

COWLITZ-WAHKIAKUM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (CWCOG)

Board of Directors - Regular Meeting / Hybrid

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

Video Conference- Zoom

Thursday April 23, 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

Nick Sevald, Town of Cathlamet

Special/Alternate Member Representatives

Eric Yakovich, Port of Kalama

Todd Souvenir, Port of Wahkiakum Dist. 1

Bill Hallanger, Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue

Steve Taylor, Cowlitz PUD

Debbie Stanley, Three Rivers Regional Water Authority

Gene Healy, Wahkiakum PUD 1

Chris Fritsch, Castle Rock School Dist.

Scott Westlund, Kelso School District

Asha Riley, Woodland School District

Associate/Alternate Member Representatives

Paul Langner, City of Rainier

Mike Karnofski, Cowlitz Economic Dev. Council

Jennifer Westerman, Housing Opportunities of SW WA

Bonnie Delaney, Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce

Doreen Daggett, Cowlitz Transit Authority

Affiliate/Alternate Member Representatives

None

Legislative Representatives

None

Other

Laurie Lebowsky, WSDOT Regional Representative

Visitors

None

Staff

Bill Fashing, Executive Director

Rachelle Nugent, Target Zero Manager

Sam Shogren, Comm Development Planner

Megan Wirtz, Mobility Management Coordinator

Robert Stevens, Sr Trans. Planner

Gabe Reese, Transportation Planner

Stacey Lane, Administrative Resource Coordinator
Dena Francis, Administrative Assistant, Contracted

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Bill Fashing completed roll call. A quorum was present.

3. Public Comment

None

4. Consent Agenda

A. March 26, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes*

B. March / April 2026 Expenditures*

C. Resolution 26-09: 2026-2029 Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Improvement Program Amendment*

All Consent Agenda items including March 26, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes, March 2026 Expenditures in the amount of \$46,916.61, April 2026 Expenditures in the amount of \$92,840.73, and Resolution 26-09 were considered as a single action item.

Motion: A motion was made by Adam Smee to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. The motion was seconded and approved with all voting in favor.

4. Action Items

A. Resolution 26-10: Surface Transportation Block Grant / Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) – Project Selection*

Robert Stevens, Senior Transportation Planner, presented an overview of the Carbon Reduction Program and presented an application for Board consideration to award the remaining State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 funds. Per Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), \$329,682 remains available for award for a rural project. The proposed project, Six Rivers Regional Trail I-5 Bicycle/Pedestrian Crossing Feasibility Project, will develop key preliminary elements including scope, schedule, cost estimates, permitting requirements, risk assessment, and initial design plans to connect South Cloverdale Road (north of I-5) to Dike Road (south of I-5). The WSDOT funding obligation deadline is June 30, 2026.

Motion: A motion was made by Adam Smee to approve Resolution 26-10: Surface Transportation Block Grant/Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Project Selection for

the Six Rivers Regional Trail I-5 Bicycle/Pedestrian Crossing Feasibility Project as presented. The motion was seconded and approved with all voting in favor.

B. Surface Transportation Block Grant: Six Rivers Regional Trail Bridge Study (Approved by Res. 24-02) – Scope Change*

Robert Stevens presented a scope change request for the previously approved Res. 24-02 which awarded \$110,000 to the 2024 Six Rivers Regional Trail Bridge Study. The previously approved project scope was limited to the partial development of bridge design plans. The proposed scope change is to maximize fund efficiency by combining the previously approved bridge design funds and the CRP Feasibility Project funds to complete planning and design for the Six Rivers Regional Trail Bicycle/Pedestrian Crossing.

Motion: A motion was made by Adam Smee to approve the proposed Scope Change to Resolution 24-02: Surface Transportation Block Grant: Six Rivers Regional Trail Bridge Study as presented. The motion was seconded and approved with all voting in favor.

5. Executive Director's Report

There will be a Housing Mini-Academy held on May 15, 2026, at Lower Columbia College in Longview. This forum will be hosted by the CWCOG in partnership with Housing Opportunities of SW Washington (HOSWWA) and will join a larger state-wide effort to integrate conversations on transportation and housing planning. Key objectives for this effort include land-use reform, funding innovation, construction cost reduction, and modern construction methods. The Lower Columbia Association of Realtors and the Housing Consortium of King County are Co-sponsoring the event. The CWCOG staff will follow up with registrants directly and send meeting information.

Representatives of the Small Business Administration (SBA) will be traveling in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties to assist residents and business owners with disaster relief information for those affected by the December 2025 flooding. The mobile unit will be at the Elochoman Marina in Cathlamet on Friday April 24th, and in Kelso on Saturday April 25th to answer questions and assist with information on how to apply for loans.

The SBA will be holding vendor workshops on May 12, 2026, in Cathlamet, Washington and May 14, 2026, in Kelso, Washington to support new and aspiring vendors in preparing to participate in local area markets. Workshops are free and include follow-up coaching, tools, and other resources.

Bill presented a summary of the recent Tax Rate Volatility Comparison Survey conducted by The Pew Charitable Trusts, highlighting Washington's standing among

western states. Based on data from SFY 2009–2024, Washington received a score of 4.1 reflecting relatively low volatility compared to the national average of 6.4.

Bill provided a brief overview of information in a recent Federal Reserve Small Business Credit Survey on the performance of Washington state small businesses as compared to those nationally. The purpose of the survey is to gather timely, actionable data on the financial conditions, capital needs, and credit experiences of businesses with less than 500 employees to help policy makers, lenders, and service providers support economic growth and development. Survey highlights included average annual revenue, number of employees, overall financial health of the business, and operational challenges.

Interest was expressed by several members to receive additional information from the surveys. Bill will send information to all board members on how to access the full reports for both surveys after the meeting.

6. Executive Committee Report

None.

7. Legislative & State Department Reports

None.

8. Membership Reports

None.

9. Information 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. Letter of Support*

- i. Port of Woodland – Phase 2 of The Rose Way Industrial Park

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm.



William A. Fashing, Executive Director



Mike Karnofski, Chair



Anisa Kisamore, Administrative Director

TITLE VI ASSURANCE: 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 and from its federally assisted programs and activities. For questions regarding CWCOG's Title VI or ADA Program, you may contact the CWCOG at 360-577-3041.

**Denotes attachments provided as part of the agenda packet*

