



February 14, 2020

Dear Council Members:

Each new year brings another chance to take stock of the past year, see what we've accomplished, and look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. I am writing to share with you some of the many ways the Greater Portland Council of Governments has benefited the region as a whole and Windham in particular, and the value we will continue to bring to all our members in 2020. Before going any further, though, I want to thank you for your community's continuing engagement with GPCOG and your contributions to making our region a better place.

Membership in GPCOG comes with many benefits, one of which is our cooperative purchasing program. In 2019-2020, the program saved communities over \$468,000 on their purchases of materials, services, and bidding costs. Windham, for example, saved \$40,458 (\$15,598 – more than \$4, or 7% per ton – on road salt alone) by taking part in the program. We're always looking for ways to strengthen and extend cooperative purchasing. We've already made some improvements and expect to make more in 2020, so the more your community participates, the more it saves.

The benefits and value of GPCOG membership extend beyond cooperative purchasing. GPCOG dues also leverage other funds such as EPA Brownfields funds for grants (at Windham's former transfer station, for example) and low-cost loans to clean up former industrial properties, small business loans, as well as private funders to address issues in our region such as mobility for disadvantaged and underserved members of our communities.

GPCOG staff's expertise in land use, transportation, and energy are hard at work in every member community. We've done mapping and planning work in Durham, Gorham, Gray, New Gloucester, and Scarborough, regional transit planning, alternative fuels and electric vehicle use. Staff have supported communities in navigating the MS4 permit renewal process, converting their streetlights to energy-efficient LEDs, renewing their cable TV franchise agreements (including Windham), and brought together elected, appointed, and other community leaders together around other important issues to develop options for responsive, effective policies. GPCOG is also a resource to both elected officials and staff on a variety of technical issues facing our communities, ranging from the risks of opiate use disorder and new challenges with methamphetamine use, to the regional housing market, to new solar development laws and how to put them to work in our region, to name some recent examples.

GPCOG's online community profiles (<https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/gpcog/Windham>) give you and others access to data, updated in real time, to help inform and support your decision making. These profiles will continue to be expanded and enriched using a growing library of data sets.

The Regional Voice Committee makes sure your community – and our region – are heard when state and federal policies and decisions are being made. After being formed in 2018, this diverse group guides

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our efforts to focus the region's voice on the things that matter most, and where we can have the most impact. Over the last year the committee held quarterly working meetings resulting in:

- Publishing the "Roadmap to Prosperity" with 2019-2020 legislative priorities
  - Testimony on eight bills (to date) in the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature
  - Direct engagement on the new state economic development plan
  - Participation on the Governor's Climate Change Council, chairing the Transportation Working Group
  - Engagement with the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Funding Alternatives
- Adoption of 2020 legislative priorities
  - Greater funding for regional transportation priorities, especially considering the region's identified investment needs in roads, bridges, multi-modal and public transportation
  - More focused economic development efforts for parts of our region that need investment and jobs the most, especially considering the bond proposals that were not sent out to the voters by legislators last month.
  - More state support for expanded housing choices, especially for low- and middle-income households. Our region's current and future economy needs more workforce housing, and many people in our region need expanded housing choices in order to preserve and sustain our communities.

It would take too long to list all the different ways GPCOG supports and delivers value to its members, so I've attached a matrix that provides just a quick look at the areas where our work has impacted our communities over the last year.

2020 is a new year with new challenges and possibilities, and an opportunity to continue working on the issues already before us. We are more excited than ever about our ability to serve Windham and all our member communities. We are strongest as a region, and as an organization, when we engage with each other, listen to each other, and act together.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve Windham as a member of GPCOG. With your continuing support we will deliver even greater value to you in 2020 and beyond,

All best,



Kristina Egan  
Executive Director

Enclosure: Member Value Grid

cc: Barry Tibbetts, Interim Town Manager



## Advocacy

## Transportation &amp; Community Network

## Inclusive Transportation Planning Project

## Public Transit Planning

## Lakes Region Explorer

## Traffic Incident Management

## Traffic Data Collection

## METRO Peninsula Loop Reboot Project

## Transportation Management Association

## Community-Specific Projects

## Economic Development

## EPA Brownfields

## Small Business Loans

## Addressing Addiction and Opioid Misuse

## Metro Coalition

## Lakes Region Managers

## MS4 Stormwater Permit Renewal

## Maine Clean Communities

## VW Settlement Application Support



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