

February 5, 2009

To: LCOG Executive Committee
From: George Kloeppe
Subject: Board of Directors' Planning Session, February 26

In an environment of rapid and unpredictable change, uncertainty and anxiety, it is more difficult, yet also more important than ever, to take a thoughtful and strategic look at ourselves and to set a course that maximizes mutual benefit. It is suggested that the Board spend the limited time that is available for its Planning Session this month in considering the question:

What can the LCOG Board do to improve the well being of the region?

Certainly, the agency will continue addressing the items on its Work Program and the tasks that have been assigned to it. But the focus question for the Board this year is intended to emphasize the *policy level*. So instead of asking what LCOG can do for you, it is suggested that the inquiry take a higher flight path. In the ideal, the Board's response to the focus question will help us to jointly identify what local government and the COG can constructively do TOGETHER.

Last month, the Executive Committee talked about the Planning Session and suggested that "regional issues" be once again used as a catalyst for the Board's discussion. For several years, we have agreed that to be relevant a *regional issue* should (1) involve multiple jurisdictions and (2) multiple TYPES of jurisdictions. The Committee requested that the Session be structured to encourage all Board members to freely and actively participate in the identification of issues—the most significant challenges currently facing local government. In addition, the Committee asked that the Session allow for the identification of internal, structural or organizational issues that deserve further consideration.

The Committee asked that "left-over" topics and issues from last February's Planning Session be shared with the Board as a starting point. But, it was clear

from the discussion in January that “economic dislocation” should be the obvious centerpiece of the Board’s exploration this month.

Finally, the Committee decided that it would be appropriate to utilize an outside facilitator, rather than COG staff, to assure a smooth and efficient utilization of time for the Session. Stan Biles, who has assisted the Board of Directors previously in its planning and goal-setting work, has been asked to serve in this role. The Committee had made it clear that facilitation need not/should not include “ice-breaking” and getting-to-know-you devices. Advance material will be provided to “prime the pump” and we would expect the Session to be off to a running start.

As to the pump-priming regional issues to start the Board’s discussion, I have reviewed to topics that were advanced last year and have also received input from the management team. I am anxious that the advance material provided to the Board not lead the discussion too much. Nevertheless, our time on the 26th will be very short, and to allow the group to really wrestle with the focus question, we need to get a solid, but quick, handle on the most pressing issues in the region. In one respect, this may be a no-brainer because of the profound impact that the economic slump has brought to bear. But there are other aspects of the community’s well being that are certainly affected by the economic condition, but need to be independently flagged as well.

There were 18 issues on the table at the end of last February’s Planning Session. The management team has gone through that list—highlighting the most pertinent—and has identified some contemporary issues for consideration, as well. As noted on the attached Issues Sheet, we see the most pressing regional issues as falling into four broad groups: The economy, human services, infrastructure, and safety and security.

There are of course other important issues that might be discussed at the planning session. Questions of governance and structure are not on the attached list. Nor is the pervasive problem of public revenue growing, if at all, at a slower rate than expenses. The Board may also want to consider our own house and offer judgments about operations and mission. The Committee’s views on this are sought.