

# Agenda Item Number 6.

## Comments from the Executive Director

**Presenter:** George Kloeppel

**Action Recommended:** None. Information Only

**Items:**

**1. Board Meeting Schedule**

We appreciate the hospitality of the Bethel School District, and particularly the flexibility to host LCOG on the rescheduled date. As a reminder, the Appreciation Dinner will be on January 26 at Lane Community College and our February Board meeting will be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> at EWEB. There are, however, three locations for Board meetings in 2006 yet to be established—see attached schedule. Offers would be gratefully accepted.

**2. Condolences**

On a sad note, we mark the deaths of two Board members. Expressions of the agency's condolences have been sent to the families of Richard Eymann, who passed away at the end of September, and Ken Miller, who died on October 12. Ken represented the Port of Siuslaw on our Board. Richard was a founding member of the board of EPUD and, until his retirement from elected office a year ago, represented the utility on the LCOG Board. Both of these gentlemen served their communities long and well and will be greatly missed.

**3. A Couple of Nice Grant Awards**

Increasingly, our resource development staff members have been working on grant applications for other organizations—in some cases member

agencies and some not. Two recent awards are particularly noteworthy. United Way of Lane County was successful in obtaining a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant for the Healthy Communities Access Program in the amount of \$1,714,366. This will support a two-year effort centering on health care outreach, a Medical Assistance Program (MAP), a Coordinated Lane County Pharmacy Program—Prescription Assistance Program, and a 24/7 referral and scheduling capability for mental health interventions. LCOG was pleased to provide help.

A second grant, this one to LRAPA, will actually provide some support back to LCOG. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded LRAPA a \$500,000 grant to reduce diesel emissions from tractor-trailer rigs running along I-5. The project will equip an additional 250 trucks with small power units to reduce emissions while idling. GPS mapping will be utilized to track the use of the units. LCOG will collect and analyze the GPS data for submission to EPA.

#### **4. Staff Campaigns for United Way and EarthShare**

Members of the LCOG staff contribute to their community both on and off the job. Many of the volunteer services provided by “COGers” are known by only a few back in the office. This year’s workplace campaign, by which employees were provided opportunities to contribute to United Way of Lane County and EarthShare of Oregon, was another reflection of the giving attitude of the agency staff. The campaign was led by Megan Banks, Senior Planner, and Sandy Karsten, S&DS Meals Program Manager. The goal for this year was exceeded by 10 percent! Agency-wide, \$14,908 was raised!

#### **5. LCOG Advocacy to EDA**

At the September 22 meeting, the Board authorized an advocacy letter to the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), opposing proposed rules for economic development districts that were considered punitive and ill conceived. Other similar communications were sent from COGs and economic development districts throughout the nation. We are informed that a comprehensive package of reforms has now been negotiated between House and Senate committee leaders and the National Association of Development Organizations. That package represents significant improvements (from our perspective) from the initial proposal of the Administration. Key issues addressed include the continued substantial

participation of local elected officials in the decision making process, reforms in the process for determining federal-local match ratios on grants, and clarifying the possible functions of economic development districts to include the “full range of economic development activities” needed to implement comprehensive economic development strategies (CEDDS). Of course, we can not know whether LCOG’s contribution to the decision making process had any bearing, but it was a part of a much larger advocacy campaign that resulted in a protection of the position of local governments.

## **6. Transportation Appropriation Passed**

After the passage of SAFETEA-LU this past summer, the congressional appropriation process needed to play itself out. That exercise was by no means straight-forward and assured. Partisan differences and the hurricane relief pressures on the treasury raised a number of questions, particularly about “earmarks” within the reauthorization. However, the appropriation has now been approved and signed, and we are now officially operating under funding levels shown in SAFETEA-LU. The annual (FFY 2006) appropriation for Federal Aid Highways was \$36.8 B, Essential Air Service was \$110 M, Airport Improvement Program (AIP) was \$3.55 B, Transit received \$8.6 B (a 12 % increase from 2005), and AMTRAK was funded at \$1.3 B.