

**GREATER PORTLAND  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2006**

**Approved by the GPCOG General Assembly  
June 22, 2006**

June 1, 2006

RE: *Strategic Plan 2006*

Dear Members of the Greater Portland Council of Governments:

We are pleased to present you with *Strategic Plan 2006* of the Greater Portland Council of Governments. This Plan replaces the agency's Strategic Plan as adopted in 1998 and in the process fulfills a goal of the GPCOG Steering and Executive Committees to review and update the agency's Strategic Plan during the 2005-06 program year.

*Strategic Plan 2006* is the product of a committed and effective partnership between the GPCOG senior management team and the Steering Committee. At various meetings throughout the year, the Plan was reviewed for input and comment with the Executive Committee. In addition, all of the GPCOG staff has been encouraged to review and comment on the Plan prior to its finalization.

In developing *Strategic Plan 2006*, a concerted effort was made to streamline the agency's existing Strategic Plan through a document that is structured to serve as a realistic and effective policy guide, as well as a document that contributes to a clearer understanding of GPCOG's many roles and responsibilities. To that end, the revised Plan has been redesigned and reformatted into an eleven-page document from its thirty-three page predecessor. Other key features include:

- A set of six Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation of six Core Objectives, each of which includes specific action items or Areas of Focus.
- Summary of Core Competencies, Programs, & Services and Key Partnerships.
- Updated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

We believe that *Strategic Plan 2006* provides a flexible but carefully crafted policy document that is relevant to our mission and intended to serve as a road map for the Greater Portland Council of Governments and our municipal and regional partners.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony T. Plante, President

Neal W. Allen, Executive Director

## **Strategic Planning Team**

### GPCOG Senior Management Staff

Neal Allen, Executive Director  
Maddy Adams, Support Services Director  
Carol MacKenzie, Joint Services & Personnel Director  
Ann Mazerolle, Finance Director  
David Willauer, Planning Director

### Steering Committee

Anthony Plante, GPCOG President, Windham  
Genie Beaulieu, Freeport  
Gordon Billington, Standish  
Richard Brobst, North Yarmouth  
James Cloutier, Portland  
Paul McKenney, Cape Elizabeth  
Carl Winslow, Yarmouth

## **GPCOG MISSION STATEMENT**

Providing responsive service and leadership to our municipal members and community partners through regional cooperation and collaboration.

## **PURPOSE**

As set forth in the GPCOG Bylaws, our purpose is to:

- Strengthen local self government while combining total resources for meeting regional challenges;
- Serve as a mutual forum to identify, discuss, study and bring into focus regional challenges and opportunities;
- Serve as a liaison with members, governmental units, and groups or organizations;
- Provide an organizational structure for the collection and exchange of information to enable effective communication and coordination among governments and agencies; and
- Provide municipal services as requested by one or more member communities.

## **OUR VALUES**

For the Greater Portland Council of Governments to fulfill its mission and purpose, we must respond to:

### **Our Member Communities**

- Always recognizing that they are the reason we exist
- Listening to and responding to their needs with professionalism, respect and objectivity
- Being innovative, effective and proactive in our approach
- Maintaining a strong commitment to customer service
- Honoring the decision-making rights of each community
- Encouraging them to remain active and engaged
- Maintaining financial stability
- Encouraging them to constantly review and evaluate what we do

### **Our Staff**

- Treat them with trust, openness and respect
- Create an environment that facilitates high ethical standards of honesty and integrity
- Provide them with the training and tools to help them grow professionally
- Recognize them based on their effort, teamwork, and results
- Encourage their ideas and involvement
- Support a culture which encourages open communications
- Provide them with consistent and quality leadership

## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)**

### **STRENGTHS**

- Voluntary organization
- Municipal member ownership
- Versatility, integrity, dedication & competence of professional staff.
- Positive staff morale
- Engaged Steering Committee
- Commitment to members and region
- Financially stable with diversified revenue stream and Endowment Fund
- Strong technology and information base and improved and evolving web page
- Strong & supportive customer base
- Capacity to adapt & effectively meet differing community needs
- Proactive and sensitive to the needs of its members
- Positive working relationships with members, a range of public & private stakeholders and other public service providers, including regional peer groups
- Objective provider of services
- Able to achieve cost savings for member communities & generally viewed as a value-added organization
- Regular meetings & interactions with appointed officials (Managers, PWDs, Planners)
- Creative
- New internal project scoping process
- Regional Corridor Coalitions
- Strong relationship with PACTS

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Funding constraints reduce effectiveness for member needs and regional opportunities
- Federal & state funds sometime limit the type of technical assistance GPCOG can provide to members
- Limited land use funding & projects and therefore staffing capacity
- Revenue stream has a moderate degree of risk
- Lack of sustained and full participation by the Executive Committee
- Delays in processing federal funds lead to problems with agency cash flow
- Balancing project budgets with client expectations, especially citizen-based committees; need to better define project scope of services
- General lack of knowledge about GPCOG programs and services even within membership
- Failure /reluctance of municipal members to fully utilize as provided for in Bylaws
- Non-membership of the City of South Portland
- Delays in fully implementing information technology

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Regional policy forum/Planners forum/workshops on current issues/training and leadership development
- Stronger and/or redefined role as a provider for public services reached through agreement with members or imposed by the State.
- Build on Regional Corridor Coalition efforts.
- Provide a key leadership role in development of a regional plan.
- Increased interest from federal, state and local officials in regional planning and intermunicipal collaboration
- Build on technology, information base; greater utilization of web site
- Restructure the Economic Development District to provide a coordinated regional community and economic development strategy
- Market information technology to private sector and non-member municipalities.
- Resource for major employers and small businesses in the region
- Traveler information technology platforms with hotels, businesses
- Build on current partnering initiatives with other organizations including Cumberland County and other regionally based organizations
- Increasing opportunities to work with the private sector
- Facilitate collaborative efforts with municipalities
- Build on transportation safety initiatives
- Better inform and educate members and the public regarding our services and our role with federal and state programs
- Emerging interest in alternative fuels
- Evolving interest and participation in vanpools, carpooling, web-based traveler information
- Evacuation and emergency planning
- More outreach via e-mail and improved web site
- Census 2010 – if population reaches over 200,000, PACTS would receive state funds directly
- Expand Cooperative Services program
- Keep School Departments informed of cooperative purchasing opportunities.
- Consider redefinition/restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities as may be appropriate
- Increased interest in the role of public transportation in the region
- Provide a regional report on trends, population growth, etc.

## THREATS

- Failure of state agencies and Legislature to fully utilize as provided for in state statutes
- State policy decisions that could redefine our purpose and role
- Municipal disinterest/perception of irrelevance
- Available funding
- Inherent potential for loss of membership during economic downturns
- Balancing competition with private consultants
- Lack of appreciation and knowledge of regional programs
- Internal complacency

## Summary of GPCOG Services, Core Competencies, Programs & Partnerships

GPCOG Services	GPCOG Core Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative purchasing</li> <li>• Coordination of mtgs. between towns</li> <li>• Economic development planning</li> <li>• Emergency planning</li> <li>• Facilitation</li> <li>• Grant applications for members</li> <li>• Grants management &amp; services</li> <li>• Mapping, GIS, IMS</li> <li>• Revolving Loan Fund</li> <li>• Staff support to committees</li> <li>• Transportation, land use planning</li> <li>• US Census Data Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative agency for PACTS</li> <li>• Conduit for federal and state funds</li> <li>• Designated transit planning agency</li> <li>• Education and Outreach</li> <li>• Facilitation with projects and plans</li> <li>• Federal and state compliance</li> <li>• Forum for public policy discussions</li> <li>• Municipal planning agency</li> <li>• Project and program management</li> <li>• Research capability</li> <li>• Staff support to members</li> <li>• Staff Support to PACTS</li> </ul>

GPCOG Statewide Programs	GPCOG State Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GO Maine Commuter Connections/Vanpool</li> <li>• Hazardous Materials Planning</li> <li>• Kids and Transportation</li> <li>• Maine Clean Communities</li> <li>• Regional Representatives on Gubernatorial, Legislative and Departmental Task Forces/committees /commissions</li> <li>• Safe Kids Maine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maine Dept. of Economic &amp; Community Development (DECD)</li> <li>• Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection</li> <li>• Maine Dept. of Transportation (MaineDOT)</li> <li>• Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)</li> <li>• Maine Turnpike Authority</li> <li>• Public Utilities Commission</li> <li>• State Planning Office (SPO)</li> </ul>

Federal Agencies	National Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Energy</li> <li>• Economic Development Administration</li> <li>• Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)</li> <li>• Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</li> <li>• Federal Rail Administration (FRA)</li> <li>• Federal Transit Administration (FTA)</li> <li>• Housing &amp; Urban Development (HUD)</li> <li>• Nat'l. Highway Traffic Safety Adm. (NHTSA)</li> <li>• United States Dept. of Agriculture (USDA)</li> <li>• United States Dept. of Transportation (USDOT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)</li> <li>• Association for Commuter Transportation</li> <li>• ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) America</li> <li>• National Center for Bicycling &amp; Walking</li> <li>• National Clean Cities</li> <li>• National Operation Lifesaver</li> <li>• Safe Kids Worldwide</li> </ul>

GPCOG Regional Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)</li> <li>• Comprehensive Plan Updates</li> <li>• Corridor Coalitions and Metro Coalition</li> <li>• Maine Clean Communities</li> <li>• Revolving Loan Fund</li> <li>• Southern Maine Economic Development District (SMEDD)</li> <li>• Transit Planning</li> </ul>

Regional Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumberland County</li> <li>• Cumberland County Emergency Mgmt Agency (CEEMA)</li> <li>• Member Municipalities</li> <li>• Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA)</li> <li>• Other COGs/RPCs</li> <li>• People's Regional Opportunity Program (PROP)</li> <li>• Portland Water District</li> <li>• Resource Conservation &amp; Development District (RC&amp;D)</li> <li>• Soil &amp; Water Conservation District</li> <li>• Southern Maine Regional Planning Com. (SMRPC)</li> </ul>

Cumberland County
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDBG Entitlement Initiative</li> <li>• County Strategic Planning Process</li> <li>• Evacuation Plans</li> <li>• Human Services Advisory Council</li> </ul>

## Guiding Principles, Objectives and Areas of Focus

### Guiding principles:

- We exist through the support of our municipal members.
- *Member* requests and needs are of the highest priority.
- *All* requests and interactions deserve prompt, professional response.
- *Our credibility* rests on accurate and objectively presented information and a commitment to excellence in the delivery of services.
- We are positioned to provide regional leadership and have a responsibility to encourage and facilitate regional cooperation and collaboration within and between municipal and public stakeholders.
- Recognize that COG staff are the agency's most important resource

### Core Objectives

**Objective 1: To be responsive to our municipal members and community partners.**

### Areas of Focus

1. A Commitment to Effective Communications.
  - Initiate, respond, and attend meetings of members, community partners and other stakeholders that are appropriate and consistent with GPCOG's mission.
  - In order to effectively serve as a regional information resource, continue to invest, build, enhance, and utilize electronic media to its potential.
  - Develop collateral material(s) that inform and reinforce GPCOG's mission.
  - Expand the Annual Report to provide a "State of Region" analysis.
  - Continue to work with and reach out to the local media.
2. Evaluating the GPCOG Mission
  - Convene an annual retreat of the Steering Committee to assess the needs, goals and effectiveness of GPCOG with a report and recommendations submitted to the Executive Committee.
  - No later than every three years engage the services of an experienced outside firm to conduct a focus group of member representatives in order to evaluate GPCOG programs, services and opportunities in the context of the GPCOG mission.
  - In developing the annual budget, staff shall seek to ensure that the document and its programs and services reflect the mission, goals and objectives of the GPCOG Strategic Plan.
  - Staff shall conduct a project scoping, evaluation process prior to developing and submitting a proposal to provide contractual service to ensure that work is compatible with the GPCOG mission and that the scope of services accurately reflects the mutual expectations of all parties.

- Provide a quarterly update to Executive Committee on projects/opportunities and requests from state agencies that have been reviewed by the Project Scoping Team.

**Objective 2: Provide responsive, relevant and quality services and programs.**

**Areas of Focus**

1. Facilitate collaboration of regional solutions
  - Serve as a liaison between state and municipalities
2. Planning
  - Continue Existing Programs
    - Technical Assistance
    - Comprehensive plans
    - Transit planning
    - Statewide programs
    - Education/outreach/safety
    - Corridor Coalitions
  - Consider new or expanded programs such as:
    - Vanpool expansion
    - Conduct evacuation plan
    - Develop regional comprehensive plan
    - Coordinate/consolidate transit system
    - Alternative fuel capabilities
    - Metro Area Coalition
3. Community and Economic Development
  - Restructure Economic Development District
  - Develop/Revise Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the District
  - Administer Revolving Loan Fund Program
  - Explore Maritime Province Opportunities
  - Assist Cumberland County
    - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
    - Strategic Plan
    - Evacuation Plan
4. Cooperative purchasing
  - Continue existing services
  - Continue program expansion

**Objective 3: To build, sustain and serve as a comprehensive regional information and data resource.**

**Areas of Focus**

- Continue to provide GIS and mapping services to municipalities
- Continue to improve IMS capabilities and market to COG members, private sector and non-member municipalities
- Continue to expand TIDS program providing traveler information at hotels and businesses
- Utilize the GPCOG web site as a vehicle for providing current information and data.
- Provide more outreach via e-mail
- Update Municipal Profiles and post on web site
- Keep Census and demographic information current and provide links to other data sources
- Post reports and other resource materials to site
- Be a data resource for major employers and small businesses in the region.
- Continue to expand the master e-mail data base to include elected and appointed officials, various committees, and interested parties
- Send broadcast e-mails to announce important meetings or events, or the release of new reports, etc.
- Stay abreast of changes in technology and offer training as appropriate

**Objective 4: To strengthen and sustain a stable, effective and engaged governance structure.**

**Areas of Focus**

- Maintain current governance structure
- Maintain a representative balance on Steering Committee
- Maintain mix of appointed and elected officials on Executive Committee
- Strengthen the involvement of GPCOG Board members
- Seek ways to make the Annual Meeting more meaningful
- Utilize “broadcast e-mail” technology to regularly inform board members (including General Assembly) and others on GPCOG activities.
- Explore existing alternative regional government structures to better understand options and overall effectiveness.
- Continue Executive Director and Steering Committee’s inclusive relationship regarding decision-making

**Objective 5: To maintain a workplace environment that cultivates and recognizes professional excellence, teamwork, and creativity.**

**Areas of Focus**

- Facilitate a stronger team approach in project/program development and implementation
- Encourage new and innovative ideas and approaches
- Support professional development
- Support continuing education
- Recognize each employee's uniqueness and value
- Capitalize on individual strengths
- Maintain and update job descriptions as appropriate for all staff
- Conduct annual reviews in conjunction with developing the Annual Budget
- Recognize and/or reward staff for increased responsibility and growth
- Foster an environment that promotes mutual trust, respect and commitment
- Maintain an office atmosphere that is professional and encourages productivity, while offering a relaxed working environment

**Objective 6: To always respect and honor the public source of GPCOG monies by ensuring that funds, budgets and projects are competently and prudently managed and accounted for.**

**Areas of Focus**

- Provide timely, accurate and informative financial reports.
- Ensure maximum security and return on investments appropriate for a public agency.
- Provide constructive project management support and financial information and reports to staff and outside agencies as required.
- Quarterly financial statements to Executive Committee
- Annual Audit within 60 days of FY end, with presentation to the Executive Committee within 120 days.
- Continually review and monitor Endowment Fund and other investments
- In developing the annual budget, staff shall seek to ensure that programs and services reflect the mission, goals and objectives of the GPCOG Strategic Plan.
- Staff shall conduct a project scoping, evaluation process prior to developing and submitting a proposal to ensure that contractual service projects are compatible with the GPCOG mission and that the scope of services is properly budgeted and accurately reflects the mutual expectations of all parties.
- Meet regularly with the Project Management Team to monitor programs and projects and to ensure that they are being managed in accordance with the scope of services.
- Honor the fiduciary responsibilities of a public agency.