

Volume 34...Issue 5
May 2007



YAKIMA VALLEY CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENTS

MEMBER JURISDICTIONS:

Grandview
Granger
Harrah
Mabton
Moxee
Naches
Selah
Sunnyside
Tieton
Toppenish
Union Gap
Wapato
Yakima
Yakima County
Zillah

YVCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Al Hubert, Chair
Toppenish City Council
Susan Whitman, Vice Chair
Yakima City Council
Mike Leita
Yakima County Commission
Jim Restucci
Sunnyside City Council
Dan Olson
Union Gap City Council
Velva Herrera
Mayor, City of Mabton
John P. Hodkinson
Regional Planning Commission



MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 28, 2007

311 North 4th Street, Suite 202
Yakima, WA 98901
509-574-1550
FAX 509-574-1551
Website: www.yvcog.org



YVCOG Membership Survey Results

By J. Page Scott, Executive Director

YVCOG surveyed our membership in late March-early April to find out what folks knew about our programs and services, as well as to find out their level of satisfaction with YVCOG as an organization. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first survey ever taken of

YVCOG members; certainly the first one in recent years. Thank you to those who took the time to answer the forty questions and provide us with valuable feedback. Here are a few of the results:

How did you first learn about YVCOG? Almost half of respondents said that they learned about YVCOG by being invited to a YVCOG meeting or by meeting a YVCOG staff person. Other respondents said they learned about YVCOG through their city council positions or city staff. Two respondents recalled when YVCOG was first formed!

When asked about YVCOG services, an overwhelming majority of respondents knew about all of the services YVCOG offers. Only 16% of respondents were unaware that YVCOG provides GIS and mapping services or housing rehabilitation program administration; 14% were unaware of our housing rehabilitation grant writing service; and only 11% were unaware of our Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program.

Survey responses were mixed when asked what the most important function is of the YVCOG: 37.5% said that metropolitan and regional transportation planning was most important, and 34.4% said community planning assistance and providing opportunities for member organizations to share common concerns were most important. Grant writing assistance was next most important (18.8%), followed by GIS / mapping services (9.4%) and housing rehabilitation program administration (6.2%).

Almost 87% of survey respondents said they had attended a YVCOG General Membership meeting, but 63% said that they were not a voting member. Seventy-three percent of respondents said that they liked networking with local officials at YVCOG General Membership meetings and 67% said they liked that the meeting locations moved around to different communities.

Seventy percent of respondents said that they read the YVCOG newsletter regularly and another 23% said that they read it occasionally. Forty percent of respondents said that they *usually* find the articles in the newsletter to be useful or interesting; another 40% said that they *sometimes* find the articles useful or interesting.

Slightly more than half of respondents indicated that they had visited the YVCOG website. Most respondents that indicated they had visited the website were looking for staff contacts or YVCOG meeting information.

We received 37 responses to our online survey – 13 of those were from elected officials. 90% of respondents were from member agencies.

Be looking for shorter, more focused online survey opportunities in the future. We hope to continue using this tool to better meet our members' needs. Thank you for your feedback!

Union Gap to Begin New Housing Rehabilitation Program

By Gene Weinmann, Housing Coordinator

The City of Union Gap entered into an agreement with the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) on April 23rd to administer its new 2007 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for housing rehabilitation. The program adds a needed element to the City's extensive economic development activities and is designed to assist 15-20 Union Gap families with housing rehabilitation, lead-abatement and weatherization assistance.

The City will appoint members to a Housing Policy and Grievance Committee within the next few weeks. The Committee will initially be tasked with creating the 2007 Union Gap Housing Rehabilitation Program (UGHRP) Policy Plan. The plan will govern the operation of the program and will incorporate applicant and contractor qualification requirements, loan provisions, and program policies and procedures. We anticipate that the policy plan should be ready for final review and City Council consideration by this fall.

The YVCOG will begin project administration activities in early May, with Environmental Review Checklist (NEPA/SEPA) tasks and various state-required documents and plans. We anticipate beginning application in-take and verification activities by August, including:

- Performing formal application intake activities;
- Verifying application information, augmented with title reports and verifications from employers, banking institutions, mortgage lenders and governmental agencies;
- Conducting initial inspections of applicants' homes;
- Resolving applicant-related title and legal issues;
- Performing lead-based paint risk assessments and producing risk assessment reports and reviewing same for acceptability;
- Performing detailed inspections of applicants' homes; and,
- Developing rehabilitation, lead-abatement and weatherization scopes of work, cost estimates and floor plan drawings on qualified projects.

We anticipate assisting 15-20 Union Gap families with housing rehabilitation, lead-abatement and weatherization assistance. The Program will target single-family, owner-occupied housing. Funding is partially provided by a 2007 Community Development Block Grant from the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, with the remainder provided by City funds and program partnerships. For additional information contact Gene Weinmann, YVCOG Housing Rehab Coordinator at (509) 574-1550.

STP Enhancement Schedule

By Drew Miller, Planner

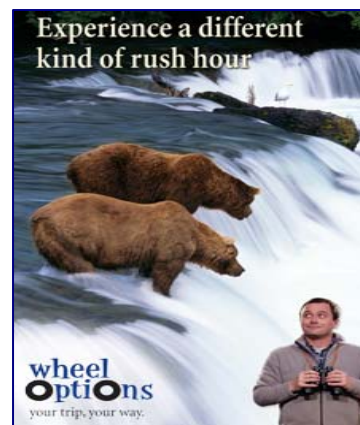


The Surface Transportation Program (STP) Enhancement grant program offers funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through 12 eligible

STP Enhancement activities. Eligible activities must be related to surface transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, scenic and historic highway programs, landscaping and scenic beautification, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation. Enhancement investments benefit communities through rehabilitation of historic facilities related to transportation, renovated streetscapes, rail-trails and other transportation trails, transportation museums, and scenic and historic highway program visitor centers.

Successful Enhancement grant applicants from the Yakima Valley region during the last call for projects in 2005 included the Naches Depot and Trail Project, the Yakima Valley Transportation Company Preservation Project, the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation's Trail Enhancement Project, Painted Rocks Site Enhancement, Naches Rail Line Preservation, and Toppenish Welcome Center.

YVCOG staff attended an Enhancement Advisory Committee Meeting in early April where a tentative 2007 Enhancement call for projects schedule was released. The schedule will be finalized in June with the call for projects anticipated in July. Prioritized project lists from Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) will be due to WSDOT in March 2008 with the final announcement of project selections in August 2008. WSDOT will provide training for RTPOs and, in turn, RTPOs will provide local workshops for interested project applicants.



With Wheel Options, We're All Winners!

By Brian Curtin, CTR Program Coordinator

They traveled by public transit, vanpool, carpool, bicycle and even by foot in pursuit of their ever elusive prize. It might have been the Alaskan Cruise, or the Ocean Shores Casino Getaway (won, by the way, by one of our own, Kathleen Eirich from WSDOT South Central Region) that drove them on. Not for me, no sir! For me it was baseball; baseball with a capital "M" for Mariners. I longed for the sights and sounds of America's favorite pastime. A \$100.00 Mariner's gift certificate, promising baseball paradise was on the line and I planned on making it mine. I carpooled like I'd never carpooled before. Alas, it was not meant to be; I did not win the coveted prize (Jeff Brown from Irwin Research did). Ah, but I won much more. I saved money on my daily commute; I made life a little easier on my fellow commuters by taking a car off the road; I sent less pollutants into our atmosphere and made life a little bit healthier for all of us. Yes, I was a winner after all! And each and every one of you who participated in Wheel Options is a winner as well!

I take pride and pleasure in congratulating the 543 employees from 15 local employers who participated in the Spring Wheel Options campaign. During the two week period from March 12 through March 23 they chose to exercise their right to use an alternative transportation mode (rather than a single occupancy vehicle) to work. Every conceivable alternative mode was utilized. Carpooling and compressed work week proved to be, by far, the most popular. Many chose to dust off the old bicycle and use the "most efficient of all commute modes." There were a few that took the "Shoe Leather Express" to work; these were some of the shorter commutes of 1 to 2 miles and they are to be commended for their efforts. The longest commute, via carpool, was a whopping 46 miles!

For those of you who live for statistics, here are a few impressive ones: **Participants - 543** (over 100 more than last spring); **Number of one-way trips reduced - 2,984**; and most impressive, the **number of one-way vehicle miles reduced was a whopping 45,187!!!** For those of you concerned about your personal carbon footprint, 2,485 pounds of carbon monoxide was not dispersed into our air.

Just imagine if Wheel Options weeks were every week of the year! Well, guess what? They are! You have the option of using an alternative transportation mode every day of your life; you just have to make the choice. And guess what else? Believe it or not, there are prizes every week. For each gallon of gas you don't pump into your tank, for each mile you don't drive alone, for each mile you do ride a bicycle or take the bus or walk, there are untold prizes in the form of saved money, improved physical health and improved air quality, as well as decreased congestion on our roads. So, make the choice, use a Wheel Option of your choice and reap the rewards.

Congratulations to all who participated in this Spring Wheel Options campaign. Please see the list of local winners in this newsletter. For a complete statewide listing of the Wheel Options Campaign prizes and winners visit the WSRO website at <http://wheeloptions.org/wheeloptions/> and keep utilizing your wheel options!

wheel Options

your trip, your way.
It's wheel rewarding!

Statewide Prize Winners

Ocean Shores Weekend Getaway

Kathleen Eirich, WSDOT SCR

\$100.00 REI Gift Certificate

Michael Foisy, WSDOT SCR

Local Prize Winners

Seattle Mariners Tickets

Jeff Brown, Irwin Research

Greystone Restaurant Gift Certificate

John Harris, WSDOT SCR

Santiago's Restaurant Gift Certificate

Adrienne Wenz, YVFWC

Lowe's Home Improvement Gift Certificate

Renee Newport, WSDOT SCR

Inklings Bookstore Gift Certificates (10)

Monica Pina, DSHS • Walter Valentine, Yakima County • Suzie Wall, Yakima County • Vicki Valentine, Yakima County • Jodi Lewis, DSHS • Joshua Jeffries, Yakima County • Greg Caron, WSDOE • Wally Morrison, Yakima County • Scott Olander, Memorial Hospital • Rita Celestre, YVFWC

Movie Bucks (10)

Susan Moberly, WSDOT SCR • Christopher Quast, YVFWC • Edwin Esquivel, Alexandria Moulding • Theresa Roberts, Regional Hospital • Erica Avalos, YVFWC • Craig Zirkle, WSDOT SCR • Michele Pescador, Yakima County • Chris Bonser, DSHS • Maria Jimenez, YVFWC • Darlene Frye, WSDOE

Yakima Bears Baseball Tickets (10 pr.)

Ken Dorais, YVFWC • Cindy Wakefield, WSDOT SCR • Kevin Kromm, WSDOT SCR • William Sauriol, WSDOT SCR • Carolyn Belles, City of Yakima • Jesse Rodriguez, CANAM • Gabriel Pinion, Alexandria Moulding • Natalie McCombs, YVFWC • Maria Gonzales, YVFWC • Michelle Fox, Yakima County



YVCOG Executive Committee Sets Direction for the Future

By J. Page Scott, Executive Director

The YVCOG Executive Committee held a retreat on April 11 to begin mapping the future for YVCOG as an organization. The majority of the time was spent reviewing and discussing results from the YVCOG Membership

Survey and YVCOG Staff feedback.

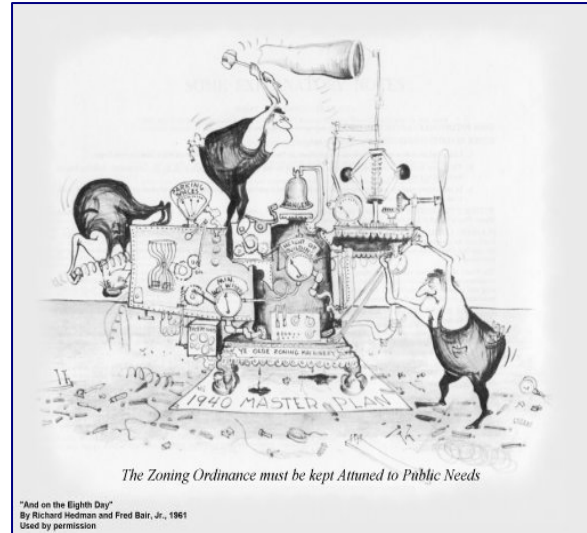
Here are just a few of the “action items” from the retreat:

- **Provide follow-up to membership with highlights of the survey results:**
 - Communicate what will and will not change as a result of the survey responses and feedback received.
 - Implement easy “fixes” i.e., putting meeting agendas and minutes on the website.
- **Future Surveys:**
 - Conduct shorter surveys, more frequently (quarterly), that focus on more specific topics and only take a few minutes to complete.
 - List specific General Membership meeting program topic alternatives and allow respondents to check their “top 3” picks.
- **Website improvements:**
 - Add YVCOG meeting agendas and minutes.
 - Ensure HTML compliance.
 - Allow people to sign-up to receive notices of meetings/newsletters.
- **What does YVCOG success look like?**
 - Encourage new elected officials to get involved and participate in YVCOG.
 - Have YVCOG staff present to new councils about YVCOG services.
 - Stress the importance to small communities of joining coalitions and the role YVCOG can play in those.
 - Acknowledge people who have been important to YVCOG when they leave.
 - Encourage general participation in YVCOG meetings and programs.
 - Keep communicating – use lots of tools to communicate with membership about who we are and what our services are.
 - No membership withdrawals; same or more members in 10 years.

Land Use Planning Points to Ponder

Michael Buchanan, Senior Planner

Planning Defined: “*Planning means the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities.*” (Canadian Planning Association website).



The way we plan the physical layout, or land use, of our communities is fundamental to sustainability. Two main features of our land use practices over the past several decades have converged to generate haphazard, inefficient, and unsustainable urban sprawl:

- ⇒ zoning ordinances that isolate employment locations, shopping and services, and housing locations from each other;
- ⇒ low-density growth planning aimed at creating automobile access to increasing expanses of land.

The complex problems shared by cities throughout the US are evidence of the impacts of urban sprawl — increasing traffic congestion and commute times, air pollution, inefficient energy consumption and greater reliance on foreign oil, loss of open space and habitat, inequitable distribution of economic resources, and the loss of a sense of community.

Community sustainability requires a transition from poorly-managed sprawl to land use planning practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, ensure close-knit neighborhoods and sense of community, and preserve natural systems.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS.....April 16, 2007

YVCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

- ⇒ Recap of 2007 YVCOG Executive Committee Retreat and survey results.
- ⇒ Announcement of Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development (CTED) award of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for housing rehabilitation programs to the City of Union Gap and the City of Toppenish. Each grant will provide for 15 to 20 housing rehabilitation projects in each community.
- ⇒ Approved Union Gap Housing Rehabilitation Contract for \$200,000 will run from 4/17/07 through 5/31/09.
- ⇒ Discussed proposal to amend YVCOG Bylaws to allow the newly seated executive board to elect the Chair and Vice Chair at the first meeting of each year, and to extend the term for those elected to the executive board to two years. Proposal will be presented to YVCOG General Membership on May 16, 2007.
- ⇒ Approved vouchers numbered APR-07-001 through APR-07-022 for \$121,658.51 for payment.

MPO/RTPO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND POLICY BOARD

- ⇒ Yakima region Surface Transportation Program (STP) call for projects issued. Applicants may apply for approximately \$2.3 million; applications are due April 26. An STP subcommittee will review the applications prior to the May 10 Technical Advisory Committee meeting. The TAC will recommend the prioritized list back to the Executive Committee for action.
- ⇒ Approved amendment #1 to WSDOT South Central Region (SCR) Traffic Analysis Agreement UC04668, for \$10,000 bringing total contract amount to \$25,000, and to extend contract to June 30, 2007. Agreement is for traffic analysis services (modeling) for I-82 at Valley Mall Boulevard Interchange.
- ⇒ Approved 2007 MTIP Amendment, formally amending Yakima County, City of Yakima and Union Gap projects into the 2007 TIP.
- ⇒ Approved SFY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), by Resolution 2007-4.

- ⇒ Ms. Madelyn Carlson, CEO, People For People, distributed final Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan for the Yakima County Region. The plan is in response to federal guidance on SAFETEA-LU that there be a regional plan for special needs transportation to identify current demographics, needs, gaps in services, and where people are originating from and going to.

YVCOG MAY MEETINGS...

MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee

Thursday, May 10, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.
311 North 4th Street, Suite 202
(The 300 Building)
Yakima, WA

YVCOG General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 16, 2007 - 6:30 p.m.
Grandview Country Park
812 Wallace Way
Grandview

Program: Area Legislators have been invited to talk about the recent legislative session.

YVCOG Executive Committee & MPO/RTPO Executive Committee & Policy Board

Monday, May 21, 2007 - 1:30 p.m.
311 North 4th Street, Suite 202
(The 300 Building)
Yakima, WA

Your YVCOG Staff:

*J. Page Scott, Executive Director
Brian Curtin, CTR Coordinator
Michael Buchanan, Senior Planner
Vacant, Senior Transportation Planner
Drew Miller, Planner
Richard Spada, GIS Analyst/Systems Administrator
Gene E. Weinmann, Housing Rehab Coordinator
Jim Dixon, Housing Rehab Building Inspector
Tamara Hayward, Housing Rehab Office Specialist
Nancy Soules, Administrative Finance Officer
Judy Price, Office Specialist*



TITLE VI Notice to the Public

YVCOG fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, see <http://www.yvcog.org/title6.pdf> or call (509) 574-1550.