

Agenda Item Number 12.A.

Report on West COGs & West Coast Corridor Coalition Conference, Portland

Presenter: George Kloeppe

Action Recommended: None. Information Only

Report:

Representatives of regional councils, state departments of transportation, port districts and others participated in the August 14-16 conference of the traditional Western COGs group and the newer West Coast Corridor Coalition. LCOG was represented by Al King, Gary Pape, Gary Williams and George Kloeppe.

Arrangements for the conference were jointly made by the regional councils in Washington, Oregon and California. It brought together regional planning and transportation policy makers from the three states, with the understanding that their regions share common issues, as the primary gateway for imported goods that account for over half of the national import total. Also of common interest to conference participants was the fact that the west coast has experienced significant population and economic growth, and regional collaboration efforts were being successfully employed in a number of areas.

On the first day of the conference the emphasis was on the Portland experience. Representing the host region, officials from Portland Metro and the Port of Portland framed issues of import for the entire corridor. The I-5/Columbia River crossing, the “cost of congestion” in the Portland-Vancouver area, the strategies embraced for “transit oriented development,” Portland’s “smart growth” programs, and Metro’s unique approach to regional transportation planning were explored. Conference participants had an opportunity to experience a guided tour of several of Portland’s key areas of challenge in both land use redevelopment and transportation. The Port of Portland provided an on-site description of the rapid expansion of its facilities; and a walking tour of the redevelopment experience in “The Pearl” district was informative.

The second day of the conference started with the three states conducting separate association meetings. Oregon's meeting focused largely upon the plans for the October 6-7 "Fall Congress" of the Oregon MPO Consortium in Bend. Then, the scene shifted to the experiences in California and Washington. Under the heading of "land use and transportation coordination," examples were presented of regional growth management "blue prints" in California and transportation/land use integration work in Thurston County (Olympia), Washington. Public-private collaboration was highlighted by the California Center for Regional Leadership and the "Compass Partnership" in Southern California. Monday morning's sessions ended with a thought-provoking presentation by Glenn Pascall, Senior Fellow at the Center for the new West. Pascall provided a well-informed perspective on the accomplishments that have been realized in the Northwest through regional cooperation. He noted, for example, that he had just attended the 85th birthday celebration for Jim Ellis, who has been credited with establishing a number of successful collaborative ventures in Washington state since the 1960s.

Afternoon sessions on Monday included a focus on the freight system from the user perspective, with presentations by the former logistics director for Oregon Steel and the former logistics director for Les Schwab Tires.

National Association representatives provided conference attendees with the broader perspective of change, with a particular focus on the next federal transportation reauthorization. Present were: Janet Oakley from the Association of State Highway and Transportation Organizations (AASHTO), Cameron Moor, the new Executive Director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and Debbie Singer from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO).

The West Coast Corridor Coalition concurrently held five subcommittee meetings in the late afternoon on Monday, and held its formal meeting on Tuesday morning.

As in previous years, my sense is that our effort to participate in the West COGs (and now West Coast Corridor Coalition) conference is well worthwhile. The opportunity for exploring shared experience with officials from other regions in the West is invaluable.