



WORKING TOGETHER TO ENHANCE OUR REGION

City of Longview Benefits of Membership – April 2016

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) is a regional planning agency currently organized under Washington State RCW 36.64.080. Since 1961, the CWCOG has continually served general and special purpose governments; working together to enhance and grow our region. By providing a regional forum to address issues of mutual interest and concern, the CWCOG acts as a catalyst for community leadership to come together and advance our local issues to State and Federal levels. Its mission is to efficiently utilize resources, so as to yield long-term benefits that enhance the quality of life for the communities and region.

The CWCOG's history includes a wide variety of projects and programs instituted at the request of its members. Currently the agency's focus is on Transportation, Economic Development, Medical Rate reform, Housing and Community Development, not counting the variety of additional planning services that support and enhance members' planning efforts. These partnership efforts help members find benefit through more efficient use of and access to funding and resources, as well as an increase in voice at the State and Federal levels. The City of Longview specifically has benefited by millions of dollars in savings, grant awards, and community improvements.

As one of the original (1961) and larger member contributors, the City of Longview over the years has seen significant return on their investment in the CWCOG. The partnership between CWCOG and the City of Longview has been a long and successful one as seen in the following highlights of some of the more recent collaboration efforts.

Medical Rate Stabilization Pool

Directly supported by membership dues, the Medical Rate Stabilization Committee was established as a regional public sector risk pool. Participants, such as the City, have greatly benefited from increased control over annual health insurance costs. By combining several local agency groups using similar health coverage, this larger pool is able to leverage their combined health ratings to stabilize annual rates and lower administration costs. For perspective, a recently released national study reporting on mid-large groups revealed employer groups in this segment have experienced on average an increase in medical plan premiums of 130% since 2005 marking a 13% average annual increase. The medical rate stabilization pool is under 50% since inception resulting in an approximate 8% average annual increase. Longview has been participating in this program from its inception and has saved almost \$240,000 since 2010.

Estimated Savings Compounded Over Time*

	<i>*Initial Savings/ Yearly Savings</i>	<i>*Wellness Program Proceeds</i>
2010	\$166,093.00	
2011	\$19,765.00	\$698.41
2012	\$11,626.00	\$2,483.18
2013	\$13,287.00	\$1,828.18
2014	\$9,799.00	\$3,694.70
2015	\$12,124.00	\$3,678.96
2016	\$7,241.00	**\$3,525.00
Total	\$239,935.00	\$15,908.43

Cumulative Benefit to Longview: \$255,843.43

** City of Longview and Gallagher **Pending*

The program, through Kaiser, has financially supported a wellness program for all participating members at approximately \$50,000 annually. The program works to assist employees in reaching higher levels of activity and health awareness which has directly impacted rates paid for by the City's insurance coverage. As part of the wellness program, City of Longview has individually received just over \$12,000 in wellness grants to date.

Transportation Planning

The CWCOC was named the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) by the State of Washington in 1982 which includes the LKRATS (Longview, Kelso, Rainier Area Transportation Study) region, and since 1990, administers the 5-County Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). The CWCOC was designated to administer the Surface Transportation Program funding for Cowlitz County in 2006. As a member of the CWCOC/MPO, the City benefits from decisions on projects and funding for the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Furthermore, as a participant of LKRATS, the City of Longview and the Cowlitz Transit Authority has access to CWCOC staff and contract services supported by funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The City provides a portion of the match required for these federal funds.

Most recently, CWCOC was responsible for securing \$4 million in special federal and state funds for the SR432 corridor study and SR 432/SR 433 intersection NEPA evaluation, directly impacting the safety and freight mobility needs of the City and the Port of Longview. It is also responsible for administering over \$1.3 million dollars of federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for Cowlitz County each year. By actively participating in the MPO, the City of Longview directly benefited from the latest decisions to provide funding support for eight projects in the amount of \$4.3 million from the STP and TAP funds.

The table below shows the funds allocated to the City by the CWCOC Board with the following bulleted points showing additional transportation efforts required by Washington State Department of Transportation that the CWCOC constantly plans, organizes and facilitates which have direct impact on the City.

<u>STP Projects</u>	
SR 432 Rail Corridor Study	\$550,000
Oregon Way/Industrial Way Interchange Project	\$1,295,077
Downtown Corridor Improvements	\$600,000
Washington Way Bridge	\$130,000
SR 4 Ocean Beach HWY/West Main Traffic Signal Interconnect	\$650,000
14 th Ave. & Broadway Intersection Improvements	\$185,000
Civic Center Circle	\$279,000
<u>TAP Projects</u>	
Downtown Corridor Improvements	\$630,000

- In 2012, CWCOC finalized the Transportation System Plan (TSP) known as the Great Streets Concept for the metropolitan area. Over several months, the Cowlitz Area Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), city councils, and citizens conducted a variety of meetings, public workshops, a walking tour, and a Great Streets Summit. Concepts from this plan were recently realized in the developments made along Commerce Avenue.
- Transportation modeling data and analysis developed through the CWCOC and used for long-range planning, is currently being used by County and City staff to support grant development relating to projects within the 432 Corridor and secure additional funding for other regional projects.

- The CWCOCG played a key role in the development of the Cowlitz Transit Authority Transit Enhancement Plan following the loss of a City staff member. Through a contract, the CWCOCG staff helped in the administration of the enhancement planning, re-branding of River Cities Transit and kept the program moving forward.
- The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) developed by CWCOCG identifies the strategies for meeting the transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes. The CHSTP includes a list of proposed public transportation projects for the Kelso-Longview-Rainier Metro Area resulting in funding coming to the City.
- Most recently, the CWCOCG on behalf of its membership is part of an exciting effort to increase the local share of federal pass through funds for the STP, TAP, and other programs that directly benefit local communities. If successful, this could return another \$200 – 300,000 to the county-wide level each year, increasing the pass through from 33% to as much as 50%.

Economic Development

The CWCOCG is the administering agency for the Southwest Washington Economic Development District (SWEDD) which includes Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Lewis Counties. As such, it prepares the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Document which is required to qualify for regional Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding. Local government agencies must include their projects in the CEDS to qualify for any EDA funding. To be included in the CEDS, local governments and other partners participate in the SWEDD and provide a portion of the match required for the EDA planning funds that facilitate these efforts. Through these efforts the CWCOCG was able to aid the City in several recent projects.

***The Longview
RLF has
supported the
creation of 328
jobs and saving
137 with a total
direct impact of
\$5.7 million.***

- The City obtained funds for the Mint Farm expansion project from the EDA. The City received \$1.4 million in funding to assist with the development of the industrial park road infrastructure.
- The CWCOCG helped obtain \$750,000 in EDA funds completing the final dollars needed for the Lower Columbia College (LCC) Health Sciences Building, now an important part of the college campus providing extraordinary resources to LCC students. Higher education is a critical component of economic development.
- Evolving out of the economic development planning efforts of the CWCOCG and the SWEDD, the Longview Revolving Loan Fund was established with EDA funds that were matched by the City of Longview. The program being available to businesses within the City limits, 21 loans have been made (since its inception with a \$500,000 investment) totaling \$1.7 million. Recent loans include: Swanson Wood and Bark, Estetica Day Spa, Ashtown Brewing, Five Dons Brewing, and LAS Truck Repair.

Housing & Community Development

Since 1999, the CWCOCG has been involved in developing the five-year Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (the most recent of which is the 2014-2019 Plan). This plan maintains the City's eligibility for Community Development Block Grant funds as well as the Longview/Kelso HOME consortium's eligibility for Federal HOME housing dollars. The plan itself identifies the needs of low and moderate-income neighborhoods, as well as homeless persons, analyzes the local housing market, and develops strategies to address community needs. All these factors that identify and quantify local needs, opening doors to additional dollars in order to address issues such as:

- In 2005, the CWCOCG staff was instrumental in securing the initial Federal Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grant in the amount of \$66,000. This mental health program has been operational since then and is currently administered through Columbia Wellness.

- Through membership investment, the CWCOG provided the City of Longview research information and data to clarify the transition, implications, and understanding of becoming designated as an entitlement community.
- The CWCOG created the 2008 Highlands Revitalization Plan using CDBG funds and authored a Northwest Health Foundation Grant for the City to help the Highlands Neighborhood Association (HNA) implement the Plan. Over a three-year period, \$231,000 would be used for a community coach to work directly with the neighborhood residents. The outgrowth of those efforts have resulted in the HNA successfully receiving several additional grants to further implement the strategies and goals of the Highlands Revitalization Plan.
- In conjunction with the Longview School District, the CWCOG conducted a demographic trends analysis and presented those findings to key community agencies. The analysis was used by a wide assortment of local entities.

2015 City of Longview Investment

Membership Investment: \$67,763

The membership formula for general members is figured on an average of assessed valuation, population & sales tax distribution. 80% of the CWCOG membership fees is carried by General Membership which is shared with Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties and the cities of Kelso, Kalama, Castle Rock and Woodland. The percentages have been reassessed, but not implemented since 2008, the Board voted instead to only raise them by percentage increments. No increases were made between 2009 and 2013.

Economic Development District Match Funds: \$1,921

Originally set to meet the match requirements for the Economic Development Planning grant, these funds have been unchanged since 2007. They no longer meet the matching needs of the grant, with the balance currently made up by in-kind match by multiple jurisdictions.

Pathways 2020 Contract Support: \$7,922

An Interlocal agreement between Cowlitz County, Cities of Longview, Kelso, Kalama, and Castle Rock, Cowlitz PUD, School Districts of Longview and Kelso, Ports of Longview, Kalama, and Woodland, LCC and Lower Columbia Action Council to support the research and production of the Community Report Card. The CWCOG supports this effort without receiving any administrative compensation.

Metropolitan Planning Organization Match Funds: \$18,692
Addressed above

Cowlitz Transit Authority Match Funds: \$8,699
Addressed above

Financial Overview

The Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments is a member driven agency established to assist with a variety of regional activities to help its members achieve success. Over the last seven years, the City of Longview has invested approximately \$460,000 into economic development and general membership programs with a direct return of approximately \$3.3 million, and transportation investments equaling \$150,800 with a direct return of \$8.1 million through the efforts of the CWCOG; a significant return on City's investment.

The City of Longview's continued engagement in the CWCOG will allow the organization to continue to help its members, such as the City, address their needs, achieve their goals and look to new and exciting opportunities for growth. Staff is committed to delivering results in our efforts to work together to enhance the region.

The CWCOG has played a direct role in the injection of over \$10 million into the Longview economy since 2010.

