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LCOG

LANE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

November 29, 2007

To: Lane County Board of Commissioners

From: George Kloeppel, Executive Director

Subject: Cost Estimate for Coordinated Population Forecasts

At the November 28 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, the request was made for a cost estimate to perform coordinated population forecasts for Lane County. The request was clarified to be an ongoing cost rather than just a one time cost. Lane Council of Governments has done two coordinated population forecasts in the last five years, so the following estimates are based on those experiences.

The ongoing cost concept is important because it is expected that the coordinated population forecasts will be redone at least every five years, following every decennial census and half way in between. It may be necessary to do a revision even more often due to unexpected change, such as the recent decision to separate the urban growth boundaries for Eugene and Springfield. Ongoing work also includes many related tasks that use population forecasts, Census data and GIS data. Examples include population estimates and forecasts for various planning projects, from infrastructure sizing to transportation. Another example is assisting a city in challenging its annual State population estimate. The ongoing work requires at least a half time staff position that costs about $60,000 a year including all benefits and overhead.

The first coordinated population forecast that LCOG did was adopted in February, 2005. The process started more than a year and half before that. Direct staff cost for the project was about $25,000. It was more complex than the more recent project because it included building the forecasting process, using GIS to estimate the population outside city limits but inside urban growth boundaries and extra meetings to allocate the unincorporated population for the first time.

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The current process was started about a year ago. Direct staff cost to date is about $20,000. The process has been simpler because the same forecasting model was used, and there have been no major changes or disagreements.

Other relevant factors that affect the cost are the staffing requirements and the compatibility with other work tasks. The staff members that do the forecasting work need to have experience with a variety of analytical tools that are used for forecasting. They need to understand the different results that can be computed using a compound average growth rate compared to a regression trend analysis compared to a ratio trend analysis, and how to use the GIS system to do estimates and allocations. The staff also needs to know the data sources such as Census data, data from the Center for Population Research, the Office of Economic Analysis, employment data, births and deaths, migration, and geographic information.

Compatibility with other work tasks is a significant opportunity for cost savings. The frequent use of the base information for multiple projects saves expense by reducing data location and familiarization time. Often one project can produce results that can be used by other projects. The current process is a good example. The forecasts that were requested by the cities can also meet the requirements of a transportation planning project.

I hope this information is responsive to your request.