

February 4, 2010

**To:** LCOG Executive Committee

**From:** George Kloeppe

**Subject:** In Search of the “Big Picture”

This memo and the attached “Patterns of Change” document could be touched upon under the “Organizational Development” item, number 6, on the agenda. But really, the internal strategic planning process that was briefly discussed at last month’s meeting is ongoing, but not complete, and today it seems more appropriate to share with the Committee something just a bit older.

In January 1986 (remember...President Reagan was in office and “*That’s what Friends are for*” was the top song), I wrote a report to the Board of Directors, whose eye-catching title was, “Patterns of Change: Five Year Trends—Lane Council of Governments.” I recently revisited that 24 year-old paper and concluded that today’s Executive Committee might find in it some useful perspective. I hope that I am not just captivated by the insights and prescience of my own words—you be the judge. Rather, I believe that the “five year trends” that I was exploring, nearly a quarter century ago, have in many ways continued to this day.

Several things happened to this organization during that first half of the 1980s. A new Executive Director was hired and came to work in the spring of 1981. That change of leadership seemed to allow the agency to put to rest some of the frustrations and misgivings of its past. Further, as is often the case, there was a “honeymoon” period with the new guy that might have put a positive shine on suggested changes.

On the national level, a new Administration had come to office at the beginning of 1981, and President Reagan’s New Federalism brought swift changes to the familiar operating mentality of regional councils across the country. The generous federal grant-in-aid programs upon which COGs had relied for years simply went away. There were no more automatic dollars rolling in the door to support COG activity. A less dramatic decision of the Administration to rescind the Project Notification and Review System that had been implemented by OMB Circular A-

95 a decade before cut LCOG and member governments out of the business of reviewing and commenting upon proposed federal grants and direct federal activities in the region.

As may be recalled, we also experienced a significant economic recession during the first few years of the decade of the '80s, and that had a direct bearing on what our member governments could afford to spend beyond their own walls. The concepts of consolidation and centralization were getting positive attention, and the result was our assumption of responsibility for the support of the Boundary Commission and Metro Cable Commission. The recession, the disappearance of the alphabet soup of direct federal grants, and the end to the "A-95 Review" process compelled LCOG to re-think its mission, purpose and function. Fortunately for the agency and for our members, we had a fairly long history and an established reputation. We also had a talented core staff and supportive partners. And, as our Ace-in-the-hole, we had a nationally recognized, cutting edge geographic information system. By no means LCOG's only asset, the GIS nevertheless helped the agency weather a significant storm, re-cast itself as a genuine service to local government, and move in new and productive directions.

Written from the perspective of a much-younger George, the "Patterns of Change" paper may provide some background and guidance to the Executive Committee of 2010, as it guides the organization toward new destinations. As time permits, I would encourage Committee members to take a look at "Patterns of Change."