



MEMBER JURISDICTIONS:

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

**YVCOG EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE:**

John Hodkinson, Chair
Regional Planning Commission
Velva Herrera, Vice Chair
Mayor, Mabton
Mike Leita
Yakima County Commission
Norm Johnson
Yakima City Council
James A. Restucci
Sunnyside City Council
Dan Olson
Union Gap City Council
Loren Belton
Mayor, Toppenish



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**Welcome
2008-09 YVCOG
Executive Committee
Members**

By J. Page Scott, Executive Director



On January 16, the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) General Membership elected the following people to the YVCOG Executive Committee, as shown above, left to right:

- *Dan Olson, Union Gap City Councilmember*
- *Loren Belton, Mayor, City of Toppenish*
- *Velva Herrera, Mayor, City of Mabton*
- *Mike Leita, Yakima County Commissioner*
- *Jim Restucci, Sunnyside City Councilmember*
- *John Hodkinson, Regional Planning Commission*
- *Norm Johnson, Yakima City Councilmember (not pictured)*

This is the first election of our new two-year terms for the Executive Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair will be selected at the February 20, 2008 Executive Committee meeting.

How Does Your Community Feel About Public Transportation?

By J. Page Scott, Executive Director

At the YVCOG General Membership meeting on March 19 in Grandview, YVCOG members will be presented information about public transportation options and asked what their communities' thoughts are about the need for expanding public transportation service in the Yakima Valley.

A coalition of members from the upper valley TRANS-Action and lower valley DRYVE committees has been meeting for several months to assess the current status of the Yakima area Public Transportation Benefit District (PTBA) board (which has not met since 1999) and examine what the overall mood is surrounding public transportation. Many things have changed since county-wide public transportation service was last put to a public vote in 1994:

- Initiative 695 eliminated the state motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) that was a major source of matching revenue for public transit systems;
- Elimination of several Greyhound stops for inter-regional travel;
- Transit service expansion outside of Yakima to the Cities of Union Gap and Selah through inter-local agreements; and
- Yakama Nation Tribal Transit service along Fort Road.

To ensure a meaningful dialog at the March 19 YVCOG General Membership meeting, the transit sub-committees of DRYVE and TRANS-Action have asked for your input: *What questions would you like to have addressed? What are you hearing in your communities, from your friends and family members, about the need for transportation services?* Please take a few moments to share your thoughts and complete a brief survey so that the discussion on March 19 can be focused to address the issues you are most interested in. The survey can be accessed on the YVCOG home page at www.yvcog.org, or at

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=HWwC_2bG91xoAr_2fE_2fciQfAKA_3d_3d.

For more information about TRANS-Action, DRYVE, public transportation options, or the YVCOG General Membership meeting, please contact J. Page Scott, Executive Director by phone (509.574.1550) or email (scottjp@yvcog.org).

National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission Testifies Before Congress

By Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner



The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee heard testimony in January from the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission on the need for a new beginning for America's transportation funding system to meet concerns of the 21st Century. Congress created the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission in 2005 under SAFETEA-LU.

The Commission is comprised of 12 members representing federal, state and local governments; metropolitan planning organizations; transportation-related industries; and public interest organizations. USDOT Secretary Mary Peters, who chaired the commission, was one of only two invited witnesses who did not appear before the committee. Peters broke with the majority on the issue of the gas tax and was part of a 3 member minority that issued a separate opinion.

In their extensive report, *Transportation for Tomorrow*, the Commission recommended restructuring federal transportation resources to place an emphasis on public transportation, investment in metropolitan areas, upkeep of existing infrastructure, and intercity rail. The complete report can be found at: www.transportationfortomorrow.org.

Although the commission proposed a series of new funding mechanisms for transportation initiatives, one item that surfaced repeatedly during the hearing is the panel's recommendation for a 25 to 40-cent increase in the federal gasoline tax, which would be implemented over the next 5-8 years and indexed to construction costs. The commission envisioned the gas tax increase as only a short-term fix, recommending that lawmakers move as quickly as possible to a system that taxes consumers based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

Highlighted below are some of the Commission's key recommendations:

- Recommended that the current federal surface transportation program should not be reauthorized.
- Develop a new federal surface transportation program that is performance driven, outcome based, generally mode neutral, and refocused.
- Consolidation of the current highway, transit, railroad, and safety funding into 10 new federal programs.
- The various modal administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation should be reorganized into functional units that parallel the new federal programs.
- The project delivery process should be reformed by retaining all current environmental safeguards, but significantly shortening the time it takes to complete reviews and obtain permits.
- Peak-hour "congestion pricing" on the interstate highways in major metropolitan areas should be permitted. Revenues generated by this strategy are restricted to transportation purposes in the travel corridors where the fees were imposed.

NPDES Phase II: Municipal Stormwater Permits Issued

By Saadia Hassan, Planner



The Department of Ecology issued two new "National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II" municipal stormwater permits in January 2007 which affect the urbanized areas of Yakima Valley. Yakima County, as the Regional Stormwater Lead, is tasked by an Inter-local Governmental Agreement to perform permit compliance tasks under this initiative for the cities of Yakima, Sunnyside, Union Gap, and Selah. These permits will implement requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and will cover municipal storm sewer systems that discharge to surface waters which are not a part of a combined sewer system.

The permits require phase-in over the next five years and the Department of Ecology has funded the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) to develop and conduct an outreach assistance effort to help the county and cities with the implementation.

AWC, in consultation with the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), developed an updated fact sheet on "Phase II NPDES" at www.awcnet.org/npdes to help jurisdictions better understand the program and permit requirements, as well as learn what others are doing to develop their local responses in a creative and a cost effective way.

For Yakima County's updates visit <http://www.co.yakima.wa.us/Stormwater/index.html>

For Phase II NPDES questions contact WSAC Policy Director Rashi Gupta, at rgupta@wacounties.org or 360-753-1886.

Safe Routes to School Training Available

By Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner

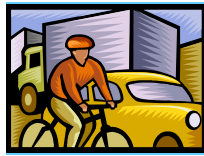
On February 11th there will be a Safe Routes to School training workshop held in the City of Yakima. Registration is required at least 2 days prior to the workshop date in order to attend. For more information and to register please visit the following website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/T2Center/Training/SR2SBrochure.pdf>.



The Safe Routes to School program is supported by both the Federal Government and Washington State Legislature through recent legislation. The purpose of the Safe Routes to Schools program is to provide children a safe, healthy alternative to riding the bus or being driven to school. Eligible projects typically address engineering improvements, education efforts, or enforcement efforts within two-miles of primary and middle schools (K-8). All public agencies in Washington are eligible to apply.

Cold Weather Cycling...

by Brian Curtin, CTR Program Coordinator



So you are a hard-core, dedicated bicycle commuter, but somewhat concerned about the onset of winter and the associated challenges of your ride. So you were **Just Wondering**, what can you do to prepare for the rigors of winter riding? Well, first of all look at winter riding from a positive point of view, don't let small inconveniences associated with winter and cold weather deter you from your passion for cycling.

As bicycle commuter advocates, we believe that the bicycle is the most appropriate vehicle for the vast majority of transportation needs of the average person. From the vantage point of cost, pollution, health, and enjoyability, the bike wins hands down over private automobiles and public transportation.

Let's start by dispelling some myths about winter cycling. First of all, it's not unpleasant; your friends will be questioning your sanity as they are preparing to rocket down a cliff on two slats of wood (who is sanity challenged here?). It's not cold; when properly clothed, your problem will most likely be getting rid of excess heat. There is a learning curve to determine the proper clothing requirements. It's not dangerous; yes, slipping and crashing on ice can happen, but you learn to handle your bike so as not to induce sliding, and studded bike tires provide awesome traction. The ICEBIKE website, <http://users.rcn.com/icebike>, conducted a survey of winter cyclists; it found less than 5% of respondents reported any injuries requiring hospitalization. Not to say that winter cycling is uneventful, many did report minor bumps and bruises from uncontrolled mishaps.

So, how do we properly prepare? First of all, never stop riding in the fall! Extend your riding season one day at a time into the fall and then into winter. Dress appropriate to the weather (again, this is learned through trial and error). Breathable fabrics are best, to vent moisture. Shoes are critical; if you are using clipless pedals, finding appropriate shoes might prove difficult and expensive (the ICEBIKE site recommends "Lake" brand winter cycling shoes for clipless pedals). You might choose to install clips that will accommodate more appropriate footwear such as winter or hiking boots. Fenders and raingear are a must for the rainy season. When the snow starts falling, studded tires make a huge difference on icy roads and will increase your overall confidence. Above all, lights are a key item. The days are shorter and you will soon find yourself commuting in twilight or darkness. Don't let this deter you, illuminate yourself! Make sure you are equipped with long running lights, fore and aft.

Now, a bit about expectations; first, expect to be a loner, a member of a small elite band of winter cyclists. Expect to "wimp out" on the coldest days of your first winter, its ok, it takes a while to figure out what works best in the cold. Expect everyone to think you are crazy, you know better. Above all, expect to find winter cycling far more enjoyable than you ever imagined. And when spring rolls around, embrace the knowledge that you were able to take all that winter could dish out and you will be entering spring in better shape than any of the "seasonal" bicyclists. So, until next time, we're still, **Just Wondering...**

General Membership Presentation "Nutrients in the Lower Yakima River: Emerging Resource Issue."

Thanks to members who attended the last YVCOG General Membership meeting and heard the presentation by Marie Zuroske of South Yakima Conservation District (SYCD) on "Nutrients in the Lower Yakima River: Emerging Resource Issue." The Power Point presentation that Marie used is now on our Yakima Basin Water Resources Agency (YBWRA) web site at: http://www.co.yakima.wa.us/YBWRA/Documents/YCOG_0108.ppt

This presentation was an introduction to an issue that will become more important to the owners of waste water treatment facilities and the agricultural community as Ecology struggles to deal with how to address water quality standard violations of pH and dissolved oxygen (DO) as related to nitrogen and phosphorous levels in the lower Yakima River. The current effort, funded by a grant from YBWRA to SYCD, is an outreach effort to help inform and initiate dialogue among the impacted entities.

SYCD plans to contact municipal public works staff in the near future. Your support for staff involvement and a heads-up to staff will be appreciated. If you are interested in additional information or presentations, such as to staff or council please contact Marie or myself. Thanks!

Jim Milton, Director, YBWRA, 509-574-2650 and Marie Zuroske, Water Quality Specialist, SYCD, 509-837-7911

Union Gap's First Housing Rehabilitation Program Begins Construction Phase

By Gene Weinmann, Housing Rehab Coordinator

The Union Gap Housing Rehabilitation Program (UGHRP) has entered the construction phase, having awarded its first 9 projects to contractors. On-site construction work is expected to begin by mid-February, with additional projects awarded and placed to bid by late March.

The Housing Rehabilitation Program offers Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation, Lead Abatement and Weatherization loans to qualified Union Gap residents. Loans are separated into two basic categories: Standard and Elderly. Standard loans require monthly payments ranging from \$40.00 to \$75.00 and require repayment of 60% of the portion of the project funded by CDBG funds. Elderly loans require monthly payments ranging from \$25.00 to \$60.00 and require repayment of 50% of the portion of the project funded by CDBG funds. Both loan types are 0% interest.

The Program is targeting a minimum of 15 housing rehabilitation projects within the City's corporate limits. The Union Gap Housing Rehabilitation Program is substantially funded by a Community Development Block Grant from the Washington State Office of Community Development, with the remaining funding provided by the City of Union Gap.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting Gene Weinmann, YVCOG Housing Rehabilitation Coordinator at (509) 574-1550.

Air Pollution Refresher

By Rick Spada, GIS Analyst/Systems Administrator

As you may know, part of my duties and responsibilities here at YVCOG are to analyze and model Air Quality for the Metropolitan Planning Organization area. I thought it would be of interest to summarize the different types of air pollution we currently have to address here in the valley.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas. After being inhaled, CO molecules can enter the bloodstream, where they inhibit the delivery of oxygen throughout the body. Low concentrations can cause dizziness, headaches, and fatigue; high concentrations can be fatal. CO is produced by the incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels, including gasoline, oil, and wood. It is also produced from incomplete combustion of natural and synthetic products, such as cigarette smoke. It can build up in high concentrations in enclosed areas such as garages, poorly ventilated tunnels, and even along roadsides in heavy traffic.



Particulate Matter is any type of solid in the air in the form of smoke, dust, and vapors, which can remain suspended for extended periods. Here in the valley we monitor PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} (particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 and 2.5 micro meters respectively). Aside from reducing visibility and soiling clothing, microscopic particles in the air can be breathed into lung tissue becoming lodged and causing increased respiratory disease and lung damage.

Particulates are also the main source of haze, which reduces visibility. Particulates are produced by many sources, including burning of diesel fuels by trucks and buses, fossil fuels, mixing and application of fertilizers and pesticides, road construction, industrial processes such as steel making, mining, agricultural burning, and operation of fireplaces and woodstoves.

Currently, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a much tougher standard, going from PM₁₀ to PM_{2.5} monitoring. The Yakima Valley will likely be unable to meet these new standards and this can greatly affect our communities.

Go to <http://www.co.yakima.wa.us/cleanair/> for more information and to find out what you can do to help keep our air clean.

Your YVCOG Staff:

J. Page Scott, Executive Director
Brian Curtin, CTR Coordinator
Vacant, Senior Planner
Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner
Saadia Hassan, 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



FEBRUARY MEETINGS...



MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee
Thursday, February 14, 2008
311 North 4th Street, Suite 202
Yakima, WA

**YVCOG Executive Committee &
MPO/RTPO Executive Committee & Policy Board**
Wednesday, February 20, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.
311 North 4th Street, Suite 202
(The 300 Building)
Yakima, WA

MARCH 19 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING...

YVCOG General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, March 19, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.
The Vineyard
150 Division Street
Grandview, WA

**Program: How Does Your Community Feel
About Public Transportation?**

To RSVP, please call Judy at 509-574-1550
or email at pricej@yvcog.org. Thank you!

(YVCOG General Membership policy: YVCOG is obligated to honor the head count given to caterers and restaurants, therefore, if you make a reservation and fail to cancel it by the deadline, you will receive an invoice for the cost of the meal. Your cooperation is appreciated.)

MAYBE ALONE ON MY BIKE

*I listen, and the mountain lakes hear snowflakes come
on those winter wings only the owls are awake to see,
their radar gaze and furred ears alert. In that stillness
a meaning shakes;*

*And I have thought (maybe alone on my bike, quaintly
on a cold evening pedaling home), Think!-- the splen-
dor of our life, its current unknown as those moun-
tains, the scene no one sees.*

*O citizens of our great amnesty: we might have died.
We live. Marvels coast by, great veers and swoops of air
so bright the lamps waver in tears, and I hear in the
chain a chuckle I like to hear.*

William Stafford-1975

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.