

## NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENTS

### BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- At the Maine Small Business Development Center (SBDC), located at AVCOG, business counselors provide one-on-one counseling to existing businesses and individuals contemplating starting a business. During the past year, SBDC counselors met with 369 clients in the AVCOG Region and made 18 workshop presentations. AVCOG's counselors were also based in outreach offices located in Rumford, Farmington and South Paris.
- The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership staff, working from the AVCOG office, has assisted approximately 23 companies over the past year. From this assistance, many proposals have been delivered, resulting in many completed projects. Many more projects are in the works including, but not limited to, the following: Manufacturing Assessments, ERP Enterprise Resource Planning software implementation, ERP software training, ISO9000 Internal Auditing, Plant Layouts, Inventory Control Assessments, Marketing Assistance, Strategic Planning, Team Building, Person Organization Skills, Lean Manufacturing including Introduction to Lean Manufacturing Classes - Value Stream Mapping, Set-up Reduction – 5S; Sort, Set-in-Order, Sustain, Standardize, Shine - TPM Total Productive Maintenance – Cellar/Flow Manufacturing, Kaizen Process and Lean Accounting.
- AVCOG has joined the Maine Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) delivery **network. Brad Straight has been hired as Procurement Counselor for the AVCOG region and can** provide assistance to small businesses looking to do business with Federal, State and Local governments.

The Maine PTAC offers several services to small businesses including identifying appropriate federal, state and local agencies and developing marketing strategies. The Maine PTAC also provides guidance to businesses going through the process of government registrations and assisting them in becoming qualified government contractors.

Since June 1, 2009, the Maine Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) located at AVCOG, has assisted over 160 active clients in Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, with completing government registrations, accurate bid match services, and one on one counseling assistance, GSA assistance, competitive knowledge and procurement history. PTAC has worked with businesses with training sessions, networking opportunities and how to sell goods and services to the government. Since June, PTAC has provided (203) counseling sessions, (4) training seminars, a matchmaker event in Lewiston and (2) workshops with prime vendors (BIW and Raytheon) who were looking for qualified businesses for their suppliers.

### Pine Tree Zone

The processing of Pine Tree Development Zone applications have been affected in a significant way. The paperwork and oversight of the PTD Zone parcels at the regional level has been eliminated. On June 22, 2009, Governor Baldacci signed LD 1473, "An Act to Reaffirm Maine's Commitment to Business by Amending the Pine Tree Development Zone Laws", the law will become effective on September 12, 2009. This legislation has modified the original legislation and created a statewide, two tiered program. This change eliminates the need for expansion projects to be located in "designated parcels" and opens up all of Maine to be eligible for Pine Tree Zone benefits. However, the eligibility criteria for a business to become a certified PTZ business have remained unchanged. The business must still be within an eligible business

sector and must create at a minimum 1 net new qualifying job. The PTZ program will now be a direct application to the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), with all processing done in Augusta.

### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

- Staff continues to provide technical assistance for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and during the period assisted approximately 10 communities with application development, planning/technical assistance or administration for the CDBG program. Three or four communities are planning to submit applications under the Public Infrastructure and Public Facilities grant programs.
- Staff continues to provide administration for the CDBG Façade Grant program for the Town of Livermore Falls. The Town received a CDBG grant for Façade Improvements in 2008. Currently seven projects are underway and most will be completed by the end of the year, with some remaining work being finished next spring.
- Staff is conducting an income survey in the Town of Mexico. The purpose of this survey is to determine the low to moderate income in the Town. The survey results will be used to potentially change the designated use of the River Valley Technology Center to a general use public facility and to make Mexico eligible for future funding through the CDBG program.

### **Economic Development Administration/CEDS**

- Staff continued to provide grant administration services to the Kingfield Water District for the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration grant which was used to assist in the replacement of deteriorated water mains to serve the Poland Spring bottling facility. The project was completed in the fall of 2008. Staff will continue to assist with the closeout of the EDA grant.
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): Staff has begun planning for the 2010 CEDS update and is working to incorporate the work from the RCIP as well as through efforts related to the Mobilize Maine initiative. The CEDS process is continually changing and evolving, and staff continues to look for ways to develop the process to be more effective and efficient.

### **Mobilize Maine**

Staff has been working with Vital Economy, consultant for FairPoint Communications, on the roll out of the Mobilize Maine asset based development strategy initiative. Staff has provided grant writing assistance to the Maine Economic Development District Association to secure funds to implement the statewide program and will continue to work with the districts to do fundraising for this project. Staff has prepared a draft grant application to be submitted to EDA to help support the EDD's efforts in support of this project. The next Phase of Mobilize Maine in this region will look asset mapping of industry sectors, how resources can be leveraged and who can benefit from that leverage.

### **FINANCE & LENDING**

- Over the past 12 months, AVCOG loaned \$1,000,000 to 18 businesses throughout the region using its various loan pools. The goal is to provide flexible capital that can be leveraged with other sources of funding in order to facilitate job creation and retention, start-ups, expansions, and modernizations. AVCOG's direct lending programs leveraged nearly \$1,800,000 in other financing and created or retained approximately 120 jobs. Loans were made in the following municipalities: Jay, Lewiston, Livermore Falls, Wilton, Auburn, Oxford, Rumford, Canton, Dixfield, and Sabattus.

- AVCOG's lending staff packaged and underwrote four loan requests totaling more than \$532,000 for local development corporations and municipalities. Staff provides loan underwriting services for the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, the Town of Lisbon, the Mechanic Falls Development Commission, the River Valley Growth Council, the Town of Wilton and the Town of Paris.
- AVCOG is also providing loan servicing for the Mechanic Falls Development Commission, the Town of Lisbon, the Town of Paris, and the Town of Wilton.
- AVCOG lending staff provided approximately 2,000 hours of SBA microloan technical assistance to businesses throughout the region. This service is funded by the SBA and thus, there is no charge to the businesses receiving assistance.

## **REGIONAL MARKETING: TOURISM, BUSINESS ATTRACTION**

### **Maine's Lakes & Mountains Tourism Council (MLMTC)**

- The following updates are for projects funded under MLMTC's FY2009 grant that were completed during the October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009 timeframe:
  - Print ads ran in *Maine Invites You*, *AAA Horizons Southern New England*, *Boston Globe Magazine* and *Yankee Magazine*.
  - The Council participated in the New York Media Market event, which took place in New York on March 3, 2009. The exposure to key media personnel and contacts made at this function were extremely valuable. As a result of our conversations at the event, we specifically followed-up with fourteen members of the media with additional information and hope to further cultivate these relationships.
  - Council members attended the New England/Massachusetts Snowmobile Show, Springfield, MA (October 2008), Boston Globe Travel Show (February 22-24, 2009), Toronto Ultimate Travel Show (March 27-29, 2009).
- AVCOG submitted a grant on behalf of MLMTC and the Council was awarded \$96,330 to market the region for FY10 (July 2009 through June 2010). Following is the Council's scope of work for the next year: advertisements in *Maine Invites You*, *AAA Horizons Southern New England*, *Yankee Magazine* and *AMC Outdoors Magazine*; attendance at key trade shows - Boston Globe Travel Show, N.Y. Times Travel Show and a few others to be determined; participation in the Office of Tourism's Maine Media Marketplace in New York; support of statewide Public Service Announcement campaign; purchase of additional regional photography; Web site enhancements, sponsorship and coordination of a Packaging Lab seminar, and support of the 2010 Western Mountains Winter Carnival and Northern Forest Canoe Trail's 16-page supplement in *Paddlers Magazine*.
- MLMTC's current members are: AVCOG, Androscoggin County COC, Bethel Area COC, Bridgton Lakes Region COC, Flagstaff Area Business Association, Franklin County COC, Jay-Livermore Livermore Falls COC, Oxford Hills COC, Rangeley Lakes Region COC, River Valley Area COC, Sebago Lakes Region COC, and Sugarloaf Area.

### **Business Attraction**

Working through our lead protocol system, staff disseminated information regarding two business site search requests, for manufacturing companies, to local development corporations and interested communities throughout the region.

## **Maine Woods Consortium (Formerly the Mountain Heritage Network)**

- AVCOG is an active participant in the Maine Mountain Heritage Network which was created in 2002 to support and align local asset based development efforts in Franklin, Oxford, Somerset, and Piscataquis Counties with the goal of bringing new revenues into Maine's mountain region. The Coordinating Team of the Network, of which AVCOG is a member, decided in 2007 that it could better strengthen programs, attract resources, and ultimately expand market reach if it worked with partners to the north and east under a new "Maine Woods" banner.
- The Network linked with organizations and initiatives in Washington, Aroostook, and Penobscot Counties and officially adopted the Maine Woods Consortium name and configuration in the spring of 2008.

The Consortium is focusing and coordinating work in three major program areas:

- Sustainable management of landscape resources.
  - Revitalization of towns and villages.
  - Alignment of small and moderate scale enterprises to meet emerging market opportunities.
- On behalf of the Consortium, Bruce Hazard met with representatives from the Betterment Fund in February to discuss their interest in investing in tourism development in Maine's "rim" counties and directing that investment through MWC. The Coordinating Team suggested providing significant funding for 2-3 projects to be chosen by a newly formed sub-committee of the Coordinating Team. Betterment Fund representatives greeted this approach with enthusiasm and they requested a full proposal from the Consortium in April.
    - The newly formed Tourism sub-committee created criteria, solicited projects and evaluated applications to facilitate allocating the \$50,000 grant received from the Betterment Foundation.
    - The following three projects were chosen to receive funding:
      1. Katahdin "Made by Hand" Maine Woods Discovery Package  
This project involves developing a tourism package to introduce visitors to the rich variety of craft traditions and artisans in the Maine Woods. It is sponsored by the Maine Craft Association, which will work with the New England Outdoor Center to create a multi-dimensional visitor experience.
      2. Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Center Website  
The Four Directions Development Corporation plans to create a high quality interactive website designed to provide an immediate outlet for tribal artists and craftspeople to sell their products, while also serving as an essential part of the planning process for development of a Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Center.
      3. Maine Woods Tourism Training Initiative  
This is a long-term initiative proposed by Mountain Counties Heritage to organize a network of existing tourism training providers including university, community college, and adult education programs as well as private sector training programs to deliver a comprehensive, multi-modal training program to tourism businesses and their employees.

## **Franklin County FERMATA Working Group ~ Franklin County Tourism Network**

- Although there is no funding to continue the Fermata work, Maine Mountains Heritage Inc., based in Farmington, has taken the lead in creating a Franklin County Tourism Network (FCTN), of which AVCOG is a participating member.

- The goal of the Tourism Network is to create an effective set of working relationships among government agencies, non-profits, and businesses to support tourism development in Franklin County. The group will promote collaboration on education, research, and other business development and promotional activities required to produce and market seamless, high quality visitor experiences.
- In November 2008, the Network coordinated/hosted two tourism training programs for businesses in the Franklin County area. A Customer Service Training program was held in Rangeley for 60 participants. The second training, a Tourism Marketing Workshop, was held at UMF in Farmington with 10 attendees. Overall, feedback on these training sessions was very positive, and the Network walked away with many ideas for additional workshops.
- The Network formed four workgroups to move their efforts along: Marketing/Branding, Communications/Public Relations, Resource Management/Product Development, and Education/Training. The Network believes business involvement is important, so they decided on a two pronged approach: general outreach and targeted recruitment. The first prong involves crafting an explanation of FCTN that details the mission, structure, status, and invites businesses to email or call a point person if they are interested in participating. The second prong involves reaching out to specific businesses to recruit for participation or feedback.
  - The Marketing/Branding Group and Product Development Group both concluded they would like to reprint the Franklin County Loop Map. This piece is a solid marketing tool for the region and highlights many of the area's assets. A committee has been formed to work out the funding and data gathering needed to produce the piece.
  - The Network is working closely with Mountain Counties Heritage on the Maine Woods Tourism Training Initiative to organize a network of existing tourism training providers including university, community college, and adult education programs as well as private sector training programs to deliver a comprehensive, multi-modal training program to tourism businesses and their employees.

## **PLANNING**

### **Land Use Planning**

- Planning Day 2008 and the Subdivision Review Workshop (spring 2009) series were again well attended by municipal officials – especially planning board members and code enforcement officers. Planning Day attendees learned about changes to land use laws and new developments in the field of planning and subdivision review. The Subdivision Review workshop series reviewed the state law and review criteria. Staff also provided information on the potential impacts new subdivisions can have on the community and the environment. Significant time was devoted to participant questions and discussion of specific issues.
- Shoreland Zoning was the focus of considerable Planning Division activity over the past year. Staff assisted more than half of the member communities in the region. Work included helping towns adapt the model to their local needs and preparing shoreland zoning maps. This was a major effort due to the changes in wetland zoning status. Staff reviewed the wetland information provided by the state and corrected it for many towns. From there, new shoreland zoning maps were developed. The majority of towns in the region are now in compliance with state requirements. More than 25 municipalities received assistance.
- Land Use Ordinance development and updates have also received considerable attention from the planning staff. As there was a lull in development reviews due to the slow economy, many towns took the time to update their ordinances.

- Gilead, Hanover and Strong continued comprehensive planning processes with the assistance of AVCOG; Livermore and Poland adopted plans prepared with the assistance of AVCOG. The Hanover Comprehensive Plan was found consistent with the Growth Management Law.

### **Regional Planning**

The Planning Division continued three regional planning initiatives: the draft of the revised Regional Policies was circulated for comments; staff worked with stakeholders on the Regional Affordable/Workforce Housing Assessment and began work on a Regional Housing Plan; and a draft Open Space Policy Plan was prepared and put out for comment.

### **Household Hazardous Waste**

The Western Maine Environmental Depot program continued to grow during the past year. More people have been bringing more waste to the permanent facility in Lewiston and the number of towns undertaking one-day satellite collections has also increased. Participation has been excellent at the satellite collections, and many very toxic wastes have been collected including large quantities of old pesticides that would have been persistent had they entered the environment.

### **Medical Waste Collection**

Working with a number of partners including Healthy Androscoggin and the Lewiston Police Department, two more pharmaceutical waste collections were undertaken for Androscoggin County. Of particular note was generous donations from Hannaford Pharmacies and both time and funding from the Medicine Shoppe in Lewiston.

### **Brownfields**

Three Phase II environmental assessments were completed for AVCOG's first EPA Brownfields grant, and there is serious interest in redevelopment of two of the sites. Work also began on a second EPA Brownfields grant. Potential properties have been selected and work has begun on several Phase I environmental assessments.

### **Geographic Information System**

The Geographic Information System was instrumental in supporting the extensive Shoreland Zoning effort, and it also provided important services for comprehensive planning, regional planning and development activity.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Fixed Route Transit Study Update**

In August 2008, Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee contracted with Tom Crikelair Associates to perform a short range fixed route study update for Lewiston-Auburn's **citylink** system. A short range study is needed every five to seven years to evaluate how well the service is meeting the needs of the residents and to address new commercial and residential development.

The study tasks included evaluating the current service, developing service design strategies, addressing the economic impact of transit in a community, and developing a capital and financial plan. The public was being included in the process to get input from riders and those that would if it fit their travel needs.

The last transit study, completed in 2001, was also conducted by Consultant Tom Crikelair. LATC implemented several recommendations contained in the 2001 study and has seen a constant growth in ridership. **citylink** went from a one-hub system located in Lewiston to a two-hub system adding an Auburn location. The College Street route was added to carry passengers from the Lewiston hub directly to the Auburn Malls area, and a free Downtown

Shuttle route was created to connect the Auburn and Lewiston routes and to serve people living and working in the downtown area.

The study is in the final draft and has been presented to LATC and to Lewiston and Auburn City Councils at a joint workshop. The study recommends that changes be made to increase service – begin earlier in the day and extend hours beyond the current last runs and to provide service on Saturdays. All of this is dependent on the cities committing more funds for the service extension.

### **Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities Plan Update**

The objective of this plan was to develop a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan to meet the socioeconomic, land use, development and environmental needs of the region and be consistent with the requirements set forth in Federal legislation. The consultant was asked to determine the status of planned projects, analyze the existing conditions and identify future trends and needs. This plan was completed and has been incorporated into the ATRC 20-Year Transportation Plan.



### **Route 196 Access Management**

Concerns had been raised about expected increases in traffic on Route 196 and, in particular, its impact on Lisbon Falls, Lisbon Center and the Town of Lisbon. This study was intended to take the Traffic System Management Study, 2006, recommendations on Access Management and aid Lewiston and Lisbon in implementing them.

The Route 196 connection between Lewiston-Auburn and Topsham-Bath-Brunswick is an important link. It is important to consider it as one of the major links between the Maine Turnpike and I-295. Maintaining the ability of traffic to travel through the area while allowing the area to increase its economic base along Route 196 is contingent on good access management. The communities have worked to develop language that can be included in ordinances. The City of Lewiston is currently working to add the changes and the Town of Lisbon has decided that it would like to use the standards developed on all of the federally funded roads in the town not just Route 196.

### **Traffic Signal Management System**

The ATRC has developed a plan to guide in establishing a Traffic Signal Management System. That plan provides the ATRC with software needs, hardware and upgrades, to integrate signals/signal systems into the management system and is in the process of being implemented with a first phase project that will incorporate 5 corridors into the system. The corridors include the Court Street in Auburn and Main Street in Lewiston, East Avenue in Lewiston, Center Street in Auburn, and the Mall area in Auburn.

The following objectives for the system are:

#### ***Increase Operational Flexibility***

- The system will allow time-of-day timing plans, with the ability to create and implement reflexive timing plans and special event plans.

#### ***Improved System Monitoring***

- The system will provide usable data summaries using typical measures of effectiveness (volume, occupancy, speed, etc.).

### ***Cross-Agency Coordination***

- Other agencies will have the ability to remotely access and monitor, though not to manipulate, the system.

### **ATRC 20-Year Plan Update**

ATRC is required to update its 20-Year Plan every five years. The existing 20-Year Plan was adopted by the Policy Committee in December. Staff completed an update of the plan, meeting the requirements of the latest Federal legislation. The plan was put out for public input and finalized. It was submitted to the FHWA and the MaineDOT. The initial efforts were an outreach to over 30 agencies and organizations that might have an impact on the plan, including the MaineDOT, Maine Department of Conservation, and Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, local and state police agencies, as well as the community housing authorities, and bicycle and transit committees.

### **Walkable Community Audits**

The staff secured funding to aid 4 communities in making them more walkable. The communities were Lisbon, Sabattus, Jay and Mexico. The staff worked with community leaders and residents to walk through their respective communities and identify the areas that were good, and those that needed help. A report was generated for each town with areas for improvement identified and responsibility.