



THE [E - L I N K]

Connecting Southern Oregon's COG With Its Members

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RVCOG Debuts E-Newsletter

Welcome to our reborn newsletter, *The E-Link*. Several years ago we were forced to put our traditional printed version to permanent rest due to the costs and staff time involved, but a request to revisit the issue, made during our recent Board retreat, caused us to take another look. This new version of our newsletter is exclusively electronic, which will allow us to distribute it more widely to officials and staff throughout our member entities and partner agencies at a fraction of the prior cost. Instead of the traditional longer articles, we will focus on keeping our membership informed of what we are doing by offering a greater variety of shorter information items, a great many of which will offer links to more material on the web. You'll have a better idea of what we are up to throughout the year, which we think will translate into an improvement in our ability to work in the best interests of our membership in southern Oregon.

RVCOG MEMBERS

- Jackson County
- Josephine County
- City of Ashland
- Town of Butte Falls
- City of Cave Junction
- City of Central Point
- City of Eagle Point
- City of Gold Hill
- City of Grants Pass
- City of Jacksonville
- City of Medford
- City of Phoenix
- City of Rogue River
- City of Shady Cove
- City of Talent
- Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District
- Rogue Community College
- Rogue Valley Sewer Services
- Rogue Valley Transportation District
- Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc.
- Southern Oregon Regional Communications
- Southern Oregon University

Central Point Launches Land Use Study

Sometimes, being a Guinea Pig can be a good thing. With a grant from Oregon's Transportation and Growth Management program, RVCOG staff members have joined Central Point officials, transportation agencies, and area residents in a ground-breaking effort to develop a model of long-range land use and transportation plans for the Gebhard Road and Wilson Road neighborhood. The results from the planning done for this area, one of the proposed urban reserves under the Regional Problem Solving (RPS) program, will provide other cities in the region with an example of how this kind of conceptual planning for a future urban area can be accomplished. Once RPS is completed, participating cities in the region will embark on similar planning efforts in their urban reserves, and will focus on employing pedestrian and transit friendly transportation concepts. Without a doubt, lessons learned from this project will help other communities in their efforts.



For more information, contact [Dick Converse](#) at 423-1373.

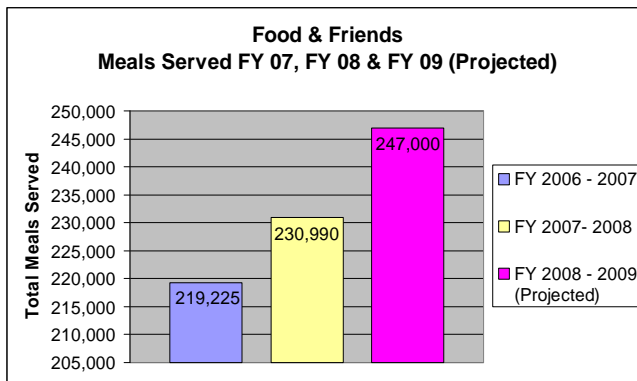
SAGE Honors RVCOG Finance Manager

In November 2008, RVCOG's Finance Manager, Alan Hudson, accepted an award from SAGE software at their annual customer conference, for innovative application of the SAGE MIP Accounting Software. RVCOG has been using the MIP software for almost 13 years. Alan also made a presentation at the conference on how RVCOG has applied the software to meet its unique accounting and financial reporting needs. To learn more about your COG's financial systems, contact [Alan Hudson](#) at 423-1376.



Budget Cuts Challenge Food & Friends

In Fiscal Year 2007-2008, Food & Friends served 230,990 meals to seniors in Jackson and Josephine counties. This Fiscal Year we expect to serve approximately 247,000 meals, or a 6% increase over last year. There are several reasons for this increase, most notably the significant downturn in our economy. To add to this trend, in May 2008, Food & Friends was asked to provide service in and around Ashland, the only area in our region to have maintained its own Meals on Wheels program. Due to the difficulty in maintaining and recruiting volunteers, that independent program could no longer operate its service—resulting in another 60 clients being added to our program.



To date we have not implemented a waiting list for Food & Friends, although that could be a possibility if faced with the reality of increasing need on the one hand and anticipated budget cuts in the next biennium's OPI and Medicaid on the other. Rest assured, however, that we will not make any such decision lightly and we will work as hard as we can to meet the chal-

lenges we face and to provide not only a hot meal, but also a much needed safety check on a very vulnerable segment of our population.

For more information, contact Evelyn Kinsella at 423-1396 or ekinsella@rvcog.org.

"We really enjoyed the volunteer driver who brought the meals, he was just delightful. It's the extra socialization; it's more than just bringing the meals. It got us through some hard times."

Carol H.

RVCOG Re-Opens Rogue Valley Public Service Academy

RVCOG is excited to announce the reconstitution of the Rogue Valley Public Service Academy (RVPSA). RVPSA is a cooperative effort among the local jurisdictions of Jackson and Josephine counties to provide local, high quality, affordable training to public sector employees, and other community leaders in our region. In these tough economic times, training budgets are being sacrificed to prevent deeper cuts in services—RVPSA will bring affordable training to our region, providing more opportunities for skills enhancement for staff, elected officials, nonprofit

leaders, and members of the many voluntary organizations that contribute to our region. RVPSA's Board of Directors comprises local government representatives and RVCOG's Executive Director, Michael Cavallaro. The Chair of RVPSA is Barbara Robson, City of Central Point Human Resources Manager, and Vice-Chair is Francis Webber, Jackson County Human Resources Director. More information will be distributed soon. If you have questions or comments, please contact RVPSA liaison, Sandi Morton, at 423-1334 or smorton@rvcog.org.

North-South Travel Demand Study for Highway 99

Highway 99 encompasses the region's largest population and employment centers. Not surprisingly, transportation modeling shows that despite recent significant investment to modernize Interstate 5 and Highway 99, travel delays will continue to be a problem.

The Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO), which is staffed by RVCOG, is embarking on a study to develop a multifaceted transportation plan for the Highway 99 Corridor. The study area is from Seven Oaks Interchange, to the north, southwards to Crowson Road in Ashland. The study will focus on the role land use and multi-modal transportation (e.g., bicycle, pedestrian and transit) can play to improve travel. The plan will include proposed projects and strategies that reduce vehicular traffic congestion and greenhouse

gases, and support economic development along the north-south corridor.

A major focus of the study will be to determine the appropriate population density and land use patterns necessary to support transit alternatives such as enhanced commuter transit, bus rapid transit, and commuter rail. In addition, the study will identify transportation options (incentive programs to encourage the use of alternatives to driving alone) and other strategies to reduce vehicle trips such as bicycle and pedestrian connectivity improvements.

For more information about the study, which will begin in Spring 2009, you can contact Dan Moore at 423-1361 or dmoore@rvkog.org. You can also visit the RVMPO website at www.rvmppo.org and click on the North-South Travel Demand Study link.

Gold Ray Road Solutions Team Formed

Southern Oregon communities are now poised to connect the recently completed Bear Creek Greenway to the Rogue River Recreational Corridor and Greenway (Central Point to Grants Pass).

To respond to initial local misgivings about what the Greenway could mean to usage of the recreational and transportation corridor along the Gold Ray and Upper River Road route, RVCOG has convened a Solutions Team comprised of citizens, landowners, trail users, fishers, boaters, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Jackson County and the Rogue River Greenway Foundation. The role of this Solutions Team is to

examine the challenges facing construction of this portion of the Greenway, devise a solution that preserves or enhances access for recreational and local uses, including the Greenway, and, finally, to make a recommendation to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners. Although well known to the members of the Solutions Team, a recent group tour of the study area served to drive home the difficult task that awaits them—the existing road is narrow, perched on the side of a steep hill, paralleled by railroad tracks, and, in parts, badly worn by unauthorized uses. On the other hand, it passes through one of the most scenic, undeveloped reaches of the Rogue River, and offers a host of unique recreational opportunities.



The Solutions Team process is being funded by Oregon Parks and Recreation, and is scheduled to produce a recommendation by this summer.



To learn more, please [click here](#) and select the "Solutions Team" link, or contact [Craig Harper](#) at 423-1369.

RVCOG

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Founded in 1968, RVCOG

is a voluntary association of local governments and special districts in southern Oregon.

OUR MISSION

We shall act as a catalyst to promote quality of life, effective and efficient services, and leadership in regional communication, cooperation, planning, and action in southern Oregon.

STAFF

Michael Cavallaro
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Don Bruland
Director of Senior and Disability Services

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Craig Harper
Natural Resources
Program Manager

Alan Hudson
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Evelyn Kinsella
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Program Manager

Sandi Morton
Asst to Exec Dir /
Human Resources
Manager



HILI Unites Hearing Impaired, Legal Community

For the hearing impaired, a routine traffic stop can be anything but routine—that's where HILI comes in.

A sub-committee of RVCOG's Disability Services Advisory Council, HILI (Hearing Impaired/Legal Interface) brings together representatives from the deaf community and the legal community across Jackson and Josephine counties. Upon learning of the need to improve communication between hearing impaired drivers and law enforcement officers during routine traffic stops, HILI devised a solution to offer state legislators: voluntary identification of hearing impairment that would appear in the DMV and/or police database. In addition, HILI has arranged for several local attorneys to conduct a training session for deaf citizens so that they can better understand their rights when interacting with law enforcement.

The group is also working to improve communication at jails and courts. After joining HILI, the Jackson County Circuit Court ADA Coordinator established procedures for requesting and scheduling ASL interpreters. She also brought the court into compliance on other ADA issues, such as proper signage and complaint procedures. HILI generated an incident report questionnaire, too, so that citizens who are deaf can gather information on their interactions with authorities. That way, HILI can pinpoint issues that need to be addressed. If there's a problem, they can invite the authority involved (individual and/or agency) to participate in HILI. Soon, the group plans to get business-size cards printed for deaf citizens to present when approached by authorities to notify them that the card-bearer is deaf and requires an ASL interpreter.

To learn more about this group's efforts, contact its chair, [Amrit Sidhu](#), at 878-4100.

Video Conferencing Preserves Resources

In our pursuit of becoming greener and improving operating efficiency, we have taken a first step in implementing Video Conferencing by installing a Polycom VSX 3000 video conference workstation capable of accommodating up to 2 or 3 participants at a time. The Polycom unit will allow SDS staff to periodically attend meetings hosted in Salem without incurring the usual costs of travel, financial and otherwise (including car rent-

als, fuel, food, overnight accommodations, pollution, and wear and tear on personnel). Our ultimate goal, as funding permits, is to install video conferencing equipment in the larger conference room for use by all COG departments and members.

To learn more about your COG's video conferencing capabilities or other technologies, please contact Brian Benton at 423-1385 or bbenton@rvcog.org.

Jefferson Conference Center Open to Members

On December 5, 2007, RVCOG's Board held the first official meeting in their new Jefferson Conference Center (photo on left). Since then, the Center has hosted more than 350 scheduled meetings, and scores of ad hoc gatherings. With a capacity of up to 50 people, the space offers a digital recorder, amplifier, microphones, speakers, overhead projector, computer, and wireless access point. The Center, which is open to RVCOG members, can also be split into two, smaller meeting rooms.

To check availability or make reservations, please contact [René Sjothun](#) at 664-6674.

Southwest ERT and RVCOG Host Orientation for New Officials

On the evening of January 27, 2009, RVCOG and the [Southwest ERT](#) hosted an orientation for newly elected officials in Jackson and Josephine counties. The event, the first of its kind for the COG, came about as a suggestion by our Board, and was intended to assist new officials by introducing them to the programs, faces, and agencies they will likely see in the coming years as elected representatives of their jurisdictions.

After welcoming the 15 newly elected officials attending the event, RVCOG's Executive Director, Michael Cavallaro, introduced the COG's management team and provided an overview of what RVCOG is, [what it does](#), and [how it interacts with its members](#).



Next, Jeff Griffin from the Governor's Office and a regional coordinator for the [Economic Revitalization Team \(ERT\)](#) described his role as an ombudsman to local governments on high priority projects throughout southwest Oregon. He then introduced regional representatives from seven of the major state agencies that fall under the collaborative problem-solving umbrella of ERT. One by one, each representative explained their agencies' key priorities, the ways in which they usually interact with cities and counties in our region, and any programs of assistance they have available. All attendees received a packet of materials with brochures, business cards, and other informative flyers.

The state agency presenters included Art Anderson, Department of Transportation (ODOT); John Renz, Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD); Karen Clearwater, Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS); Larry Holzgang, Oregon Economic & Community Development Department (OECDD); John Becker, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ); Karen Chase, Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE); and Bruce Sund, Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD).

Rounding out the evening, Liz Shelby, Chief of Staff and Director of Government Relations for [Southern Oregon University](#), also a state agency, highlighted several SOU programs and resources that can directly benefit local jurisdictions, such as internships and volunteerism. Coincidentally, Liz was one of two current RVCOG Board members who attended the event. The other was Councilor Russ Silbiger from the City of Ashland.

Once the formal presentations were over, newly elected officials had an opportunity to meet one-on-one with the state agency representatives, as well as RVCOG senior staff and the evening's co-hosts, [Jeff Griffin](#) and [Michael Cavallaro](#).



Based on early feedback, it's likely that RVCOG and the Southwest ERT will partner again in the future to offer newly elected officials an opportunity to jumpstart the learning process on the state and regional side of their responsibilities. **To all who participated, thank you!**

Nature Photography by Dick Converse.

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