

# Regional Issues—2009

A sampling of topics for consideration at the LCOG Planning Session  
February 26, 2009

By agreement, a “regional issue” is pertinent for the Board’s discussion, if it involves more than one jurisdiction and more than one type of local government. The following draws upon the LCOG Board’s exploration of issues in early 2008 and incorporates input from the agency’s management team.

**The economy.** There is a need for better coordination between players and a genuine focus of effort, particularly in the context of “Economic Stimulus” from the state and federal governments, but also with our locally-based economic development efforts. The topic relates to, and is complicated by, the differing dreams and expectations of communities with regard to growth, development and job creation. Some don’t care about industry, but want population; some crave big jumps in employment and are willing to take increased residential development as a loss-leader; some are focused upon slow, contained population growth and compact urban forms. What is the “regional” vision? We need to focus on those aspects that enhance “quality of life” and the well being of the citizenry over the mid- to long range time frame. Sample local issues affecting our economic viability:

- Public revenue vulnerability—impacts on government programs and services
- Private business cutbacks/closures, unemployment—and anxiety regarding employment
- Declining investment yields’ dampening impact on spending and investment
- Preparing for a turnaround—workforce education, site availability
- Public sector role in economic development constrained by funding limitations—costs increase at higher rate than revenue

**Human services,** across the board, are a major regional issue in times of recession. Whether access to health care, housing, nutrition or employment services, the need is great. More money would be good, but there is always room for enhanced cooperation and coordination of effort. Internally, it is essential that we prevent our LCOG delivery system from being crippled by inadequate funding and unrealistic state policies. Sample local issues affecting human services viability:

- Increased homelessness
- Increased need for food and nutrition programs
- Decreased services for young people
- Reduced funding for education
- Increasing portion of citizenry lacking health insurance; increasing health care costs
- State funding cutbacks putting preventative services—meals, home care—at risk, with long-term cost impacts, as clients get “sicker faster,” and employment impacts, as family members leave jobs to provide care

- Layoffs of home care workers yielding economic and social impacts
- Growing “baby boom”-driven case loads for senior services
- Absent treatment services, increasing alcohol and drug abuse-related crime and social problems
- Insufficient doctors and nurses in Lane County—need to train, attract, retain health care professionals

**Infrastructure** throughout the region is in need of expansion, maintenance and/or replacement. “Economic Stimulus” may help a bit, but a new, and broader, view of how local government responsibly manages capital assets may be called for. (In recessionary times, pursuit of big, locally supported/approved investments may seem a fool’s errand, but the issue remains.)  
Sample local issues with infrastructure impacts:

- Transportation and transit funds squeezed—ridership up, revenue down—gas and employment tax sources unstable
- Constraints on available domestic water supply—a regional approach?
- Deferred maintenance has eroded transportation system quality
- Public buildings and other investments deteriorating—deferred maintenance

**Safety and security** of person and property is perceived to be a major issue. Perhaps it is. Again, money could be part of the answer. But where should it be applied? The issue of dealing with crime in this community is made more intractable by the systemic nature of the problem. Weaknesses in any part of the system impact the whole. Further, the people whose behavior elicits the public’s fear and concern (a.k.a. bad guys) are relatively few in number, but tend to be touched over and over again by the “system.” Sample local issues related to safety and security:

- Continuing increases in property crime
- Inadequate correctional space to either confine or deter
- County funding limitations—low property tax and declining timber funding—County is responsible for major elements of the public safety system
- Regional security impacted by high energy demand and supply limitations—imported petroleum
- Burden of addressing climate change, whether through preparation or mitigation, is security issue