

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065 / TELEPHONE 547-7000

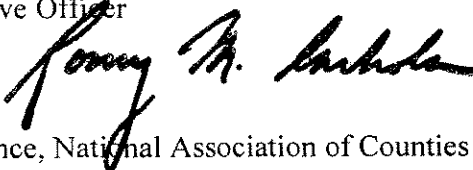
ROMY M. CACHOLA
COUNCILMEMBER
(808) 768-5007
(808) 550-6738 (fax)
e-mail: rcachola@honolulu.gov

June 19, 2009

Memorandum

TO: Councilmember Todd Apo, Chair

CC: Clayton Wong, Fiscal/Administrative Officer

FROM: Councilmember Romy M. Cachola 

SUBJECT: Western Interstate Region Conference, National Association of Counties
Umatilla County, Pendleton, Oregon
May 20-22, 2009

I attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference, which was held in Pendleton, Oregon from May 20-22, 2009. NACo's WIR Conference is a major event that includes NACo's Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Public Lands Steering Committees, and WIR Board of Directors. There were about 250 county officials in attendance along with NACo staff and various presenters.

The three-day conference provided county officials with the opportunity to hear speakers, discuss legislation, and network with other officials to exchange information on various issues. Normally, the conference focuses on public lands and other issues (i.e. transportation stimulus package) critical to the Western Region of the United States.

I arrived in Portland, Oregon on the evening of May 17. The following day, I met with Tri-Met officials Alan Lehto, Neil McFarlane and Dan Blocker. Tri-Met is a municipal corporation that operates a comprehensive transit network within a tri-county area in Portland. The Tri-Met system includes a 44-mile light rail system, 93 bus lines and 14.7 WES commuter rail, along with transit service for seniors and people with disabilities. My hosts provided me with excellent information and fact sheets on the Tri-Met system.

On May 19, I attended a pre-WIR conference get-together with other county officials and NACo officers. The informal event served as an opportunity for conference attendees to get to know one other.

May 20, 2009

May 20 was the first day of the WIR conference, which included registration for attendees, Board of Directors meetings, Steering Committee sessions, and various NACo Board of Directors events.

I attended the Western Interstate Region Board of Director's Meeting from 8:30 am to 12 noon. At the Board of Directors meeting, the attendees were briefed on the role of research, extension and teaching that surfaced with discussion of healthy forests and related environmental concerns. Economics, water shed management, carbon sequestration, job loss, fire suppression and insect infestation are just part of the menu which will be shared with land-grant universities.

May 21, 2009

After the Opening General Session, I attended the Education Session Block II "*Cooperating Agency Relationships—How Counties Engage in the Federal Planning Process.*" The presenters were John Martin, commissioner from Garfield County, Colorado; Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Bureau of Land Management liaison from Washington, DC; and Randy Phillips, U.S. Forest Service liaison from Washington, DC.

The speakers talked about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which provides for county participation as cooperating agencies when federal agencies prepare environmental documents such as environmental impact statements. Much of the information during this session was provided by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service planning process and requirements for participation by local governments.

May 22, 2009

I first attended the General Session from 9 am to 10:30 am. The featured speakers were Deanna Archuleta, deputy assistant secretary from the U.S. Department of the Interior; Cheryl Cook, deputy undersecretary for rural development from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Tom Mulikin, senior environmental attorney from Moore & Van Allen PLLC; and Gordon Smith, former U.S. senator from Oregon.

In Educational Session Block III, I attended the session entitled "Counties Working with Extension to Address Tough Times." The speakers were Peg Herring, assistant department head for communications from Oregon State University and Lyla Houglum, executive director of Western Extension Directors from Oregon State University. Both speakers at this workshop discussed how counties can partner with Extension to meet needs of families and communities during these tough economic times. Best practices in Oregon were featured which enabled participants to learn ways to support county departmental staff in providing useful information for their constituents through the help of various online and printed materials and programs. The workshop also sought the advice and input of county officials, from their local points of view regarding a special Extension national initiative entitled "Managing in Tough Times."

In Educational Session Block IV, I attended the session entitled "Western Interests in the Federal Transportation and Highway Bill Reauthorization." The session was moderated by Leo Bowman, commissioner from Benton County, Washington, a member of NACo's Board of Directors, and a member of NACo's Transportation Steering Committee. The session's speakers were Phillip

Ditzler, Oregon division administrator from Salem, Oregon and Pete Field, Transportation planning team leader from the Federal Highway Administration. Both speakers discussed the stimulus/recovery legislation that provided substantial funds for highways, including funds for roads on public lands. Congress is currently working on legislation to reauthorize the federal highway and transit programs, which expire on September 30, 2009. Both speakers also addressed the stimulus bills and what we can expect in the future from the highway and transit programs.

Key Transportation Highlights

This session was very informative, particularly when it comes to the reauthorization of the surface transportation program which provides the authority to fund the federal highway and transit programs. I learned the following key information from this session:

- SAFETEA-LU expires on September 30, 2009. Congress is currently reviewing the program and considering options to improve the highway and transit programs.
- SAFETEA-LU established extensive new resources and opportunities to advance highway safety throughout the country in a comprehensive, strategic manner. Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law on August 10, 2005.
- County governments have a substantial interest in this legislation because of its ownership of the systems. Consider the following:
 - ✓ Counties own approximately 1.77 million miles of highways, or about 45 percent of the nation's 4 million mile highway and roadway network.
 - ✓ Counties also own about 256,000 bridges or 44 percent of all bridges.
 - ✓ Counties own/operate about one-third of the nation's transit systems, including rail, bus and van service.
- The current law, SAFETEA-LU, has provided about \$286 million in funding for highway, transit and safety programs over the past 5 years. Currently, congressional committees with jurisdiction over the program are working to develop their respective legislative proposals.
- Everyone is waiting to see what type of proposal the Obama administration puts forward. It is unclear whether the administration will put forward a major legislative proposal or only a list of principles.
- There appears to be some interest in reforming the highway and transit programs. During the past year, there have been two congressionally-created national transportation commissions that have suggested in their final reports both programmatic and financing reforms. However, it is likely that Congress will not complete action on reauthorization before the September 30th deadline and will need to extend the present program. This is not unusual as most surface transportation reauthorizations have been late.
- Currently, the latest hurdle facing reauthorization and efforts to reform the programs is financing. The 18.3 cent federal gas tax, which was last increased in 1993, is not generating enough revenue into the Highway Trust Fund to fully fund the current highway program. This is due to the decrease in fuel consumption because of increased gas prices and the current economic downturn.
- In November 2008, Congress passed a bailout bill for the highway program that provided only \$8 billion for projects nationwide in General Fund money to the Trust Fund to get the program through Fiscal Year 2009. It is projected by some that the same problem will again occur in FY 2010 when funds could be \$8 billion-\$11 billion short.

- At the same time, there appears to be little support to increase the federal gas tax to pay for a new and expanded program. President Obama has made it clear regarding his opposition. Many congressional leaders have hinted at their limited appetite for increasing the gas tax in the middle of a recession.
- NACo is encouraging county officials to contact their members of Congress to let them know how important reauthorizing the federal surface transportation program is to improving county highway, bridge and transit systems.

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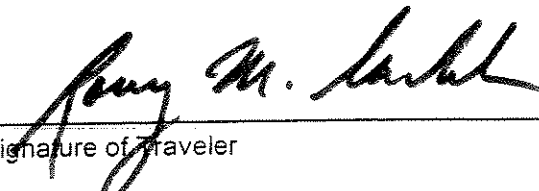
CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 6/5/09

Traveler: Romy Cachola
 Event: 2009 NACO Western Interstate Region Conference
 Location: Pendleton, OR
 Dates: From 5/20/09 8:00 am To 5/22/09 8:30 pm

Description	Amount	Notes
1. Registration Fee	470.00	Online registration attached
2. Airfare	843.52	DR: 5/17/09 1:20 pm RT: 5/23/09 11:25 am
3. Hotel	849.96	Rate: various No. of Billable Days: 6
4. Meals	197.25	Receipts attached
5. Ground Transportation	94.75	Receipts attached
6. Tips	31.00	
7. Other	30.00	Excess bag charge to/from Honolulu
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	2516.48	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:



 Signature of Traveler

JUN 8 2009

 Date