Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

May Board Meeting

01 May 2015

La Plata County Court House

Board in Attendance:

Andrea Phillips – Town of Mancos

William Tookey – San Juan County

Chris Tookey – Town of Silverton

Greg Schulte – Town of Pagosa Springs

Julie Westendorff – La Plata County

John Egan – Town of Pagosa Springs

Chris LaMay – Town of Bayfield

Lana Hancock – Town of Dolores

Michael Whiting – Archuleta County

Ron LeBlanc – City of Durango

Shane Hale – City of Cortez

Staff in Attendance:
Miriam Gillow-Wiles – Executive Director

Sara Trujillo – Assistant/Accountant

1. **Call to Order/Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Andrea Phillips sitting in for Chairman Dick White at 1:35pm; everyone introduced themselves.

1. **Consent Agenda,** April 2015 Minutes & March 2015 Financials

**Motion to approve minutes and financials as presented: Michael Whiting, Second: John Egan. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

1. **Discussion Items:**

SB 152 Update:

Miriam worked closely with CCI and CML to help develop what would have been a minor change to SB152. The change would have allowed public private partnerships without having to go to a vote. However, the bill was killed before it was introduced. Therefore, we will have another year with no changes to this legislation.

Our options regarding this issue include:
1. Run opt-out elections in all the participating local governments in the fall. CML has a basic ballot initiative we can use quite easily.
2. Create a non-profit and lease infrastructure and capacity to the nonprofit which then can be leased to the private providers. However, this is untested.
3. Do nothing, and maintain the status quo.

The board found the easiest route would most likely be to opt-out versus creating a non-profit entity. Discussion of this issue is to be continued.

Grant Match Standards:

Discussed at the April meeting was a need for a standardized formula that would apply to all grant match requests going forward in the future. A standardized formula will create consistency and efficiency when COG staff needs to make calculations. In addition, a standardized formula will allow communities to know what to expect.

The standard formula was proposed as follows:

A base number will be applied to all communities at 25% of the total match amount then a number based on population will be added to the base. The board liked this formula and feels it is appropriate to apply to all future grant match calculations.

Questions were raised regarding communities not wanting to participate in a specific grant. In these cases, the formula would be recalculated to include only those communities that want to participate. If it is found that funding is not feasible, the grant will not be sought. It was noted that the by-laws state that no community can be forced to participate or give money for a grant match.

COG staff plan on reviewing options for 2016 grant requests in July and to work on grant match calculations in order to give those numbers to communities so communities can get those figures into their budgets. This will help prevent match requests mid-year that are difficult for some communities to bring after a budget has already been set for the year.

1. **Decision Items:**

Letters of Support:

At the April meeting a letter of support policy was discussed to serve as a screening tool to ensure we are writing appropriate letters of support. Some updates were made to include changing the word “project” to “proposal” and an additional step 4 asking, “has the proponent consulted with SWCCOG members or other agencies that might have jurisdiction over decisions that could impact the implementation of the proposal?” was added.

The board’s largest concern with letters of support is that the COG is neither in the personnel business nor a political body. The board would like the policy to specifically state that the COG does not give job recommendation or political endorsements. In addition, the board does not feel it needs to see every support letter request. An appropriate set of actions when a support letter is requested is for the executive director to review the request. If the request passes all criteria in the support letter policy then the director will present the support letter request to the executive committee. Upon approval from the executive committee, a support letter will be signed with a brief overview of the letter being presented at the following board meeting.

**Motion to approve the letter of support policy with the mentioned updates and set of actions to process a letter of support: Shane Hale, Second: Ron LeBlanc. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

Telecom Equipment Fund:

During the Retreat in March there was ample discussion about the SCAN, maintenance, cost, equipment repair, and replacement funding. One issue discussed at the Retreat was to replace or change the name of the Fiber Repair Fund (RAMP Fund) with an Equipment Replacement Fund to update and replace the large routers located in Durango and Cortez. The RAMP Fund was supposed to be levied at $900/year for each community and county that participated in the initial DoLA grant.

At the April meeting, the Board requested to see the equipment fund costs divided up by base plus population. The base for the Fiber Repair Fund was previously $900, for two years (it is unknown where the $900/year fee came from). Just a flat $900/year fee would only bring in $10,800. The cost of the software upgrades are $15,000. Having discussed with the IT Departments and the Cities and La Plata County, the consensus is that the software does not need to be updated on the routers unless something breaks. At that time we would need to pay for the software updates.

**Motion to request staff apply the previously accepted standard formula for fee calculations and present the new figures to the board at the June meeting for a voting decision and approval: Julie Westendorff, Second: Michael Whiting. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

Telecom Overages Match:

During the Retreat, staff presented on the Telecom budget, and highlighted a shortfall. The Board Members present indicated they would be interested in alleviating that shortfall, which will greatly help with the budget. As a result of this, staff put together a detailed estimated amount of what that short fall is projected to be by the end of the year.

**Motion to request staff apply the previously accepted standard formula for fee calculations and present the new figures to the board at the June meeting for a voting decision and approval: Ron LeBlanc, Second: Shane Hale. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

Broadband Planning Grant Match:

A broadband planning grant will help give us an operating plan for the SCAN network and create a plan of attack to fill in gaps to make better connectivity for communities. In addition, a planning grant will help us to know how to connect outside of the region for better redundancy. Match for this grant is in the amount of $32,000 with the Alliance giving $12,000, CDOT providing $10,000, and COG members providing the final $10,000. It was strongly noted that a planning grant must be complete prior to DoLA accepting any grant requests for infrastructure funding.

The board suggested going to Region 9 and requesting the $10,000 as Region 9 is highly supportive of economic development, which the broadband planning grant heavily involves. It was noted that the next Region 9 meeting does not take place until July; therefore, there may be a bit of a waiting period for an answer. In addition, the board would like staff to use the standard formula for match calculations and present this information at the June board meeting.

**Motion to have staff approach Region 9 regarding match funds and present recalculation of match formula at next meeting: Shane Hale, Second: William Tookey. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

DoLA Downtown Assessment Grant:

Ken Charles had previously presented to some the idea of packaging an assessment grant with an implementation of recommendations funding. Many communities receive funds for a downtown assessment grant and receive great feedback for things to implement. However, when the grant funds run out, many smaller jurisdiction do not have the funds to actually implement the recommendations given from the assessment. Therefore, Ken would like to see funds made available for communities to hire a consultant and implement some of the recommendations.

The proposed communities for this endeavor include Ignacio, Silverton, Pagosa Springs, and Bayfield with the COG being the fiscal agent. These efforts would occur over the course of two years – two communities per year.

**Motion that the COG be the fiscal agent for the DoLA Downtown Assessment Grant: Ron LeBlanc, Second: Michael Whiting. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

CDOT Transit Grant:

CDOT Division of Transit and Rail just released their Notice of Funding Availability for administration, operations, and capital operating projects for a two year grant cycle, 5311 and 5310 funding. Miriam would like to apply for administration funding for State FY 16 and 17 to hire a 0.5 FTE to 0.75 FTE person to focus on developing the Transit Council goals/needs, and CDOT identified goals. The City of Durango as well as several other transit and senior centers will be applying to 5311 funding. The SWCCOG would be applying to 5310 funding, so the COG would not be competing with other agencies within the region for funding.

Pros:
• Would add staff dedicated to Transit
• Cover some of existing staff expenses
• Two year grant funding
• Not competing with other organizations for funding
Cons:
• Would add staff via grant funding, would need to plan on future funding for employee
• Office space restrictions
• Will need to find cash match for FY2017

Summary of Transportation Coordinator Job Description:
Position will lead the coordination and development of SWCCOG Regional Transit Coordinating Council. The qualified individual will help implement the Transit Council’s goals and efforts in planning and coordinating transportation options for the Southwest Colorado Region. This position will also work towards finding ways to fill in gaps in traditional public transit services by coordinating human services transportation and public transportation operators, applying for funding, and working with Tribal transit development. The objective of the SWCCOG Transportation Coordinator position is to coordinate transportation services in order to improve the region’s overall mobility.

There would not be a match required for this grant as the match comes from the DoLA grant. Many board members found much benefit and need to create this position. However, some board members were a bit uncomfortable with developing this position that will not have continual funding.

The board would like to see a more thorough job description and developed scope of what this person would be doing. In addition, the board feels there would need to be an employee agreement that recognizes the job is funded to a specific date. Ron LeBlanc asked that the City of Durango be left out of this endeavor.

**Motion to move forward with the CDOT grant application for a Transportation Coordinator with Miriam presenting to board a more thorough scope of job duties: Shane Hale, Second: John Egan. All in favor with the exception of three opposed: Chris LaMay, Chris Tookey, and Lana Hancock.**

1. **Reports:**

Director’s Report:

* Staff is working on RREO draft report. This should be complete in June.
* MURP capstone is almost finalized for transit.
* Miriam will have a couple meetings in Denver in May for broadband and one for AmeriCorp VISTA.
* Application for VISTA is almost complete, and VISTA should be here in August.
* Staff recently purchased a video conferencing system.
* WLC workshops have commenced and should give us different ideas to make our economy more resilient.
* Miriam has been working on the Broadband Planning Grant.
* The next transit meeting will be held June 11.

**Adjourned at 3:20pm**