



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



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**Draft Metropolitan & Regional
Transportation Plan Released**

By Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner

On May 15, 2007, YVCOG issued the Draft version of its 2007 update to the Yakima Valley Regional Transportation Plan. There will be a 30-day comment period on the Draft Plan before YVCOG adopts the Final Plan. The document is a long-range plan for both the Yakima County region and the greater Yakima metropolitan area. An update to the Plan is required to maintain the region's eligibility to receive federal and state funding for transportation improvement projects. The Plan was last updated in 2003. The Draft Plan includes an extensive list of future transportation improvements in the valley. These include both improvements on state highways, and regional improvements that will be implemented by local jurisdictions.

The Draft Plan was developed through a 10-month planning process guided by the MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee and Executive Committee. Public input was sought and obtained through workshops, written comments, and the project website.

Copies of the Draft Plan are available at the downtown Yakima and Sunnyside branches of the Yakima Regional Library, YVCOG office, and on the project website at www.yvcog.org/PlanUpdate.html. The public is invited to submit comments on the Draft Plan via the project website's online comment form (both English and Spanish versions are available), by emailing scottp@yvcog.org, or by writing to J. Page Scott, Executive Director of YVCOG. The comment period ends on Thursday, June 14 at 5:00 pm.

A meeting of the Yakima Valley MPO/RTPO Executive Committee will occur on June 18 at the YVCOG offices to consider adoption of the Plan. The public is welcome to attend and participate.

**Toppenish to Begin New
Housing Rehabilitation Program**

By Gene Weinmann, Housing Coordinator

The City of Toppenish entered into an agreement with the YVCOG on May 14th to manage the project administration element of its new 2007 Community Development Block Grant for housing rehabilitation. The agreement will allow Toppenish's Housing Rehabilitation Program to continue the successful rehabilitation work accomplished from its 2005 Program.

The City will appoint members to the Housing Policy and Grievance Committee within the next few weeks. The Committee will initially be tasked with developing the 2007 Toppenish Housing Rehabilitation Program 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. It is currently anticipated that the plan should be ready for final review and City Council consideration by July, 2007.

The YVCOG initiated initial project administration activities in late May, with Environmental Review Checklist (NEPA/SEPA) tasks and the development of various state-required documents and plans. YVCOG staff anticipates beginning application in-take and verification activities in July, 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 on the 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 on applicants' homes;
- Developing lead scopes of work and cost estimates; and
- Developing rehabilitation, lead-abatement and weatherization scopes of work, cost estimates and floor plan drawings on qualified projects.

The Toppenish Housing Rehabilitation Program anticipates assisting 15-20 Toppenish 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. Additional information may be obtained by contacting Gene Weinmann, YVCOG Housing Coordinator at (509) 574-1550.

Drew Miller promoted to Sr. Transportation Planner

YVCOG is pleased to announce the promotion of Drew Miller to our Senior Transportation Planner position. Drew has been assisting both the Transportation and Community Planning programs at YVCOG since April 2006. On May 3, Drew accepted his new position and will be focusing on Transportation planning duties associated with the metropolitan and regional transportation planning organization (MPO/RTPO).

Congratulations, Drew!

GUEST SPEAKERS AT YVCOG GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

YVCOG members welcomed 14th District Representative Charles Ross, and 15th District Representative Dan Newhouse, to the May 16 YVCOG General Membership meeting held at Country Park in Grandview.



Representatives Ross and Newhouse shared their thoughts about bills which did and did not pass during the recent 2007 Legislative session.

STP Regional Projects Approved

By Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner

The Yakima Valley MPO/RTPO Executive Committee approved the projects recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to receive FFY 2007 Surface Transportation Program (STP) Regional funds. Three urban projects and one rural project were selected. The three urban projects selected were:



- Yakima County's Selah Loop Road Reconstruction
- City of Yakima's Railroad Grade Separations on MLK and Lincoln Blvd's.
- City of Sunnyside's South 1st Street Reconstruction

Yakima County's South Naches Road reconstruction project was selected for rural funding.

In accordance with four new regional STP distribution rules, we anticipate all projects will receive the total funds requested in their application. The maximum funds that could be requested during this call for projects was \$2.317 million. Funds will be distributed based on their priority rankings, which were established using a competitive application.

YVCOG's process of distributing STP Regional funds had to change in response to actions by the Legislature and Governor last year. They directed RTPOs that receive federal STP funding to distribute funds based on regional priorities rather than by formula. The MPO/RTPO Executive Committee approved the new STP competitive application and distribution process in February.

If you have any questions please contact Drew Miller at 509-574-1550 or millerd@yvco.org

Transit Service to Continue in Union Gap

By Drew Miller, Senior Transportation Planner

Voters in Union Gap will get one more chance at the polls this November to secure bus service for their community.



The City of Union Gap has worked cooperatively with Yakima Transit and the YVCOG to secure Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funding to continue demonstration transit service beyond its current termination date of June 30, 2007. The CMAQ funding will help finance an expanded transit route for 6-months that will run from July 2 to December 31; ensuring bus service through another vote in November. The Union Gap City Council agreed to place a transit resolution on the November ballot if CMAQ funding was secured.

The last vote in November 2006 was narrowly rejected by Union Gap voters 515 to 506 to fund a new 10-mile bus route by raising the local sales tax from 7.9 percent to 8.1 percent. However, one problem cited from last November's election was that voters did not see or experience the expanded transit route they were voting on.

The new CMAQ funding and expanded route aims to solve this problem by providing Union Gap voters a chance to use the actual route before they vote on it. The expanded demonstration route will serve a significant portion of the City of Union Gap and will offer one all-day bus and one peak time bus that would double service during the morning and afternoon peak commuting hours.

Before CMAQ funding for this project could be granted, the City of Union Gap first had to demonstrate that the project was eligible to receive CMAQ funding, submit an application to YVCOG, and document the air quality benefits of the transit route. The MPO/RTPO Executive Committee approved CMAQ funding for this project at their May 21 meeting.

If you have any questions, Drew can be reached at 509-574-1550 or by email at millerd@yvcog.org.

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.

Top Ten Reasons Not to Commute by Bike

By Brian Curtin, CTR Program Coordinator

- 10 - Your health insurance is a company benefit and your increased health would equate to a loss by using your benefits less.
- 9 - It's hard to smoke, put on make-up, shave, or talk on the cell phone when you are cycling.
- 8 - You won't spend as much quality time sitting in your truly enjoyable car.
- 7 - Your insurance agent is a great guy and you would hate to stop paying car insurance premiums.
- 6 - If too many people do it, gas stations and car lots will go out of business, adding to the unemployed.
- 5 - The many options of what you can do with the money saved on gas, insurance, and maintenance, may cause minor dilemmas.
- 4 - The natural high and energy rush you'll feel daily will increase your performance at work; possibly leading to a promotion and better pay; further compounding reason number 5.
- 3 - You'll lose weight and new clothes are too darn expensive!
- 2 - Your fitness level may cause you to outlive your friends and be lonely in your old age.

And, last but not least...

- 1 - It's just too much trouble eating all the extra food you will need for energy!

Your YVCOG Staff:



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

Lots of People Ride Bikes for Lots of Different Reasons

By Brian Curtin, CTR Coordinator

Here are five good reasons why you should be out riding your bicycle.

1. For Your Body

Riding a bike offers many health benefits. Here are just a few:

- increased cardiovascular fitness
- increased strength
- increased balance and flexibility
- increased endurance and stamina
- increased calories burned

It can be done by people of all ages, from childhood up even through the adult years when achy joints don't allow for more stressful exercise like jogging.

2. For Your State of Mind

Riding a bike is a proven stress releaser. Regardless of if you are riding purely for pleasure or for a specific purpose, you will arrive at your destination feeling relaxed, energized and happier about the world and yourself. Plus, being out on your bike is just flat-out fun.

3. For Your Community

Being out on your bike is good for the people around you as well. You are able to go the places you want to go and yet put one less car on the road.

You don't bring with you the noise that a car generates and are actually able to interact with people as you move. From my bike you can wave to a neighbor, say hi to a kid, smell someone's dinner cooking and be a warm and friendly human presence on the streets.

Also, not insignificant: operating a bicycling does not harm the environment. There is no polluting exhaust released, no oil or gas consumed. And the energy and materials used to manufacture one automobile could be used to create a hundred bikes.

4. For Convenience

There is an undeniable convenience factor you'll discover when riding a bike. Front row parking spaces are guaranteed no matter where you go. Traffic jams are also irrelevant.

Though cars will certainly make better time on long trips, you'll find for many short trips or through heavy traffic, you can travel just as fast or faster on your bike.

Have you ever been to a massive festival or concert in a park somewhere, the type of event that draws so

many people that just getting there is a problem? Going in on a bike is a perfect solution. Zip in, zip out. You don't have to get there hours early to get a parking spot or else face parking miles away from the event. And you won't have to wait hours in traffic to get out once it's over.

5. For Your Pocketbook

It costs between 20 and 30 cents per mile to operate a car, depending on the vehicle.

This is based on expenses like gas, oil, maintenance, etc., that go up when you drive more. This figure doesn't include the hidden costs of vehicle ownership like depreciation, taxes, and insurance. These factors make the actual per mile cost to operate a car much higher. When you start multiplying cost per mile to operate a car by the distance you ride, you can easily calculate how much money you save by riding a bike.

For example: my daily roundtrip commute is 16 miles. If I do that just twice a week, I will save over \$400 in operating costs alone in the course of a year. (16 miles x 2 trips per week x 52 weeks x .25 cents per mile.) And, if you have to pay for parking, tolls, and the like, don't forget to factor that in, too. It can add up quickly.

Ride For You

When you ride your bike, you are doing a lot of good things, many of which are for the benefit of others. But ultimately, the one who benefits the most is you, through better health, peace of mind, increased confidence and self-reliance, heck, even through a fatter bank account.

So for all these reasons, get out there on your bike today. Even if you don't save the world in the process, you'll still have fun trying!

Original article by David Fiedler at <http://bicycling.about.com>

YVCOG JUNE MEETINGS...

MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee

Thursday, June 14, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.

311 North 4th Street, Suite 202

(The 300 Building)

Yakima, WA

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

Monday, June 18, 2007 - 1:30 p.m.

311 North 4th Street, Suite 202

(The 300 Building)

Yakima, WA

Local Government

By Michael Buchanan, Senior Planner

I recently attended a community meeting and was struck by the fact that the elected officials sitting in that room all had the common goal of improving the community for all of its residents. Being in that room filled with volunteers that were giving their precious time I wondered if the people that they represented appreciated their commitment or if they were suspicious of their motivations. I discovered the following article on the Municipal Research and Service Center web page and give full credit to it producing thoughts that respond to my appreciation of local governments at work.



"In recent years, the work of local government has been handicapped by declining citizen confidence and involvement in government. Whether the lost trust has resulted primarily from government's own failures, or is a reflection of dramatically changing times, action is needed. It is time to remind ourselves and others about what government is, what it does for us and what our mutual responsibilities are, to make government work for all of us. We must get out the word about government successes, without whitewashing the problems that must be addressed. We must honestly look at what changes are needed to reconnect citizens with government, and to make government work in the new information age.

The record of American government successes may well qualify as the greatest story never told, according to political columnist, Mark Shields. U.S. citizens can readily recite problems with government, but stumble badly when asked to name government successes. The day-to-day services of local government are all too invisible to the naked eye, until things go awry. In the face of these widely-held public perceptions, it's all too easy for local officials to lose heart. Turnover, burnout and political casualties are high in an era when:

- Numerous opinion polls reveal basic lack of knowledge about the political process, declining voter turnout, declining participation in community organizations and perhaps the lowest level of trust in government since the Civil War.
- Disgruntled citizens oppose proposed plans, programs, budgets or private projects, but do not become involved in proposing alternative solutions.
- Some elected officials rant about the evils of government, as if they have no part in government.
- Citizens seem more inclined to solve conflicts with baseball bats and guns, modeled after the conflict resolution techniques of road raging motorists.

Government may be guilty as charged on some accounts, and certainly our approaches to governance must change to meet the demands of dramatically changing times. But it is misguided to view government as if it is some foreign occupying power. Governments in this country were established by the citizens of this country for their mutual benefit. (Remember government of, for and by the people?) As citizens, we all share a responsibility for how our governments perform. "We have met the enemy and he is us (Pogo)."

There are small signs that we have begun to turn the corner and are moving toward improved confidence in government. However, given the pervasiveness of negative perceptions, it is time to get on with the job of telling the story of what government really is, what it does for us, and what our respective responsibilities are. We must begin the job of rebuilding trust, reconnecting people with their government, and fostering citizen involvement in governance and community affairs.

Opinion polls cited earlier indicate that the average citizen is acutely aware of government shortcomings, but far less conscious of the day-to-day benefits government provides. The message about government failures has been more vigorously promoted than the story of its successes. We, who are involved in local government, need to stop and remind ourselves about why we created government in the first place, and what benefits government provides us. We must then aggressively tell the story about the value of government and our mutual responsibility to make it work.

Local government and our political process provide the means to sort out competing interests and diverse needs that exist within a community. The political process and a public dialogue on issues also can lead to compromises and solutions which may be more equitable and fair to diverse groups in a community.

Government officials are frequently accused of imposing their will on that of individual property owners and citizens. Local officials are not elected to impose their will on others. Instead, local officials initially gain legitimacy because citizens of the community have elected them, believing that they will represent their interests. Local officials maintain legitimacy to the extent that they maintain open, honest lines of communication, provide opportunities for citizens with diverse viewpoints to be heard, work with the community to develop a shared vision and agreed upon goals, and then follow those goals. As long as they follow those goals, which represent the will of the people, they maintain the right to make decisions for the community."

(MRSC website: <http://www.mrsc.org/Publications/textsrcg.aspx>)

Keep Your Computer Virus Free

by Richard Spada, GIS Analyst, YVCOG



With all the computer viruses going around, I thought it would be timely to pass along some basic tips to keep your computers healthy and running at home or office.

- *Make sure you have an up-to-date anti-virus program like Norton Antivirus or McAfee. Get the fully registered version and update it every month. This is crucial as new viruses are added every day. Also, be sure that you have an anti-virus program that works with your operating system, (e.g. Windows).*
- *Be wary of attachments in e-mails. Viruses are program files that are executed when you open them. Does the message reference the attached file? Is it from a friend? Were you expecting the e-mail? Look at the file extension (the last three letters of a file). If it ends in .exe, .bat, .pif, .vbs, .scr. or .com then it's better if you don't open it. Also, two file extensions, like document.doc.pif signifies that a document was converted into a virus.*
- *Read warnings and articles about viruses. If someone writes an article about it, then you know it's pretty common and easily spread. But also keep an eye out for hoax viruses. These are not actual viruses but urban legends.*
- *If you think you've received a virus, delete the e-mail and make sure you empty your DELETE folder too.*
- *If you've activated a virus, don't panic. Hopefully your anti-virus program will catch it and quarantine it. Erase it permanently from your computer. If the program hasn't caught the virus the virus will probably start trying to execute its function, whether it's e-mailing itself to others or deleting computer files. Determine which virus you have, warn others if it is a worm (e-mails itself), download a repair program (you'd be surprised at how many specific repair programs there are out there) or take your computer to a program expert.*
- *If you're downloading files from the Internet, verify that there's an anti-virus program that checks the files on the downloading site. If not, download the file to a disk and scan with your own anti-virus program.*
- **Back up all your data regularly.**

These tips should be a good start to a healthy computer. Take the time to follow them.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

May 21, 2007



MPO/RTPO Executive Committee

- Announced promotion of Drew Miller as Senior Transportation Planner
- Recruitment opened for Planner position; ends May 31, 2007
- Approved recommendation by MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee concerning distribution of FFY 2006 federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for 6-month transit route in Union Gap
- Approved recommendation of MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee concerning distribution of FFY 2007 federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds.
- Presentation of Draft 2007-2027 Yakima Valley Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan; Plan has been released for 30-day public review.

YVCOG Executive Committee

- Approved April Budget Report
- Approved Toppenish Professional Service Agreement for Housing Rehabilitation grant administration services, for \$200,800, to run from April 17, 2007 through June 30, 2009.