**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 September 24, 2026 ~ 12:00 p.m.

# MINUTES

**Attendance:**

**General/Alternate Member Representatives**

Steve Ferrell, Cowlitz County
Lee Tischer, Wahkiakum County
Adam Smee, City of Kalama
Mike Karnofski, Chair, City of Kelso
Eric Halverson, City of Longview
Brittny Michaelson, City of Woodland
Nicolas Sevald, Town of Cathlamet

**Special/Alternate Member Representatives**

Troy Stariha, Vice Chair, Port of Kalama
Evan Jones, Port of Longview
Scott Anderson, Port of Wahkiakum Dist. 1
Robert Wile, Port of Woodland
Chris Herman, Port of Woodland
Dean Takko, Beacon Hill Water & Sewer Dist.
Bill Hallanger, Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue
Steve Taylor, Cowlitz County PUD
Gene Healy, Wahkiakum PUD 1
Chris Fritsch, Castle Rock School Dist.
Patti Bowen, Longview School District
Asha Riley, Woodland School District
Debbie Stanley, Three Rivers Regional Water Authority

**Associate/Alternate Member Representatives**

Mike Karnofski, Cowlitz Economic Dev. Council
Doreen Daggett, Cowlitz Transit Authority
Rachelle Burch, Housing Opportunities of SW WA

**Affiliate/Alternate Member Representatives**

None

**Legislative Representatives**

Tanisha Harris, Outreach Director, Senator Cantwell's Ofc.

**Other**

Caroline Crisp, ODOT Regional Representative
Ryan Clemens, WSDOT Regional Representative
Laurie Lebowsky, WSDOT Regional Representative

**Visitors**

Ben Tripousis, Speaker, Cascadia Program
Adam Leuin, Cascadia Program
Erinn Ellig, Parametrix
Cecile Malik, Cascadia Program
Jason Beloso, Cascadia Program
Sarah Parker, Maul Foster & Alongi

**Staff**

Bill Fashing, Executive Director
Anisa Kisamore, Administrative Director
Rachelle Nugent, Target Zero Manager
Sam Shogren, Comm Development Planner
Stacey Lane, Administrative Resource Coordinator
Robert Stevens, Sr. Trans. Planner
Gabe Reese, Transportation Planner
Dena Francis, Administrative Assistant

1. **Call to Order & Introductions**

   Chair Mike Karnofski called the meeting to order at 12:03pm.

2. **Roll Call**

   Bill Fashing completed roll call. A quorum was present.

3. **Public Comment**

   None

4. **Consent Agenda**

   A. July 23, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes*

   B. July/August 2026 Expenditures - Ratify*

   C. August/September 2026 Expenditures*

   D. Travel Authorization – Ratify*
   National Assoc. of Development Organizations (NADO) - Reno, Nevada
   National Assoc. of Regional Councils (NARC) – Pismo Beach, California

   E. Resolution 26-29: Legacy Longview Revolving Loan Fund Certification*

   All Consent Agenda items including the July 23, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, July/August 2026 Expenditures in the amount of $132,195.24, August/ September 2026 Expenditures in the amount of $110,436.31, the Travel Authorization, and Resolution 26-29 for the Legacy Longview Revolving Loan Fund Certification were presented as part of the CWCOG's regular and normal business items and considered as a single action item.

   **Motion**: Eric Halverson moved to approve all Consent Agenda items as presented. The motion was seconded and approved.

## 5. Action Items

A. Resolution 26 – 26: Credit Card Limit Increase*

Approval of Resolution 26-26 Credit Card Limit Increase is requested by staff to increase the spending limit of the agency credit card from $15,000 to $20,000. This increase will allow staff to continue to be responsive to the needs of the agency by maximizing financial flexibility and engaging in more economical business practices and will allow the agency to continue to meet monthly and annual financial commitments for travel, supplies, online services and subscriptions in keeping with the agency credit card use policy.

**Motion:** Bill Hallanger moved to approve Resolution 26-26 Credit Card Limit Increase as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

B. Resolution 26 – 30: Employer Health Premium Benefit Contribution*

Approval of Resolution 26-30 is requested to increase the monthly Employer Health Premium Benefit Contribution cap from the 2026 limit of $1,975.00 to $2,000.00 per qualifying position per month effective for 2027. This $25.00 monthly increase to the agency benefit package was reviewed and recommended by the Executive Committee (EC) during its regular meeting on August 27, 2026.

**Motion:** Bill Hallenger moved to approve Resolution 26-30: Employer Health Premium Benefit Contribution as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

C. Resolution 26 – 31: Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Improvement Program 2027 – 2030*

Robert Stevens presented Resolution 26-31 for adoption of the 2027-2030 Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Improvement Program (M/RTIP). The program includes 48 projects within the Cowlitz County and Rainier, Oregon Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The top three project types include 20 Transit projects, five Bicycle/Pedestrian projects, and four projects each in Safety and Bridge Preservation. Collectively there is approximately $114.7 million programmed for the next four years, reflecting a slight increase over the 2026-2029 adopted amount of $114.5 million. Following adoption, the plan will be submitted to WSDOT and ODOT for inclusion in the 2027-2030 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

**Motion:** Brittny Michaelson moved to adopt Resolution 26-31: Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Improvement Program 2027-2030 as presented. The motion was seconded and approved.

## 6. Presentation

A. Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program

Ben Tripousis, WSDOT Cascadia Program Administrator
Jason Beloso, WSDOT Rail, Freight & Ports Strategic Planning Manager

The presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the Cascadia Program, focusing on the Washington I-5 Master Plan, Cascadia High-Speed Rail, and Amtrak Cascades projects. Each project directly addresses the region's growing population and increased infrastructure needs to support the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods across the Cascadia megaregion- defined as the corridor surrounding the I-5 arterial between Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia.

To support these initiatives, the briefing analyzed projected population and job growth over the next 25 years while evaluating current system constraints. WSDOT is focusing on a system-wide approach to improve and coordinate auto, rail, and air transport across the region. Additionally, the presentation provided the Master Plan's core goals and prioritization steps, outlined the Service Development Plan, and concluded with recent program updates and upcoming opportunities for public education and community engagement.

## 7. Executive Director's Report

A. Financial Report Quarter 2, 2026

Bill Fashing presented the second quarter financial report, noting that operating revenue received for the first half of the year was significantly less than anticipated due to challenges WSDOT experienced due to the implementation of a new statewide finance processing system. Bill reported that the issues have been successfully addressed and payments have caught up and will be reflected in the third quarter financials. Bill noted that otherwise things are on target and going well.

## 8. Executive Committee Report

Mike Karnofski gave a brief overview of the June and July 2026 meeting minutes and mentioned their discussion on including additional language in the Title VI Language Access Policy to ensure compliance with regulations.

## 9. Legislative & State Department Reports

Teneshia Harris, Outreach Director for Senator Cantwell's office, expressed appreciation for the WSDOT presentation and affirmed the senator's continued desire to provide support to the region for this plan. Ms. Harris noted their interest

in ongoing projects in the Kelso-Longview area and their attention to the impact of the upcoming November election outcomes on the region.

**10. Membership Reports**

Caroline Crisp from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) reported that the Clatsop County Transportation Systems Plan kickoff meeting was recently completed, and the Northwest Area Commission on Transportation (NWACT) is in the process of forming its Work Plan for various projects in Oregon and they are awaiting the updated projects list.

Laurie Lebowsky, WSDOT Regional Representative, reported that the WSDOT 2027-2029 Budget was submitted for review and approval in September. Based on current state fiscal realities, Laurie noted that the budget focuses on the most critical items needed to maintain current service levels and complete projects that are already underway. Laurie provided updated information on the budget, statewide planning, construction and current project manager contact information in the chat for attendees.

**11. Other Business**

Bill noted he will send out a copy of the presentation to members for the slides that were skipped in the Executive Director's Report due to time constraints.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.

William A. Fashing, Executive Director

Mike Karnofski, Chair

Dena Francis, Administrative Assistant

***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*