todd Souvenir, Port of Wahkiakum Dist. 1
Robert Wile, Port of Woodland
Dean Takko, Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
Bill Hallanger, Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue
Bruce Pollock, Cowlitz County PUD
Gene Healy, Wahkiakum PUD 1

Debbie Stanley, Three Rivers Regional Water Authority
Stephanie Helem, Three Rivers Regional Water Authority
Chris Fritsch, Castle Rock School District
Wes Benjamin, Kalama School District
Scott Westlund, Kelso School District
Patti Bowen, Longview School District
Asha Riley, Woodland School District

Associate/Alternate Member Representatives

Darr Kirk, 911 Public Authority
Paul Langner, City of Rainier
Scott Jorgensen, City of Rainier
Jim Seeks, Cowlitz Transit Authority

Rachelle Burch, Housing Opportunities of SW WA
Jennifer Westerman, Housing Opportunities of SW WA
Ilona Kerby, Lower Columbia CAP
Mike Karnofski, Cowlitz Economic Development Council

Affiliate/Alternate Member Representatives

None

Legislative Representatives

John Anderson, Governor Bob Ferguson's Office

Other

Matthew Pahs, Federal Highway Administration
Laurie Lebowsky, WSDOT Regional Representative

Caroline Crisp, ODOT Regional Representative

Visitors

Kirk McKnight, Wahkiakum Eagle
Will (Unknown), Puget Island Resident

Tim Rahschultze, Guest Speaker, Prof. Dev. Academy
Craig Patenode, Professional Development Academy

Staff

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
Anisa Kisamore, Administrative Director
Stacey Lane, Administrative Resource Coordinator
Dena Francis, Administrative Assistant, Contracted
Sam Shogren, Comm Development Planner

Gabe Reese, Transportation Planner
Robert Stevens, Senior Transportation Planner
Megan Wirtz, Mobility Management Coordinator
Rachelle Nugent, Target Zero Manager

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) ensures all compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 by prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disabilities in the provisions of benefits and services results in from its federally assisted programs and activities. For questions regarding CWCOG's Title VI Program, you may contact the Department's Title VI Coordinator at 360-577-3041. If you need special accommodations to participate in this meeting, please call us at 360-577-3041 by 10:00 a.m. three days prior to the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Karnofski called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Bill Fashing completed the roll call. A quorum was present.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Consent Agenda

A. January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

B. January 2026 / February 2026 Expenditures

All Consent Agenda items including January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes, January 2026 Expenditures in the amount of \$47,488.32, and February 2026 Expenditures in the amount of \$56,444.87 were presented for consideration as a single action item.

Motion: Bill Hallinger moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

5. Action Items

A. Resolution 26-05: Carbon Reduction Call for Projects

Robert Stevens provided a historical review of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) as well as the guidance provided by the CRP for project evaluation. Mr. Stevens presented reasons the CRP may have additional funds available to award in 2026 and the award guidelines should the funds become available. Funds are intended to be awarded to eligible RURAL projects only. The total estimated additional funds for award is \$336,714. The application period to submit projects for consideration is March 2 to March 12, 2026. All projects submitted for review will be evaluated by the CWCOG staff and ranked based on the CRP applicable evaluation criteria in the guidance document. Project ranking information will be presented to the Board of Directors for review and award consideration at their regular March 2026 meeting.

Motion: Troy Stariha moved to approve Resolution 26-05 adopting the CRP guidance for the 2026 Special Call for Projects and to allow the CWCOG staff to implement said guidance as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

B. Resolution 26-06: Surface Transportation Block Grant Call for Projects

Robert Stevens provided a historical review of the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. This Regular Call for Projects is intended to solicit projects for award consideration for federal fiscal year 2028 - 2029. The total estimated fund available for award is \$3,633,502. This amount includes distribution of the one-time additional funds reallocation of the \$1,670,714 received by the CWCOG in late 2025. The application period to submit projects for consideration starts March 5 and ends April 20, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. All projects submitted for review will be evaluated by CWCOG staff. Projects meeting the STBG evaluation criteria will be forwarded to the Cowlitz Area Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) for additional review and ranking. Project ranking information will be presented to the Board of Directors for review and award consideration at their regular May 2026 meeting.

Motion: Adam Smee moved to approve Resolution 26-06 adopting the STBG guidance for the 2026 Regular Call for Projects and to allow CWCOG staff to implement said guidance as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

6. Presentation

A. Leading in Times of Great Change

Guest speaker Tim Rahschulte, Co-Founder of the Professional Development Academy (PDA), has worked with agencies across the United States to develop a program to grow today's frontline leaders to their fullest potential and to mentor emerging leaders to be prepared for what lies ahead. Mr. Rahschulte's presentation focused on the role of a leader in times of great change, and on the three foundational skills great leaders must possess: competence, capability, and a collaborative nature. The PDA offers scholarships to board member agencies and their employees to help offset the program cost.

7. Executive Director's Report

A. Financial Report- Quarter 4 2025

Bill Fashing reviewed the 2025 4th Quarter Financial Report, highlighting the CWCOG's overall positive financial position coming into 2026. Bill spoke to the purposes of the CWCOG's year-end fund balance and discussed the agency's upward 5-year financial trend.

Additionally, Bill discussed metrics that the CWCOG agency has begun tracking in relation to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Metrics presented include website visitors, the CEDS 24-month unemployment rate trends, Economic Development metrics, and per capita money Income. He also presented a recap of various current regional Economic Development activities taking place in 2026.

8. Executive Committee Report

A. Regular Meeting Minutes October 23, 2025

B. Regular Meeting Minutes November 20, 2025

Chair Mike Karnofski reported no new items from the Executive Committee.

9. Legislative & State Department(s) Reports

None.

10. Membership Updates

A. Troy Stariha- Port of Kalama: The Port of Kalama is finalizing selections for their Interim Commissioner position to be presented next month to the Board for appointment to complete the current term prior to the 2027 elections.

B. Troy Stariha- Port of Kalama: The railroad overpass construction project is due to break ground this spring in March or April. Substantial completion is anticipated by May 2027.

C. Mike Karnofski- City of Kelso: The new tenant for the empty building at exit 36 will be Amazon. The facility will be used as a distribution center for their technology division. The City of Kelso received the facility purchase price plus three million dollars (\$3,000,000,000) for tenant buildout and improvement permits thus far. The City is anticipating 100 new jobs with an average wage of twenty-three dollars (\$23) an hour as a result of this purchase.

11. Informational Items & Other Business

Information Items & Other Business are presented as handouts within the Board Agenda packet for the Board to review at a time that suits.

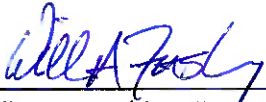
A. Letters of Support

- i. WHEELhouse Capital Capacity Grant Application (Wahkiakum County)
- ii. Cowlitz PUD I-5 Corridor Capacity Upgrades

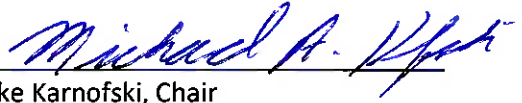
B. Human Services Transportation Plan – Survey

12. Adjourn

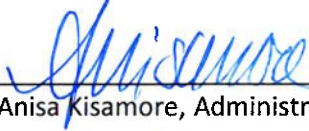
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:02 p.m.



William A. Fashing, Executive Director



Mike Karnofski, Chair



Anisa Kisamore, Administrative Director

**Attachment in the Agenda Packet*