

July 21, 2005

To: LCOG Board of Directors

From: George Kloeppe, Executive Director

Subject: July 28 Planning Session, Closing the Loop

At the beginning of next week's Planning Session, I will offer a brief summary of the outcomes of the Board's 2003 and 2004 Sessions. This is intended to provide a historical and thematic reference point for the discussions that will follow. Also, since a number of Board members are fairly new to the organization, this retrospective may provide new information about the priorities previously established by the Board.

In July of 2003, there were three major topics identified and pursued for the following year:

- The function and process of the Board of Directors was considered less than ideal and major operational changes were suggested to streamline and make more efficient the agency's operation. As an example, the number of Board meetings per year was reduced from ten to six, and substantial policy responsibilities were shifted from the Board to the Executive Committee. The changes which were conceived at the Planning Session and put in place over several months accomplished several objectives, notably to allow the policy board—in large measure freed of operational responsibilities—to explore broad policy issues and set the agency's direction.
- The economy was identified as a major regional issue in 2003, and staff was directed to structure some Board meetings around that topic. Accordingly, economic development was a central theme of three Board meetings during the following months.
- A second topic that rose to the top of the Board's consideration of important regional issues in 2003 was education. Two Board meetings during FY 2003-04 were focused on education from a regional perspective.

In July of 2004, the Board again dedicated its entire meeting to a Planning Session. While other topics were considered, including a thoughtful reflection on

the organizational changes that had been put in place, the primary objective in 2004 was to identify important public policy issues and, from that data, to focus on issues about which the Board wanted to learn more or engage in further discussion. Five regional issues—determined by the Board to cross jurisdictional lines and to involve different types of local governments—were flagged for special presentations and discussions in FY 2004-05. They were:

<u>Public Safety</u>	September
<u>Local Control</u> , Relationship of Local Government to the Legislature	December
<u>Public Infrastructure</u> (focusing on broadband and wireless access)	February
<u>Education and Lifelong Learning</u>	April
<u>Regional Economic Development</u>	June

For each of these broad regional topics, information was assembled and an “outside” resource brought to the Board to serve as a catalyst for discussion. Under the informal policy established for “special presentations,” a hierarchy of possible actions was available. The first level was *education and discussion*; followed by *follow-up analysis and information*; followed, when appropriate, by a *work program task or project*. However, it was agreed that the first and most important step toward finding a regional solution to any public policy issue was for there to be an informed discussion of the subject by elected officials from multiple jurisdictions. Key understandings included the avoidance of duplication of effort and the pursuit of new regional initiatives only when there was multi-agency consensus that a joint venture would be fruitful.

The importance of the Board’s consideration of “special presentation” topics lies at the heart of the Board’s now-expanded role as the forum for the exploration of regional public policies. Clearly, not every governmental activity is suited for such consideration. By carefully and insightfully choosing topics for initial policy-level consideration (education and discussion), the elected officials of the LCOG family of governments have an opportunity to find solutions and better serve the public interest.

It is recommended that the Board identify topics for consideration at six meetings over the coming year. With that direction, staff will assemble the resources and facilitate healthy and productive discussions.