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March 7, 2013

To: Interested Parties

From: Steve Harvey, Director

Re: 2012 Annual Report

Enclosed are copies of the COG's 2012 annual report for distribution to your board or council and appropriate staff. The report was adopted by the COG at its February 28<sup>th</sup> board meeting. The varied and comprehensive nature of the projects and programs undertaken by the COG would not occur without the support and involvement of the COG members and board, its committees, local planning commissions, area elected officials, staff and volunteers. Please take a minute to review this capsule report on a busy, productive year and, if you wish, pass it on to others. If you would like additional copies, please call. Thank you!

SHH:kw

Enclosures

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Counties of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum ~ Cities of Longview, Kelso, Woodland, Kalama, Castle Rock and Rainier, Oregon ~ Town of Cathlamet ~ Ports of Longview, Kalama, Woodland and Wahkiakum #1 & #2 ~ Cowlitz PUD ~ School Districts of Longview, Kalama, Kelso, Woodland and Castle Rock ~ Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District ~ Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue ~ Cowlitz County Fire District #5 ~ Lower Columbia College ~ Lower Columbia Community Action Program ~ Cowlitz Economic Development Council ~ Longview Housing Authority ~ Kelso/Longview Chamber of Commerce ~ Wahkiakum Chamber of Commerce





Another year has passed but it seems like only a few months. But, much has happened and continues for the Council of Governments and its member entities. A few of my highlights are:

As reported for our homelessness program, the numbers show that the Housing First Coalition partners are having a positive impact on the numbers of homeless individuals and families in the region. Since crafting the area's first plan addressing homelessness and the recent update in 2011, the strategies and priorities seem to be having some effects in a good way. Since the causes of being homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are many and usually complicated, any progress, while good, should be treated with guarded optimism. Hopefully, the projects and programs derived in 2012 will help maintain the downward trend.

The passage of the federal transportation act, MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), added greater certainty for maintaining the federal role and resources for transportation planning and projects for the region. The act, however, includes a number of shifts in emphasis across the spectrum. How these changes will affect state, regional and local governments remains to be seen as regulations and guidelines are developed and sent down the chute to the local level. And, since it is only a two-year bill, there may be further issues addressed as debates return in Congress over what the next authorization should look like.

Several of the small cities have undertaken some updating of land use and development codes during this economic slow-down. With assistance by COG planners, code improvements address mostly commercial and industrial development chapters, preparing the communities for potential new businesses and revitalization of downtown cores.

One downside this year was the ending of the COG's community mobilization program which coordinated a wide variety of interests and agencies to address substance abuse and violence in our communities. This very regional program started up in 1989 with very modest resources and, as more state, federal and private foundation grants became available, evolved into an energetic program. With the gradual demise of funding, partially pushed by the Great Recession, the program kept shrinking until there were few funds to address the problems. Certainly, the issues and conditions aren't diminishing, and it is hoped that more resources come to the fore to ramp up community efforts to address these conditions.

Practically all COG projects and programs rely upon the involvement of numerous local elected and staff officials from our member entities and representatives of other organizations. Their dedication of time and expertise never gets the credit it so well deserves. So, as I leave the COG, I pass along my heartfelt "Thank you!" and best wishes for a rewarding and always improving future.

*~ Steve Harvey, Director*

## *Addressing Regional Issues*

COG staff has continued to take steps to ascertain ways to break down program silos and address our member's regional concerns. In 2012, notification was received that COG was 1 out of 56 nationwide recipients chosen by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to receive technical assistance pertaining to economic and fiscal health. The assistance shall help identify 'smart growth' solutions to common community problems.

Staff met with the COG and Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District (CLEDD) boards to identify regional concerns ranging from transportation and infrastructure to workforce, education and environment. The information received from our members provided a starting point for a workshop to address economic and fiscal health. Key approaches explored in the workshop included:

- \* Promoting compact growth patterns where infrastructure already exists.
- \* Directing development to more appropriate locations by pricing public services to reflect actual costs.
- \* Evaluating the return on public investment for land development proposals, focusing on taxes and jobs generated per acre.
- \* Creating high quality places that draw a good talent pool to the community, which draws high quality employers to the

region, encouraging mixed land use in commercial districts to create popular destinations, promoting affordable housing that expands multi-modal amenities and located near services.

A summary report of the workshop outcomes provided the following short-term recommendations, or "next steps" for the region:

- \* Convene forums to identify areas for cooperation and partnership.
- \* Development a regional framework for cooperative problem-solving.
- \* Incentivize regional cooperation through a system of prioritized investments.
- \* Identify a set of planning/administrative/legal/financial services that could be shared by cash strapped jurisdictions.
- \* Promote public-private partnerships for education and workforce development.

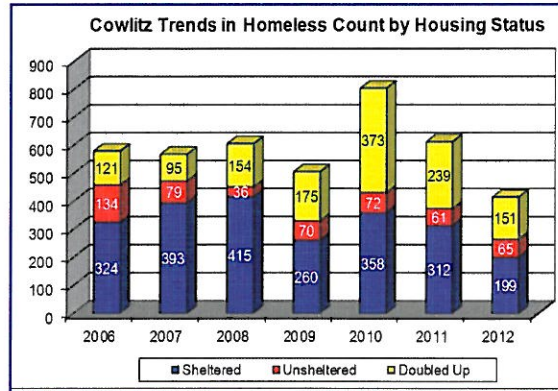
Staff presented the "next steps" to the boards and proposed a new venture for 2013; advising that COG and CLEDD boards hold quarterly joint sessions to focus on specific recommendations. The joint sessions will provide information to the boards that include best practices outside of the region, partnership opportunities for addressing concerns, and identifying current efforts already taking place with regional partners.



## Regional Issues, continued

The 2012 Point In Time Count of homeless persons showed a 42% decline in homelessness in our community since 2006, which is our baseline measurement year. COG staff conducts the annual Point In Time Count on behalf of the county, coordinating efforts among more than 25 public and private agencies. This progress came about despite the impacts of the Great Recession, and is largely due to the impact of short-term rental assistance to 565 households.

During 2012, staff was heavily involved in developing and reviewing Requests for Proposals for strategic projects that will implement the Cowlitz County Ten Year Plan, which was updated and adopted in 2011. Cowlitz County awarded just under \$500,000 in state Consolidated Homeless Grant and local Document Recording Fee funds to implement five key projects: Emergency Support Shelter, Community House on Broadway, Homeless Prevention & Rapid Rehousing Rental Assistance (CAP), Low Barrier Housing for chronically homeless persons (CAP), and the Landlord Incentive Program (Longview Housing Authority) which recruits landlord participation for difficult-to-house populations. In late 2012, a second Request for Proposals was issued for the five remaining short term projects listed in the Ten Year Plan. These included: Housing Retention Team (intervention/case management), Life Skills, Permanent Supportive Housing (services plus housing for homeless persons with disabilities), Urban Rest Stop outreach center, and Extreme Weather Shelter for sheltering in inclement weather. These projects should come on-line in early 2013.



COG staff formed and is leading a workgroup to design a Coordinated Entry & Assessment program since the fall of 2012. Coordinated Entry is a state and federal requirement that should have a big impact on how quickly people can get directed to the most appropriate source(s) of help. Staff also led a planning group to develop the county's first "Project Homeless Connect" (PHC) outreach event, in conjunction with the

2013 Point In Time Count. PHC is similar to a "stand down" event for homeless veterans, but is for any members of our community who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Other accomplishments by staff and members of the Cowlitz Housing First Coalition include:

- ◊ Improved collaboration among agencies for the 2013 project funding round;
- ◊ Developed a series of "best practice" trainings using nationally-recognized professionals and offered to local housing/service providers in Cowlitz,

- Clark and Lewis counties;
- ◊ Improved the homeless management information system (HMIS) to track client-level progress;
- ◊ Reduced the overall number of homeless persons and reduced the length of time spent in homelessness; and
- ◊ Recognized as a high-performing county under the state's new Housing & Essential Needs Program (operated by CAP) for housing support to persons unable to work due to temporary disability.

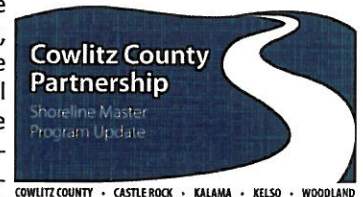
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A collaborative planning effort between Cowlitz County and the cities of Castle Rock, Kalama, Kelso and Woodland moved into high gear in 2012 to update the 35-year-old county Shoreline Master Program. COG is providing project management services for the update, while a consultant team led by Parametrix is doing the bulk of the work. The Washington State Department of Ecology provided the county and cities with a three-year grant to complete the update by December 1, 2014.

The initial phases of inventorying the shoreline environment, identifying shoreline jurisdiction, developing public participation programs and conducting public outreach & visioning were completed in 2012. "This partnership project represents an exciting opportunity for stakeholders, citizens, and others to participate in shaping the future from the ground up in terms of

how their community interacts with waterfronts and shoreline environments. We want to hear from the entire spectrum of people, businesses, and organizations that have an active interest in those areas," said Steve Harvey, COG Director.

The crux of the work will be completed in 2013. Currently, Planning Commissions for the partnering jurisdictions will soon begin developing the Shoreline Master Program, including shoreline environmental designations, policies and regulations. The project schedule and other project information can be found at [www.cowlitzshorelineupdate.org](http://www.cowlitzshorelineupdate.org).



## Membership

### 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

Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District  
Cowlitz PUD  
Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue  
Cowlitz Fire District 5  
Castle Rock School District  
Kalama School District

Kelso School District  
Longview School District  
Woodland School District  
Port of Kalama  
Port of Longview  
Port of Woodland  
Wahkiakum Port District 1

### Associate Members

City of Rainier, OR  
Cowlitz EDC  
Longview Housing Authority  
Lower Columbia CAP  
Lower Columbia College  
Kelso Longview Chamber  
Wahkiakum Chamber



## Economic Development

The COG continued its popular, well attended, census data workshop series with "Data 201: The Census Has Landed, Now What?" This workshop reviewed the changes in the 2010 Census forms and the information that was accumulated. The series will continue in 2013 and add a grant writing workshop in late fall.

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COG staff moved forward with the Fire and Ice Scenic Loop (FISL) project. The Request for Qualifications was advertised in September and nine proposals were received. Interviews were held in the fall, and in December, the COG awarded the contract to Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C. out of Alexandria, VA. The project will be underway in 2013 and the anticipated completion of the Corridor Management Plan is June 2014. FISL was funded in 2011 through the Federal Highway Administration.

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The Economic Development Administration held a Peer Review of the CLEDD, the first since its conception, to review the board, staff and fiscal responsibilities. EDA met with staff and several board members, reviewed the current CEDS report, board make-up and funding. The EDA identified several strong points and some areas of weakness:

- District support of the member counties is heavily dependent on Cowlitz County members to meet the match requirements. Staff addressed this concern in the 2012-2013 Planning Grant application, receiving all of the in-kind match from the Cowlitz and Lewis ports, EDCs and IPAT. EDA also advised COG staff to revisit the fee structure and improve the commitment of all of the members. This will be addressed in the CLEDD Compact in 2013.
- EDA considers the staff to be well-qualified and effective in carrying out the EDA funded scope of work. Yet, EDA advised staff to increase public awareness of its role, purpose and accomplishments.

- The organization's financial controls and practices are exemplary, and may be used to instruct and benefit other organizations in need.
- EDA advised implementing a prioritization tool into the CEDS to increase the relevance and usefulness of the report. EDA further advised that the board convene a special facilitated session to consider the future of the organization. COG staff has discussed this and proposed joint sessions with the COG board to address regional concerns.

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Thanks to a grant secured by COG staff from the Broadband Office of Washington State Department of Commerce, a broadband technology gaps and needs analysis of the region surrounding Mount St. Helens has launched. Project partners include Cowlitz and Skamania counties, the Mount St. Helens Institute, and the U.S. Forest Service. Project consultants will provide an economic analysis of broadband technologies to increase economic, educational and tourism opportunities in the region. The study will be completed in June 2013.

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The Cowlitz Lewis Economic Development District (CLEDD) was charged with forming an executive board in 2012, which required that a member of the COG Board sit on the CLEDD executive board as secretary. Director Harvey led the executive board to draft a Compact/Interlocal Agreement that was presented to the CLEDD board in 2012.

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COG staff completed the Annual Update of the 2009-2013 CEDS report and submitted the report to the Economic Development Administration. The report included changes requested by the CLEDD Board to be more timely regarding project submissions for Rural Development (.09) funding that each county administers. The report also included several new projects to the list. The Annual CEDS Update can be viewed at [www.cwcog.org/cledd/publications](http://www.cwcog.org/cledd/publications).

## Community Planning

The City of Kalama, with COG staff help, completed revisions to their sign zoning code. Modifications ensure that the standards are consistent with the Kalama Comprehensive Plan. The revised code is now more user-friendly, concise, and flexible.

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Castle Rock Electric Vehicle Charging Station

The City of Castle Rock continued to make improvements to its downtown. In addition to the new streets and sidewalks on Front Ave., the city joined WSDOT's "Electric Highway" when it added an electric vehicle charging station. The COG's city planner helped with the planning process and issuing environmental and land use permits for these projects.

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Staff continued assisting the Cowlitz County Department of Emergency Management with an update of the county's *Hazard Mitigation Plan* which identifies and supports local government measures needed to mitigate natural hazards such as flooding, landslides, earthquakes and wind storms. The plan

has been reviewed by both Washington State Military Department Emergency Management Division (WA DEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is currently being finalized for local adoption.

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The GIS Users Group, coordinated by COG staff, expanded its membership to include local engineering and surveying companies in an attempt to ensure that local government data collection and distribution are satisfying the needs of local businesses. User group meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month at 3:00 pm in the Cowlitz County Annex Conference Room, next to the COG office, and are open to the public.

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The Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee and COG staff developed goals, policies, objectives, and land use categories, which helped draft a new future land use map. Extensive public and private stakeholder outreach conducted in 2012 will help develop elements for a draft plan to be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners in 2013.



## Transportation

The COG Cowlitz Area Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, with the assistance from a consultant team headed by Parametrix, completed development of the Longview-Kelso Great Streets Concept. The study creates a framework for Longview, Kelso, and Cowlitz County for future transportation investments across all modes (vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, etc.) serving residential, commercial, industrial and civic neighborhoods. These projects help to create a unique sense of place, which is a core strategy of current community revitalization efforts while providing flexibility to meet unique street design challenges. The report can be accessed at <http://www.cwcog.org/transportation.htm>. The planning effort will move into implementation during 2013 with a vigorous public education effort for staff, elected officials and citizens, with the goal to have the concept adopted by the cities of Longview and Kelso by 2014.

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COG staff provided a regional perspective with the City of Kelso's proposed Hazel Street Overcrossing proposed project to provide a grade-separated railroad crossing at Hazel Street. The projected growth in freight and passenger rail along the BNSF mainline will result in longer periods of congestion along South Pacific and cut off emergency access to the areas of the city west of the railroad. The initial concept has been adopted by the city. COG staff is assisting with securing funding in order to move the project into the environmental documentation and preliminary design and engineering phase.

The SR 432/433 Rail and Highway Modernization NEPA/SEPA project achieved several milestones during 2012. A consultant team, led by Parsons Brinckerhoff, was selected in May. COG, along with assistance from the project technical advisory members, worked closely with the consultants to finalize the scope and budget for the project. This resulted in a signed contract between COG and Parsons Brinckerhoff. In early 2013, data collection related to projected highway and rail traffic volumes and characteristics will be gathered for in-depth analysis.

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Public, non-profit and tribal transit providers worked with COG Staff on transit projects during 2012, and managed the WSDOT Consolidated Transit Grant Program, which resulted in over 22 projects reviewed, ranked and submitted to WSDOT's Public Transit office for funding. We also worked with the Cowlitz Transit Authority to roll out the authority's new transit service name, "River Cities" and its logo.



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Finally, COG staff assisted the City of Woodland in the development of the Request for Proposals for consultant services for the Scott Avenue Reconnection NEPA/SEPA. This project will be hiring consultants and getting underway in 2013. COG staff will provide varying levels of guidance throughout this planning process.

## Financial Report

Beginning Fund Bal \$ 4,919

### Revenues

Federal \$ 512,750  
 State \$ 369,558  
 Dues \$ 241,339  
 Contracts/Planning \$ 437,897  
 Total Revenues \$ 1,561,544

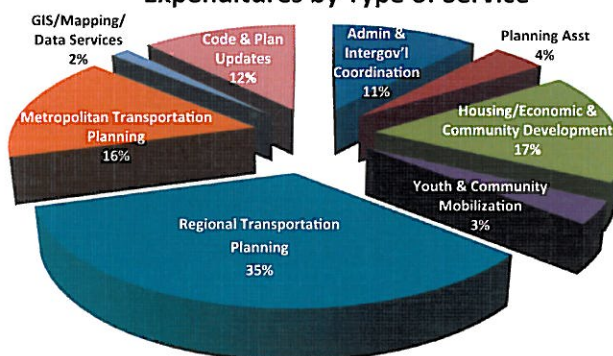
### Expenditures

Personnel Cost \$ 1,076,250  
 Contracts \$ 227,025  
 Other Services \$ 162,914  
 Capital Outlay \$ 5,653  
 Total Expenditures \$ 1,471,842

Total Resources \$ 1,566,463

Ending Fund Bal \$ 94,621  
 Reserve Funds \$ 70,000

### Expenditures by Type of Service



## Staff

### Executive Director

Steve Harvey

### Community Development Planners

Melissa Taylor, Planning Manager  
 TJ Keiran, Planner III/GIS Specialist  
 Barbara Kincaid, Planner III/Special Projects  
 Don Mathison, Planner III (Part-Time)  
 Dawn Hanson, Planner II/Housing  
 Matt Hermen, Planner II  
 Jennifer Keene, Planner II/Economic Development

### Community Mobilization

Shannon Miller, Coordinator (through mid-October)

### Transportation Planners

Rosemary Siipola, Planner III/Project Manager  
 Darlene Sharar, Planner III/Special Projects Manager  
 Amy Asher, Planner II

### Support Staff

Anisa Kisamore, Office Administrator  
 Shanda Wagner, Finance Assistant  
 Katie Wells, Administrative Assistant  
 Bonnie Kelley, Receptionist/Secretary

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